



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

1101 Market Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107

CHERYL BETTIGOLE, MD, MPH
Health Commissioner

SARA ENES, MBA, MSW
Chief of Staff

January 2024

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Philadelphia continues to face an epidemic of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among its teenagers. To combat this problem, the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, and the School District of Philadelphia work together to educate high school students about STIs and offer free, voluntary, and confidential testing and treatment for gonorrhea and chlamydia, two of the most common infectious diseases among teenagers. It is important to diagnose and treat these infections early to prevent long term harm to a teenager's future fertility and to prevent spread.

Prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic, approximately 30,000 students received an educational presentation about STIs and were offered testing annually. To date, approximately 200,000 tests have been performed and 9,500 infections found, with nearly 100 percent of all infections treated. Presentations, testing, and treatment are offered at no cost to the student, parent, or School District.

During the 2023-2024 school year, this successful program will continue in a *safe and effective* manner. Students in high schools will receive STI prevention education and will be offered the opportunity for free and confidential testing for STIs. If a student's test result is positive, they will receive free antibiotic treatment, given under a health care provider's supervision.

The School District of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health strongly believe that we have an obligation to do everything we can to ensure children remain healthy and free of STIs. We encourage you to take a few moments to speak with your child/children about sexuality, including the prevention and consequences of STIs. You are your child's first and most important teacher, especially when addressing these issues. If you need additional information about STIs or would like suggestions on speaking with your child about STIs, please visit the Department of Public Health's website www.TakeControlPhilly.org.

Included for your information is a sheet of Frequently Asked Questions about this program. If you have other questions, please call the Health Department's STD Control Program at 215-685-6614.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Cheryl Bettigole in black ink.

Cheryl Bettigole, MD, MPH
Health Commissioner

Handwritten signature of Kendra B. McDow in black ink.

Kendra B. McDow MD, MPH, FAAP
Medical Officer of the School
District of Philadelphia