

Guidance for Schools and Out-of-Home Child Care Centers: West Africa Ebola Outbreak

Background

There is an Ebola outbreak in the West African countries of **Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.**

If a child or staff member is ill and did not travel to Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone, it is highly unlikely that he or she is at risk for Ebola.

- The chances of getting Ebola are **extremely low** unless a person traveled to an area affected by the outbreak **and** had **direct contact** with body fluids such as blood, vomit, or diarrhea of an Ebola-infected person, or with objects soiled with that person's body fluids.
- Additional screening measures at major international airports where all individuals traveling from affected West African countries must enter the U.S. will further reduce the risk of the undetected importation of Ebola in the U.S. DHEC is notified by the CDC of all travelers returning to South Carolina from Ebola affected countries.
- Ebola can be spread between people **only after** symptoms begin. Ebola is more easily spread by people who are severely sick.
 - Early Ebola symptoms can include fever, headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach pain.
- Fever in people who traveled to Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone is much more likely to be caused by another disease such as malaria or typhoid than to be caused by Ebola. A doctor should identify the cause of the person's fever.

Recommendations for Students and Staff

1. Monitoring at Home

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is screening people arriving at U.S. airports from Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone for Ebola symptoms and/or exposure. In compliance with CDC recommendations, DHEC actively monitors the health status of returning travelers for 21 days.
- Healthy people who recently returned from Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone can attend school or child care or work while being monitored for symptoms by public health officials.
- ***Schools and child care centers do not need to conduct additional monitoring of students.*** Monitoring will be done by public health officials.
- If the child, student, or staff member develops fever or gets sick during the 21-day monitoring period, he or she should **not** come to school or child care. Instead, the staff member or child's parent should call their DHEC contact person right away. If emergency care is needed, DHEC or the person who traveled will tell the 911 operator about the symptoms and about the travel history.
- If after 21 days, the person has no symptoms, he or she is not at risk and does not need further follow up or monitoring.

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2. Watching for Illness at School or the Child Care Center

- If, within 21 days of returning from Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone, a **staff member** develops fever or other symptoms while at school or child care, the staff member must stay alone in a separate room until medical help arrives. The school principal, nurse, or center director must contact 911 and mention the recent travel. The principal, nurse, or director should also report the illness to the regional DHEC office.
- If, within 21 days of returning from Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone, a **student/child** develops fever or other symptoms while at school or child care, the student must stay in a separate room with supervision until medical help arrives. If a school nurse is available, the nurse should see the student right away, using precautions recommended by the CDC. The school principal, nurse, or center director must contact 911 and report the child's recent travel and the child's symptoms. A staff member, preferably the nurse, should wait with the child and calmly reassure the child until medical help arrives. The child's parent or guardian must also be contacted right away. The principal, nurse, or director should also report the illness to the regional DHEC office..
- If a **student** or **staff member** that recently traveled develops fever or other symptoms while at school or child care, and the school or child care provider cannot identify whether the person traveled to an affected area, the above steps should be the same.
- If a room at school or the child care center is contaminated with body fluids (such as vomit) from a sick staff member, student or child that was isolated for the reasons described above, the room should be closed to others. After DHEC has evaluated the situation, we will give the school or child care center further guidance about cleaning and/or reopening the room.

Anyone who gets sick more than 21 days after returning from Guinea, Liberia, or Sierra Leone DOES NOT need to be checked for Ebola and IS NOT at risk for Ebola.

Resources for More Information

Send your medical questions to DHEC:

- Email: ebola@dhec.sc.gov
- For medical questions about students or staff members, call the Epidemiology Program in your region (see phone numbers on the List of Reportable Conditions: <http://www.scdhec.gov/Library/CR-009025.pdf>)

General information for parents and staff about Ebola is available from:

- Resources for Parents, Schools and Pediatric Healthcare Professionals
 - <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/children/index.html>
- The DHEC Care Line (1-800-868-0404)
- The DHEC website:
<http://www.scdhec.gov/Health/FHPP/HealthAlertsNotifications/ebola/>
- The Health Preparedness Network Website:
<http://www.scdhec.gov/Health/FHPP/HealthAlertsNotifications/ebola/healthPreparednessNetwork/>

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- The CDC's Ebola website: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/>

Information in this document is adapted from materials prepared by the New York City Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Please contact DHEC with your questions.