



STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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COMMISSIONER

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Dear Educators:

Thank you for the continuing good work you do every day to ensure the health of children in Tennessee schools. We appreciate your efforts and want to provide information about the current Ebola virus disease situation that may be causing concern for some parents or staff.

In the last few weeks you have likely heard about an outbreak of this disease in the three West African countries of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. With recent information that this disease has affected some individuals in the United States, it is understandable school stakeholders may have questions about efforts in our state to detect and protect against this illness.

For several months, the Tennessee Department of Health has been working with local, state, national and international organizations in a coordinated effort to effectively contain this threat. While our risk is not zero, it is manageable if we all focus on facts and take the right steps to protect ourselves, our friends and family, and our communities.

Should there be a confirmed case of this disease anywhere in our state, the Tennessee Department of Health will immediately make that information known through public announcements. At this time there are no confirmed cases in Tennessee and protection efforts are ongoing. That includes statewide efforts to 1.) Identify and assist families and children who may be at increased risk for infection and 2.) Working with the healthcare community to safeguard others. If a public health threat is identified in any community, the Tennessee Department of Health has the authority to take appropriate actions to prevent the spread of illness.

We recognize many families and children in today's society are very mobile. For that reason, we've been working with health department staff members and private clinicians to ask parents additional questions about travel histories and potential for exposure to Ebola virus disease and other illnesses. If we believe there is any risk to others, we will work with families to ensure their children are healthy before they are permitted to attend school.

I would encourage you to ask parents to visit the Tennessee Department of Health website to view the latest information about Ebola virus disease: <http://health.state.tn.us/Ceds/ebola.htm> Accurate information about how this disease is spread can do much to calm fears and reduce rumors.

If you need any additional information or assistance, please reach out to me or to your local health department. If we don't have answers to your questions, we will get those for you quickly. Working together, we can ensure the important work of educating children and keeping them safe and healthy is not interrupted unnecessarily -- and we can stop Ebola virus transmission and unnecessary fears in their tracks.

Best,

John J. Dreyzehner, MD, MPH, FACOEM
Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Health