



# Arkansas Department of Health

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**Governor Mike Beebe**

**Nathaniel Smith, MD, MPH, Director and State Health Officer**

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## **RE: Ebola Update - guidance for schools**

The World Health Organization declared an international emergency related to the Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in West Africa in September. Responses to this outbreak include: 1) neutralizing the outbreak within the countries of origin, 2) preventing transmission outside the country by screening travelers at departure from West Africa and re-entry to their home country, and 3) alerting health providers and others to increase their surveillance of those at risk. The Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) is committed to supporting objective three by educating travelers and those institutions such as schools that host travelers as well as providers about managing those at risk.

ADH is aware that some schools and institutions of higher education in the state may have students and faculty who have traveled from the five countries with current or recent Ebola outbreak: Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone. It is important that schools continue to be aware of this risk as the situation in West Africa has not improved and students and teachers will travel throughout the school year. Travel from countries that are not involved in the outbreak should not be considered to increase one's risk of Ebola.

The most critical step to prevent transmission of Ebola is to identify those persons that have traveled from affected countries (currently Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Senegal and Nigeria) in the last 21 days. Once identified, they should be given the information provided below.

### **BACKGROUND & GUIDANCE**

- Ebola virus is a highly infectious agent. It has been associated with serious illness and death.
- Ebola is spread from person-to-person through direct contact with bodily fluids.
- Those who have only casual contact (e.g. being in the same room without physical contact) with patients with Ebola are considered to be at low risk but should have medical evaluation and consultation.
- Those who have traveled from an affected country (Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone) within the past 21 days but do not have symptoms and have no known contact with someone infected with Ebola are not at risk of infecting others. However, they should continue to monitor themselves for fever or symptoms until 21 days have passed since departure from the affected country. Quarantine is not indicated for these individuals.

- Schools are asked to report any individuals who have traveled from West Africa (Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone) in the last 21 days to the Arkansas Department of Health regardless of symptoms.
- Ebola infected patients become **infectious** when they develop symptoms most notably **fever**.
- Any hospital or healthcare facility with isolation capabilities can **safely** provide supportive care to an Ebola patient. ADH has provided instructions to all health care facilities in Arkansas.
- Before arriving at a physician's office or emergency facility a person who suspects they have Ebola should call ahead and alert the medical staff.
- **Any suspected case of Ebola should be reported to ADH immediately at 501-537-8969 (Monday - Friday 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM) or 1-800-554-5738 (After Hours and Weekends) and CDC at 1-770-488-7100.**

ADH is working closely with the CDC and will continue to closely monitor the Ebola outbreak. ADH will provide additional information and guidance as needed. It is expected that new information and guidelines will continue to emerge in the next few weeks. The CDC Ebola website is the most expeditious way to keep up with developments at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>. Frequently asked questions regarding Ebola can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/guinea/qa.html>.

Thank you for your efforts in this important matter.

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