



## Ford County Public Health Department

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For Immediate Release

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### Ford County Public Health Department Encourages Ford County Residents to Stay Informed and Practice Simple Daily Disease Preventive Measures.

Ford County Public Health Department (FCPHD) — is reaching out to the public and urging them to stay informed when it comes to the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) and to stay informed regarding all infectious diseases.

Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) is participating in conference calls with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to keep updated on any new developments. IDPH and the CDC are providing local health departments with some initial guidance documents. IDPH is also issuing press releases and holding media briefings to update the public on what is taking place. IDPH is making the decision whether the patient needs labs processed and if they do IDPH is handling those labs. IDPH is working in conjunction with the CDC. IDPH laboratory has Ebola testing supplies and will be ready to accept CDC approved specimens for testing, should the need arise. IDPH has also established a 24/7 hotline for Illinois citizens to answer questions. That number is 1-800-889-3931.

Although there are no suspect or confirmed cases of Ebola in Illinois or the surrounding states, having preliminary plans in place and making sure everyone is informed with accurate information is an important first step should a case of Ebola be confirmed. FCPHD, Gibson Area Hospital and ambulance service, and Ford County Office of Emergency Management are conducting weekly meetings to work closely together to prepare disaster planning and response. A public health threat would be handled in a coordinated response just like other emergency responses that might occur. There are procedures in place at the Ford County Public Health Department for handling a situation should someone come to the hospital with signs of EVD. The hospital would contact FCPHD who would then contact IDPH.

There is a greater risk of contracting seasonal flu currently than contracting Ebola and everyone should remember that complications from the flu in past years has claimed more lives annually. The flu is an upper respiratory disease that is airborne. There are only specific ways Ebola is transmitted. It is NOT spread through the air, water or food. Ebola has been detected in blood, saliva, mucus, vomit, feces, sweat, tears, breast milk, urine and semen. Someone would have to come into contact with one of these bodily fluids of an infected individual through a break in the skin or a mucus membrane to be exposed to the disease. Only a person who is experiencing symptoms of the disease can transmit the virus. Symptoms of Ebola include: fever, headache, joint and muscle pain, diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, lack of appetite and abnormal bleeding. Since these are also symptoms of other diseases, one major factor that would trigger whether or not someone may potentially be infected with the Ebola virus would be if they had traveled to one of the three West African countries where the outbreak is occurring-Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea or having direct contact with an individual exposed to EVD.

In the event there is a case of EVD nearby local health departments do have the authority to enforce isolation and quarantine but would prefer people to voluntarily commit to isolation and quarantine procedures.

Airports are collecting information on passengers and sending the information to local health departments in the areas the passengers are going.

As local healthcare and public health agencies and others train, practice and prepare, area residents should focus on accurate information from reliable sources and practicing simple daily disease preventive measures like the **three Cs**: **Clean** your hands thoroughly and frequently, **Cover** your coughs/sneezes, **Contain** your illness by staying home when you are sick. Getting an annual flu shot is also an important preventative measure in personal and community health. If an individual has traveled to West Africa and/or had exposure to an infected individual and have Ebola symptoms, call your medical provider to discuss next steps first.

Collaborative, community planning with a focus on the distribution of factual information helps agencies and residents stay informed and allows county officials and residents to better plan and prepare in the event that a local Ebola case is confirmed. The health department will continue to update local officials and community planning partners as information is shared by the Illinois Department of Public Health. The state health department has activated an Ebola hotline (800-889-3931) and website ([www.ebola.illinois.gov](http://www.ebola.illinois.gov)) that provides information and answers questions about Ebola. The CDC also has a website with Ebola information at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola>. Look for updates on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ford-County-Public-Health-Department/1463556340578922?ref=hl>.

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