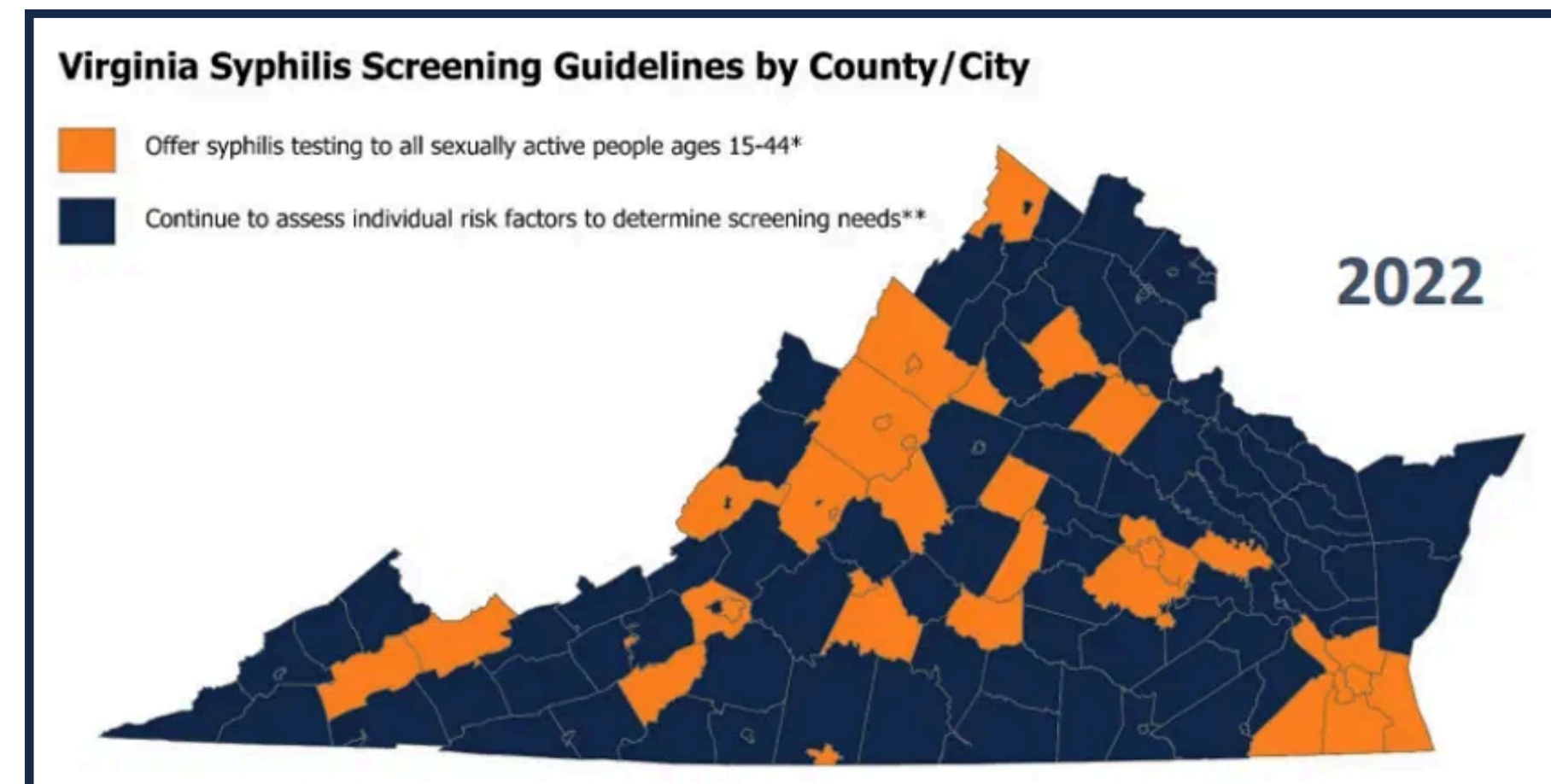


Health Issue/ Background

- While HIV trends are growing steadily upward both nationally and in Virginia, syphilis cases have spiked alarmingly in recent years.
- Limited screening during the pandemic, a false sense of protection while using PrEP, increasing drug use, and many other factors are contributing to this rise.
- in 2023, Richmond incidence rates (new cases) of total early syphilis were around 100 cases per 100,000 residents—around 66% higher than Virginia as a whole.
- Most concerning, congenital syphilis cases (babies born to mothers with syphilis) are increasing. This can cause serious health issues or death for the child.
- In December 2023, new guidelines from VDH recommended that ALL sexually active adults 15-44 in RHHD get tested annually.



