

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Health



STD Control Program

April 1, 2004

Owner / Manager
Venue
Washington, DC

To Whom It May Concern:

There is currently an outbreak of infectious syphilis among gay and bisexual men both nationally and locally. The number of new infectious syphilis cases among gay and bisexual men in the District of Columbia increased 187% between 2000 and 2003. Unfortunately, in Washington, DC, unlike many of the other major cities affected by this epidemic, it appears that this trend is continuing into 2004.

Syphilis is a serious sexually transmitted disease (STD) caused by a bacteria that can pass from person-to-person during **ANY** type of sexual activity. Signs and symptoms of syphilis typically include sores and rashes, but many infected people do not know that they are infected. Having syphilis makes it easier to become infected with HIV, or to spread HIV to others. Left untreated, syphilis can cause blindness, paralysis, and brain damage.

The Department of Health's STD Control Program is committed to ending this epidemic among Washington, DC's gay and bisexual male population. We are:

- increasing community awareness of the epidemic through the media and through a **"Syphilis is Back! Get Tested!"** social marketing campaign
- partnering with organizations that serve the gay and bisexual community (such as Whitman-Walker Clinic)
- providing free and confidential syphilis and HIV testing in a variety of venues (including a health van located on 17th Street, NW at "R" Street, Friday and Saturday nights from 8pm to 2 am)

We would like to:

- partner with the owners of local bars/clubs/bath houses that serve the gay and bisexual male population of Washington, DC to distribute condom packets with STD prevention information, display **"Syphilis is Back! Get tested!"** posters, and perhaps, in the future, offer onsite free and confidential syphilis and HIV testing

Please help us eliminate syphilis in the District of Columbia!

This letter will be followed up with a phone call to gauge your support of our efforts and, hopefully, to set up a meeting to outline the details of our collaboration.

Thank you,

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