



November 26, 2014

Dear Rhode Island Educator:

The Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have been asked to provide guidance to schools with teachers, staff, or students who have family members who have recently traveled to Ebola-affected countries or who themselves may have recently traveled to Ebola-affected countries. We understand that concerned parents may fear for the safety of their children. However, it is important to understand the risk of disease transmission and not impose unnecessary restrictions on persons who do not present a health risk.

Current medical and scientific evidence indicate that a person infected with Ebola virus disease (Ebola) is not contagious unless they develop signs or symptoms of illness, such as fever (including low-grade), headache, weakness, muscle pain, vomiting, loss of appetite, fatigue, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or bleeding. In other words, a person who is not showing any signs or symptoms cannot infect others, not even close contacts, such as children, spouses, other household members, or classmates. Furthermore, asymptomatic close contacts pose no risk of Ebola transmission to others. For this reason, we recommend that you not exclude from your schools the household or family members of asymptomatic travelers returning from Ebola-affected countries or any asymptomatic teachers, staff, or students who have recently traveled to Ebola-affected countries. We further recommend that you not require household members or asymptomatic travelers to obtain "clearance letters" from a physician or health authority before allowing them to attend classes or come to work.

Be assured that every person returning to Rhode Island from the Ebola-affected countries in West Africa is being screened for the risk of Ebola on entry to the United States by trained personnel. HEALTH is monitoring all travelers from affected areas on a daily basis for 21 days, until the incubation period expires, and is prepared to take immediate action if any person being monitored develops signs or symptoms of Ebola. The details for the three categories of monitoring can be found on HEALTH's website at <http://health.ri.gov/diseases/ebola/?parm=139>.

Public Health authorities stand ready to assist you in the protection of your students, faculty, and administration. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Ebola health information line at 401-222-8022. For current information about the disease and the countries affected by this outbreak, please visit <http://health.ri.gov/diseases/ebola/?parm=139>.

Thank You,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Fine".

Michael Fine, MD
Director, Rhode Island
Department of Health

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Thomas R. Frieden".

Thomas R. Frieden, MD, MPH
Director, CDC, and
Administrator, ATSDR

Cc: Deborah A. Gist, PhD, Commissioner, Rhode Island Department of Education