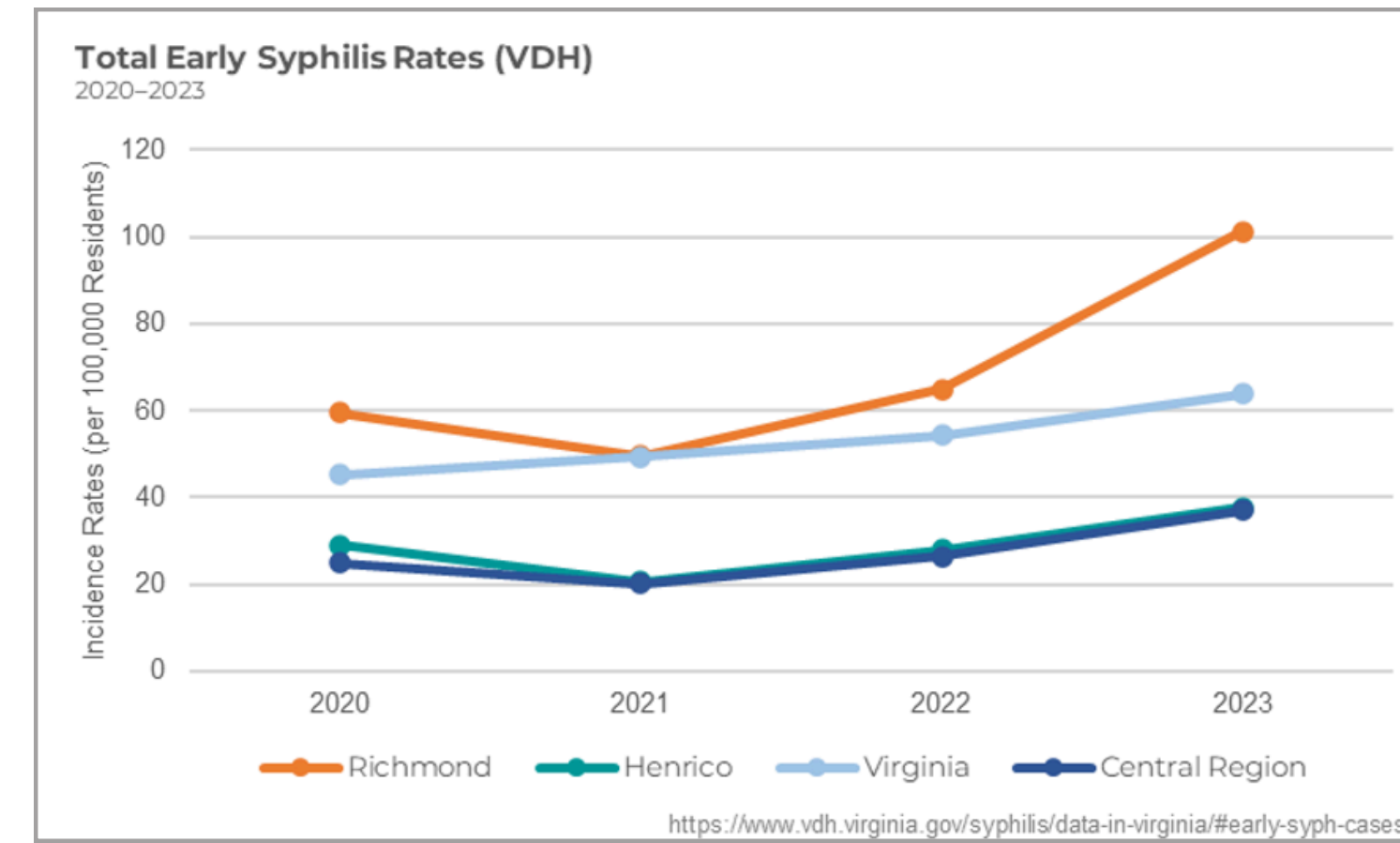
Projects Undertaken

- Collected publicly available data on STI cases in Richmond and Henrico, and summarized findings with visualizations.
- Analyzed STI data from the Virginia Electronic Disease Surveillance System (VEDSS) using R Studio and created visualizations for internal use in informing policies and outreach.
- Created census block group and tract maps of Richmond/Henrico pertaining to STI resources and risk factors.
- Aided in project management of the central region syphilis task force (research and communication).
- Created educational materials for distribution concerning syphilis testing and awareness.

