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Ebola-Affected Countries: Change in Monitoring of Liberian Travelers Talking Points for State and Local Health Departments in California 6-16-2015 (FINAL)

General Information

- The 2014 Ebola epidemic is the largest in history, affecting areas in West Africa
 - Current list of Ebola-affected countries: Guinea and Sierra Leone
- Liberia declared free from Ebola virus transmission by the World Health Organization on May 9, 2015.
- In the US, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has not declared Liberia Ebola free, but classifies Liberia as a country with former widespread transmission and current, established control measures.
 - As the situation in Liberia continues to improve, CDC and the United States government (USG) are reviewing Liberia's designation as an Ebola-affected country subject to enhanced visa and U.S. port-of-entry screening.
- Nationally, from October 2014 to May 2015, over 17,000 travelers have been monitored, only one in October 2014 was diagnosed with Ebola.
- In California, from October 2014 to June 14, 2015, 759 travelers have been monitored and **Zero diagnosed** with Ebola. California monitors approximately 60-70 travelers/week in 39 of the 61 California Local Health Departments.
- To date, approximately 50% of travelers from Ebola-affected countries arriving in California have been from Liberia.
- Since October, persons from Ebola-affected countries have been monitored daily by the Local Health Departments in California, reporting their temperatures and any symptoms of illness.
 - If any traveler developed symptoms, they were evaluated for Ebola.
 - To date, **zero** of the travelers to California have been diagnosed with Ebola.
- The CDC Travel Website states that Liberia is at Health Alert Level 2: Practice Enhanced Precautions.
 - CDC is no longer recommending that US residents avoid nonessential travel to Liberia.
 - However, CDC recommends that US residents practice enhanced precautions when traveling to Liberia.
 - Although the risk to travelers is extremely low, there is the possibility of reintroduction of Ebola into the country.

- Travelers should follow CDC's advice for avoiding contact with blood and body fluids.
- Travelers should also be aware that getting medical care in Liberia may be difficult because the health infrastructure has been severely strained by the Ebola outbreak.
- Certain travelers, such as senior citizens, people with underlying illnesses, and people with weakened immune systems, should consider postponing travel to Liberia.

Change in Monitoring of Travelers from Liberia

Note: this is a change in monitoring for travelers from Liberia ONLY. This does not apply to those persons traveling from Guinea and Sierra Leone, or those persons traveling from Liberia that recently visited Guinea and/or Sierra Leone before coming to the U.S.

- Effective June 17, 2015 at 12:01 AM EST, the CDC changed its monitoring procedure for Liberian travelers.
 - Instead of daily monitoring, each Liberian traveler will be instructed to **watch your health**.
 - Liberian travelers are instructed to watch their health for possible symptoms of illness
 - E.g., feeling feverish, diarrhea, vomiting, weakness, fatigue, stomach pain, muscle pain, or unexplained bleeding or bruising.
 - Liberian travelers arriving in the US will continue to be screened in the 5 east coast airports they must pass through to enter the US
 - Liberian travelers will be given a "Check and Report Ebola" (CARE) kit instructing them about watching their health and providing a number to call if they develop any symptoms.
 - The number provided for California is 916-845-8911 – this is the Governor's Office of Emergency Services State Warning Center
 - The number provided for LA County is 213-989-7140 – the public health department
- This is a change in the monitoring for travelers from **Liberia ONLY**. All travelers from Sierra Leone and Guinea will continue to be monitored daily by California's Local Health Departments.

What Difference Does the Change from Active Monitoring by Local Health Departments to "watch their health" for Liberian Travelers Make?

- Although the risk of Ebola for Liberian travelers is **extremely low**, the traveler must still pay attention to their health for 21 days after their arrival to the United States.
 - Travelers who develop any illness or symptoms will be assessed by their Local Health Department and referred to healthcare as appropriate.

- The change in monitoring of Liberian travelers from daily active monitoring by Local Health Departments to self-observation will result in no restrictions of movement and daily activities for the traveler from Liberia. They will no longer have to report daily or twice daily to the local health department.
- If the Liberian traveler has any questions, they may contact the California and/or Los Angeles County numbers as above and/or their local health department.

Information for Healthcare Providers and Emergency Medical Services

- CDC and CDPH recommends that healthcare providers:
 - Should conduct thorough histories that include:
 - Health status;
 - Travel; and
 - Exposures.
 - Should assess travel history for any possible infectious disease exposures (e.g., MERS-CoV, malaria) and not focused only on Ebola-affected countries.
 - Should use clinical judgement to evaluate patients based on those histories and their symptoms.
 - Should implement infection control measures as appropriate to travel history and clinical presentation.
 - Follow standard protocols for patient care (e.g., medical equipment and procedures, infection control, laboratory testing)
 - If the patient reports travel from Liberia and no travel into Guinea and Sierra Leone – no Ebola-specific precautions are required.
 - Should continue to report suspect cases of any potential high risk infectious disease to the Local Health Department.
- Travelers from Liberia will be provided an informational document, “Check and Report Ebola (CARE) with instructions to watch your health. This document:
 - Instructs the traveler to watch your health for 21 days
 - Provides symptoms to watch for and report
 - Contains a “CARE Traveler Information” card to keep with them and to present the card if seeking medical care.
 - Instructs them to show the card and tell the healthcare provider that they recently arrived from a country that previously had an Ebola outbreak.
 - Instructs the healthcare provider to
 - Conduct a travel, Ebola Exposure, and health history
 - Isolate ONLY IF history indicates a significant risk of Ebola exposure
 - Implement standard, contact, and droplet precautions as appropriate
 - Investigate other potential causes of patient’s symptoms

Will anyone know if a Liberian traveler comes to California?

- Yes. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) will be notified by the CDC of any Liberian travelers to the state **for informational purposes only.**
 - Local health departments will also be notified **for informational purposes only.**
 - No regular or daily monitoring of Liberian travelers will be done by the local health department, unless deemed necessary in the clinical judgement of the local health department.
 - Local Health Departments will contact any Liberian traveler who becomes symptomatic and may refer them to the appropriate healthcare provider.

Informational Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/>
- California Department of Public Health: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov> and click on the CDPH Ebola Virus Information link.
 - Direct link to the CDPH Ebola website:
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cder/Pages/Ebola.aspx>
- CDC Travel Website: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>