

# Disease intervention specialist (DIS)

## Information for Utah patients

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### What is a DIS?

Disease intervention specialists (DIS) are highly trained public health professionals who use contact tracing and case investigations to prevent and control sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In Utah, DIS work at local public health departments; many DIS are public health nurses who also work in clinics and deal with a wide range of infectious diseases.

DIS are specifically trained to:

- Educate about the causes and spread of STIs
- Provide community members with accurate information about STIs
- Locate and notify sex and needle sharing partners of their exposure to an STI
- Provide education to prevent future STIs
- Make sure patients get adequate testing and treatment
- Maintain patient and partner confidentiality
- Work with sensitive topics and make patients feel comfortable
- Connect patients to additional resources as needed

### What is partner notification?

DIS help make sure those diagnosed with STIs, and their sexual or needle-sharing partners, receive appropriate treatment and education about STI prevention. This is also called partner services or contact tracing.

DIS help people who are diagnosed with an STI create a plan to contact their partner(s) to let them know of their possible exposure and help them get testing and treatment. Those diagnosed may choose to inform their partners of potential exposure and testing options, or may let this be completed by the DIS.

After the first interview, the DIS may follow up again to help assist with any other concerns, verify if treatment has been completed, or get any additional information on partners.

Confidentiality is the highest priority for DIS so they can keep the identity of the person who is diagnosed with an STI private when they notify partners.

Those who are diagnosed with an STI who prefer to notify their partners themselves can use [TellYourPartner.org](https://www.tellyourpartner.org) (or scan the QR code below), a website that makes it easy to anonymously tell your partners they might have an STI.

## How will DIS follow-up with me?

DIS routinely follow up with those who have been diagnosed with STIs such as syphilis, HIV, gonorrhea, and depending on local processes, chlamydia, via a phone call, text message, email, or social media message, among others.

Those who are diagnosed with an STI may be asked to share information about themselves and their partners such as name, date of birth, address/current living situation, pregnancy status, and any STI symptoms they may have. This information is very important for the DIS to complete their investigation and stop the spread of disease.

## Frequently asked questions

- **Why do DIS have access to my information?**
  - When someone is diagnosed with chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, and/or HIV, their clinician is required to report that diagnosis to the Utah Department of Health and Human Services. The appropriate local health department is then notified, and information is shared with a DIS so they can contact those diagnosed to start an investigation. All information is kept confidential and only those directly involved in the person's care are allowed access to this information.
- **How will DIS keep my information confidential?**
  - Confidentiality is the highest priority for DIS in order to respect the privacy of individuals diagnosed with an STI. By law, DIS cannot share any information with a person's partners, even general information like the age or sex of the person who named them as a contact.
- **What if I don't wish to be contacted by DIS?**
  - The individual diagnosed with an STI is encouraged to work with public health, but may decide whether they want to participate in the investigation and partner services. If they choose to participate and provide information about their diagnosis, treatment, and partners, a DIS can support the patient and their partners.
- **What if someone answers my phone? How is my privacy protected?**
  - The identity of the person on the phone must be confirmed before DIS can say why they are calling. This is done to ensure privacy is protected, which is a top priority for DIS.