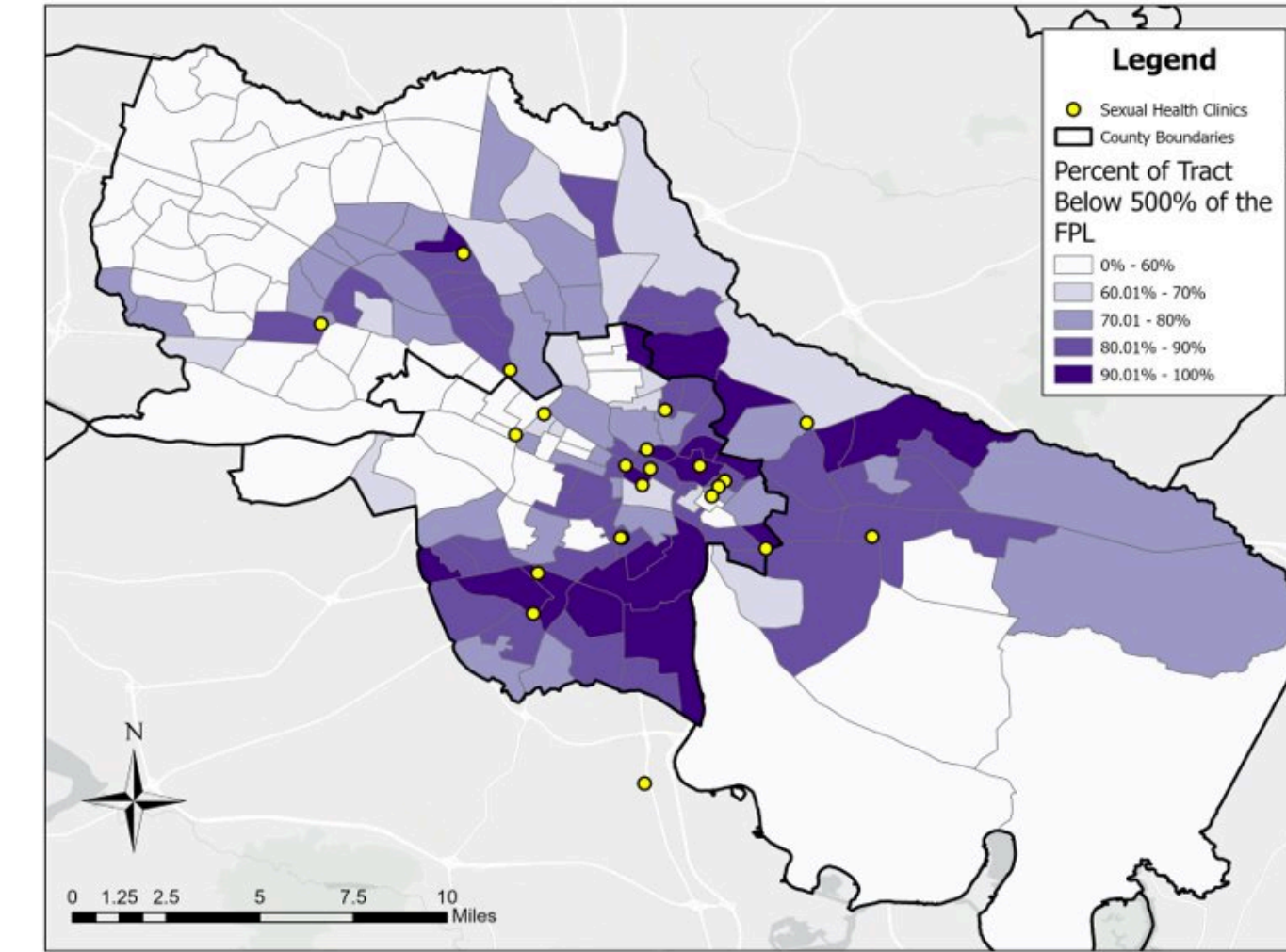


Project Outcomes

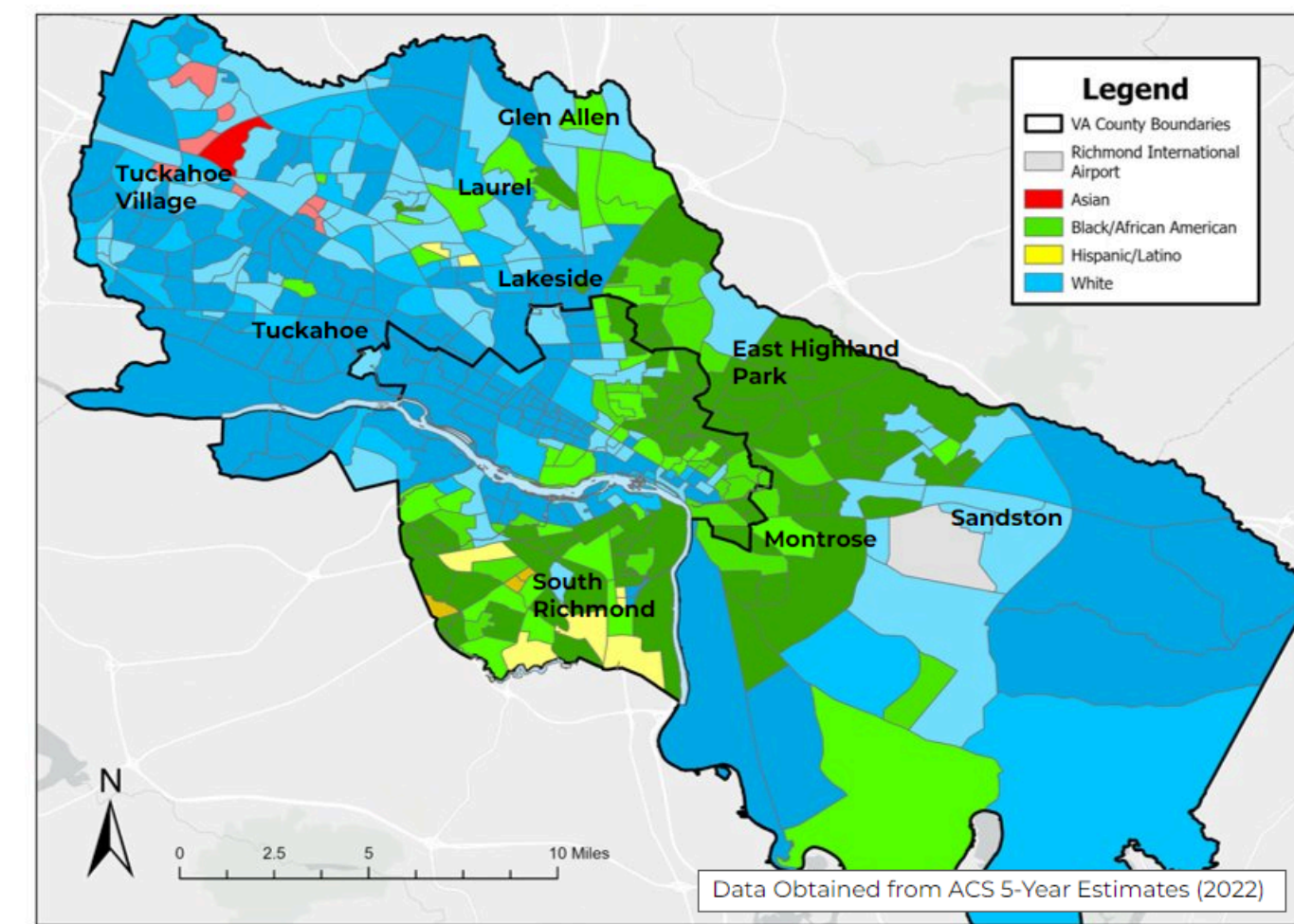
STI Epidemiology



Sexual Health Clinics and Ryan White Income Eligibility (ACS 2022 5-year Estimates) RHHD (2022)



Largest Race/Ethnicity Population by Census Block Group RHHD (2022)



Central Region Syphilis Task Force



YOU MAY HAVE SYPHILIS AND NOT KNOW IT. PROTECT YOUR BABY. GET TESTED.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW?

- Congenital syphilis (CS) occurs when people pass syphilis to their babies during pregnancy.
- Syphilis is a bacterial infection that can cause serious health problems without treatment.
- Parents can get syphilis by having unprotected sex with someone who already has it.
- Many people with syphilis may not have or notice any symptoms—testing is the only way to know for sure.
- Syphilis is easily treated, but antibiotics cannot reverse permanent damage to newborns.

HOW DO I GET TESTED?

• Ask your doctor about testing. Ask about an expedited test at the local Health Department or local Public Health Clinic. Visit www.vdh.virginia.gov.

WHEN SHOULD I GET TESTED?

- If you are pregnant, you should be tested at your first prenatal visit.
- It is highly recommended that pregnant people should be tested at 28 weeks, and again at delivery, especially if the person is at high risk.

