

Evaluating ASHM's Syphilis Testing in Antenatal Settings: Train the Trainer Course

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Background



Australia is responding to a resurgence of syphilis, declared a Communicable Disease Incident of National Significance, alongside a concerning increase in congenital syphilis, with **103** cases reported between 2015 and 2024¹.

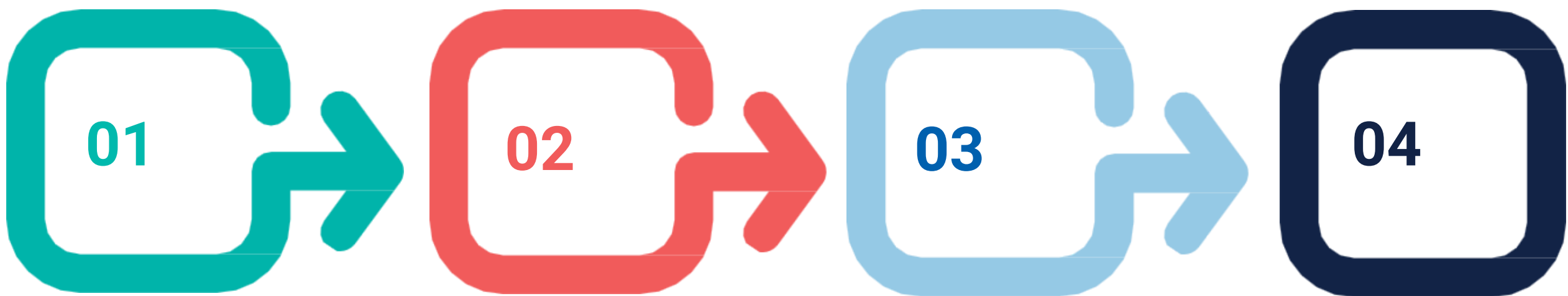
Updated national guidelines now recommend universal syphilis screening at three points during pregnancy, substantially increasing testing in antenatal care. This has created an urgent need to rapidly scale workforce capability, ensuring clinicians are equipped to test, interpret results, and manage care effectively.

In response, ASHM developed the **Syphilis Testing in Antenatal Settings: Train the Trainer** course to support the upskilling of antenatal care providers and to promote consistent, guideline-aligned practice to strengthen Australia's response to the elimination of congenital syphilis.



Approach

The 'Train the Trainer' model engaged a master trainer who educated health staff who are less experienced in antenatal syphilis testing and congenital syphilis in their services. Participants completed Online Learning Modules and attended a live-facilitated webinar, which developed their confidence in delivering their own training session. Following these components, participants delivered their own training on antenatal syphilis testing in their service.



- **Syphilis Testing in Antenatal Settings: Train the Trainer Online Learning Module**
- **Pre-course survey**
- **2-hour live facilitated online course**
- **Post-course survey**
- **Ongoing support and follow-up from ASHM for four months**
- **Delivery of workplace training session**
- **Report-back survey**

Outcomes

There were 83 total attendees across four live-facilitated webinars between November 2025 and March 2026. Of these, 66 participants completed the post-webinar evaluation survey. Participants reported the following outcomes:

- 98%** of respondents ($n = 64$) reported that they were familiar with their jurisdiction's clinical guidelines for antenatal syphilis testing.
- 96%** of respondents ($n = 60$) reported that they were mostly or entirely able to discuss referral pathways and support for positive syphilis cases in pregnancy.
- From the qualitative survey responses, **66%** of participants ($n = 42$) identified that they would encourage opportunistic STI testing and increase screening as a result of attending this activity.

The majority of participants (69%, $n = 66$) shared positive feedback when asked if they would recommend this CPD activity to a colleague.

