



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **CDC Issues Ebola Monitoring Changes**

### **Information tracked at Major Airports to be shared with State, Local Health Departments**

**GRAND RAPIDS** – The Kent County Health Department (KCHD) continues to work with local partners and state and federal agencies to stay on top of the Ebola outbreak. Ebola is a rare, serious viral infection. It is not airborne or waterborne. A person infected with Ebola is not contagious until symptoms appear, which can take up to 21 days. The virus only spreads by direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of a person who has symptoms. Although the initial signs and symptoms of Ebola are flu-like in nature (i.e. fever, headache, muscle pain), health care workers and the family and friends who provide care for a person sick with Ebola are at highest risk for infection and the general public should not be concerned about Ebola if they develop flu-like symptoms. Risk factors for Ebola have not changed and include recent travel history to Sierra Leone, Guinea or Liberia or direct contact with someone who is sick with or died from Ebola.

Last week, the Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) was reactivated. MMRS is a program that supports the integration of emergency management, health, and medical systems into a coordinated response to mass casualty incidents caused by any hazard. MMRS is operating to ensure a coordinated response between public health, first responders, law enforcement, hospitals, and community leaders. KCHD continues to be in contact with our partners in MMRS on a regular basis as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) protocols and guidance continue to evolve.

This week, the CDC started a program to actively monitor all individuals who arrive in the United States after travel to Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone. All air travelers with this travel history are now being routed through five major airports (Atlanta, Dulles, Newark, JFK and O'Hare) where screening for Ebola symptoms and risk factors will take place. This information is entered into a national system and is then provided to state health departments for distribution to local health departments, who are responsible for monitoring the health of these travelers. "Increased surveillance and monitoring has been critical in recent weeks and will continue to be critical as long as there are cases of Ebola in the world," said Adam London, Kent County Health Officer. "Contact tracing and monitoring has been extremely successful in Senegal and Nigeria, where Ebola outbreaks were contained and now, the countries are Ebola-free. We have confidence in the systems and protocols that are in place, and Kent County is fully prepared to monitor anyone with a travel history to an Ebola outbreak region."

As a result of the CDC airport monitoring system, the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) notified Kent County of a traveler who visited a country where an Ebola outbreak has been declared. The individual did not provide care for or have contact with anyone who has Ebola, and has very low risk for Ebola infection by CDC standards. The person is not exhibiting any signs of illness. KCHD staff will contact the

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person twice a day over the 21 day surveillance period to monitor for symptoms and report their measured body temperature, as recommended by the MDCH and CDC. (No further information regarding the traveler will be made public.)

“The Kent County Health Department is sharing this information to remain open and transparent, and most importantly, to recognize that this is the first notification of a traveler, and it probably won’t be the last,” said London. “The most important take-away from this is that this is not an imminent health threat, and this individual is at very low risk for illness. We want the general public to remain informed, and trust in our capabilities.”

It is important to note that the Ebola virus does not show up in a blood test until the person is showing symptoms, and there are only 12 labs in the U.S. that can test for Ebola. Therefore, the CDC has very pointed, specific guidance about the testing process, and must approve any testing. Results can take 24 to 48 hours to confirm.

KCHD will provide updates as necessary at [www.accesskent.com/Health/ebola](http://www.accesskent.com/Health/ebola).

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