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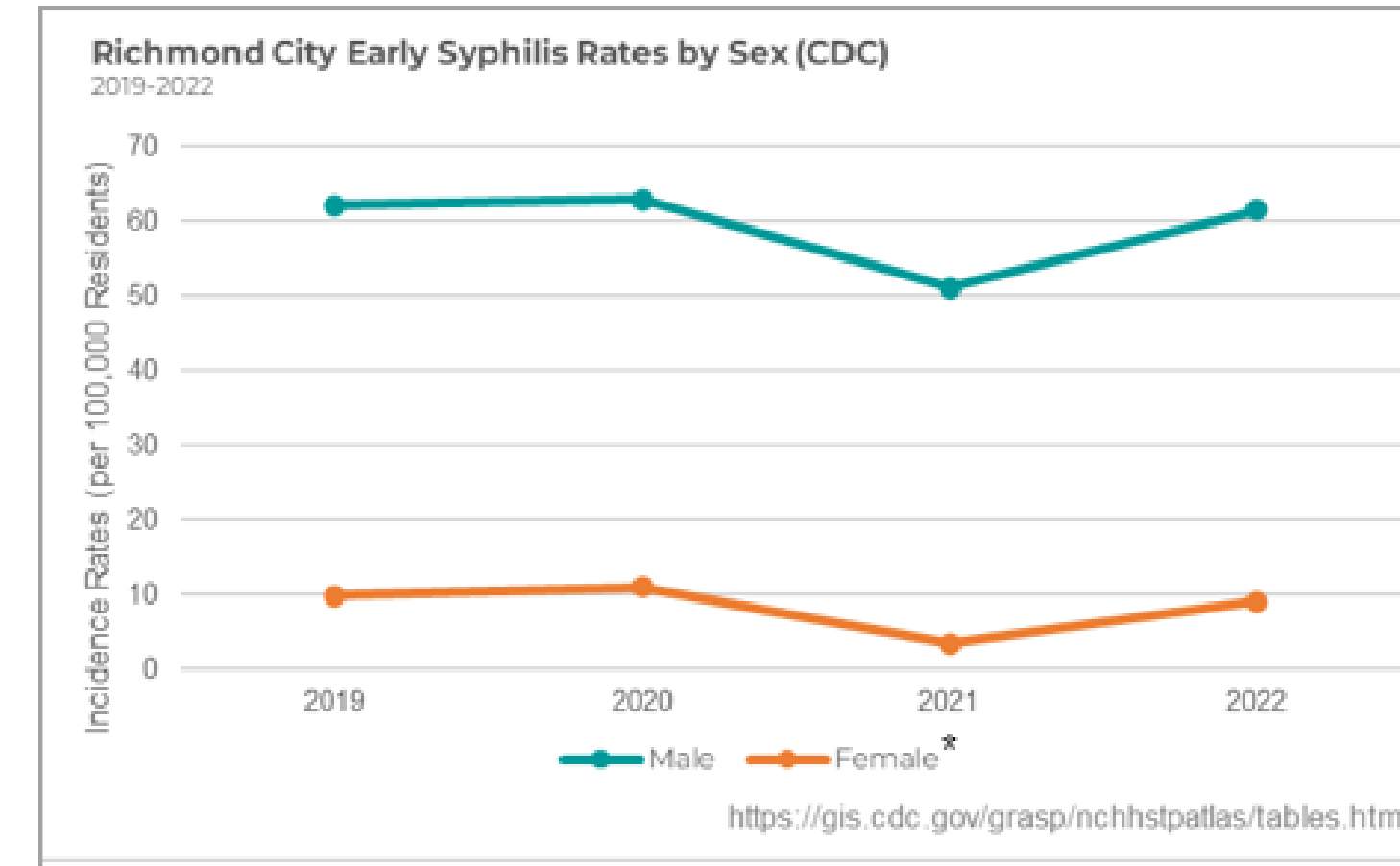
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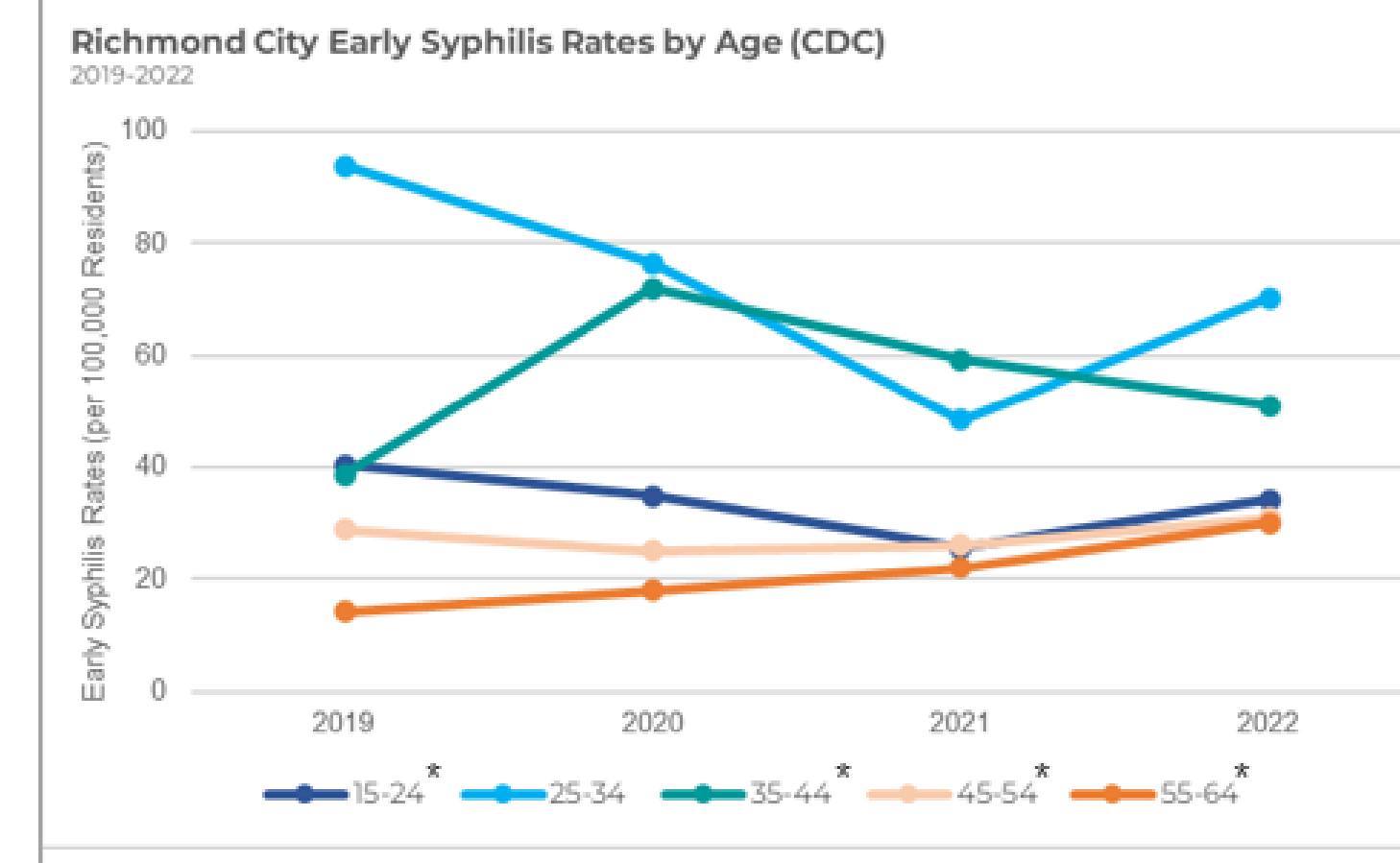
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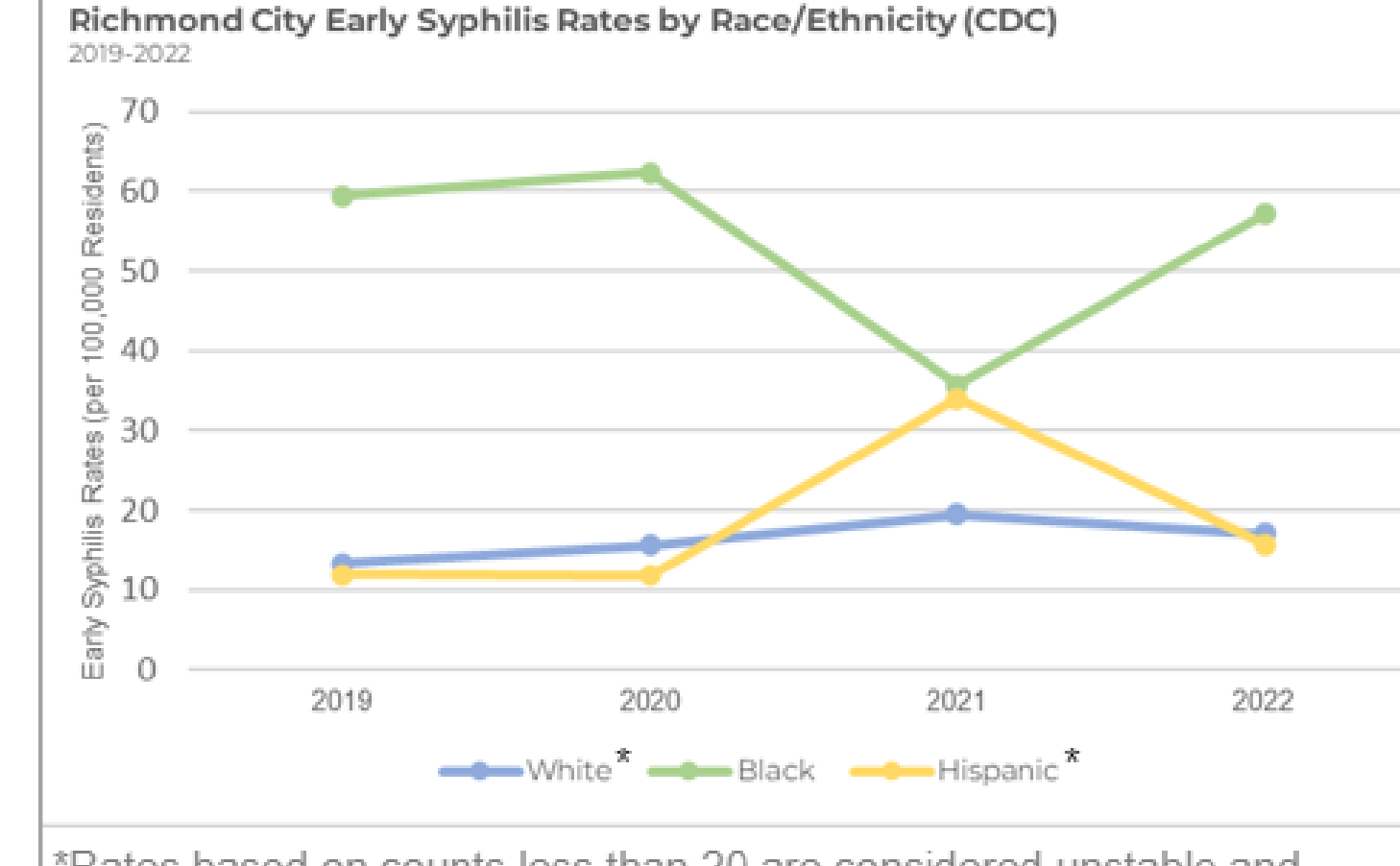
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*Those within RHHD will be able to access VEDSS data visualizations through the public health data repository.

Task Force Resources

- Four one-page flyers - targeted at providers and the public
- Document with available provider STI trainings
- List of urgent care chains in each region for potential collaborations with testing

Research Conclusions

- While absolute numbers remain higher in those assigned male at birth, RHHD is seeing a concerning increase in cases among those assigned female at birth (similar to national trends).
- Black populations bear the highest burden of syphilis and HIV cases, but all races/ethnicities are seeing more infections.
- Richmond City and Piedmont districts saw the most drastic increase in syphilis cases from 2022 to 2023, but case burdens were higher in all districts.
- A higher proportion of syphilis cases in recent years had recorded recent drug use and/or incarceration.
- Thus far, 2024 case numbers are on track to meet and likely exceed that of 2023

Internship Takeaways

- Gained fuller understanding of STI services at local health districts, reporting requirements for STIS, and surveillance activities/data management.
- Learned to collaborate with various employees within RHHD, including DIS and nursing staff.
- Honed epidemiology/statistical skills and communication strategies.
- Learned more about the operation of health districts and their partnerships with CBOs, hospitals, and clinics.



Acknowledgements

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