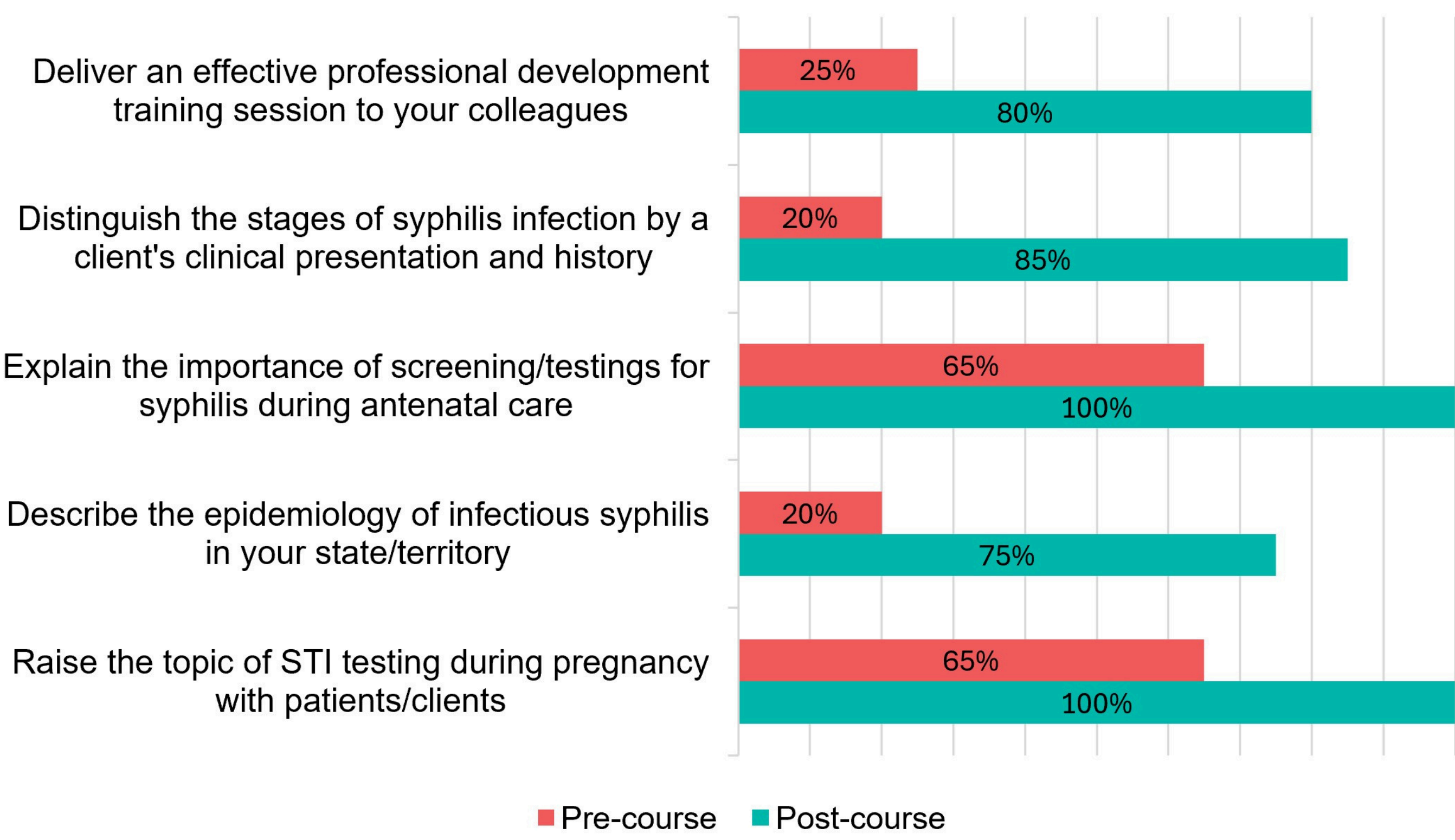
“Yes... [we must] work together to reduce the spread. The more trainers, the more health practitioners become educated.”



Between November 2025 and June 2026, **Six** participants delivered training sessions in their practice, resulting in a further estimated **121** total staff educated in syphilis.

20 participants completed both pre- and post-course surveys for the *Syphilis Testing in Antenatal Settings Train the Trainer* activity. There was an overall increase in knowledge and confidence after completing the activity.

Percentage of participants reporting 'confident'/'very confident' in their ability to:



Innovation and Significance

The course was effective in raising awareness and increasing knowledge on syphilis case management for antenatal care providers, responding to the priorities outlined in the *National Syphilis Response* plan.

The Train the Trainer model allows for sustainable, local capacity building across Australia, and ASHM has re-used this model in its *Train the Trainer: PEP and Emergency Contraception in Acute Settings* course.



Scan here for more information or to express interest for ASHM's **Syphilis Testing in Antenatal Settings: Train the Trainer** course.

<https://ashm.org.au/training/core-curriculum/antenatal-syphilis-train-the-trainer/>

References

¹ Kidd, M., Chief Medical Officer's statement declaring syphilis a Communicable Disease Incident of National Significance [Media release] (7 August 2025), <https://www.health.gov.au/news/cmo-statement-syphilis-cdins?language=en>, accessed 11 August 2025