Ebola Information for Leadership of Volunteers Working with West African Communities in the United States

Volunteers are concerned about being exposed to Ebola when working with West African communities in the United States.

Volunteers are at very low risk of being exposed to Ebola when working with West African (Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone) communities in the United States.

The risk of being exposed to Ebola in the United States is very low, even when working with West African communities.

On September 30, CDC confirmed the first case of Ebola to be diagnosed in the United States in a person who had traveled from Liberia to Dallas, Texas. Two healthcare workers who cared for the first case (index patient) have contracted Ebola, and CDC is working with Texas state, local, and hospital health authorities to investigate how this occurred.

Get the Facts on Ebola:

www.cdc.gov/ebola

West Africans in the United States may face stigma because the current Ebola outbreak is associated with a region of the world. Stigma involves stereotyping and discriminating against an identifiable group of people, a place, or a nation.

What your organization and volunteers can do to counter stigma:

- Raise awareness of the potential problem.
- Learn the FACTS about Ebola and then share accurate information about how the virus spreads.
- Explain that Ebola is caused by a virus, not a person.
- Speak out against negative behaviors, including negative social media statements about groups of people, or exclusion of people who pose no risk from regular activities.
- Share the need for social support for people who have returned from the region or are worried about friends or relatives in the affected region.

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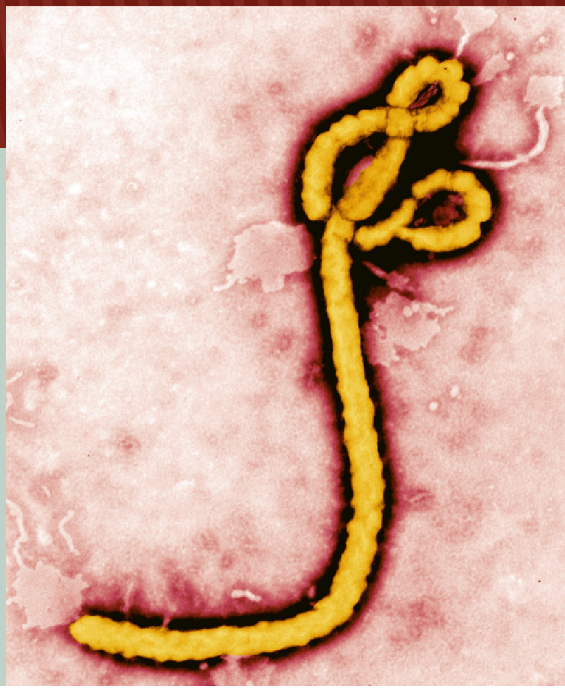
What to tell your volunteers about Ebola



People of West African (Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea) descent are not at more risk than other Americans if they have not recently traveled to the region.

- Remember, ethnic or racial backgrounds have nothing to do with getting infected with the Ebola virus.
- Viruses like Ebola can't target a particular population.

A person who does not have Ebola symptoms cannot spread the disease.

Ebola can only be spread by direct contact with blood or body fluids of a person who is sick with Ebola or with objects like needles that have been contaminated with the virus.

People who have recently returned from West Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea) and have no symptoms of Ebola do not put others at risk.

- Countries in West Africa are screening at airports to help ensure that people sick with Ebola do not get on planes.
- CDC is implementing enhanced entry screening at five U.S. airports that receive over 94% of travelers from Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.
- CDC recommends that all travelers who have been to Sierra Leone, Liberia, or Guinea monitor their health for 21 days after returning from these countries and seek medical attention if they develop symptoms of Ebola during this period.
- Unless travelers were exposed to Ebola on their trip, there is no public health reason to take additional precautions.
- Even if travelers were exposed, they cannot spread the disease unless they have symptoms.

You don't need to take any additional special precautions or wear any personal protection while volunteering for West African communities in the United States.

- Follow your normal volunteer procedures.
- If you don't normally wear personal protection equipment (gloves, mask) when volunteering, you don't need to take any special precautions.
- Follow your normal "stay healthy" routine.
  - Wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
  - Do NOT handle items that may have come in contact a person's blood or body fluids.

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If you come across someone who is from or has just returned from West Africa (Sierra Leone, Liberia, or Guinea) and is sick, immediately contact your volunteer organization. If appropriate, urge them to seek medical care. If there is any chance that someone has been exposed to Ebola and is sick, they should immediately call 9-1-1. Tell the operator about the possible Ebola exposure.