

## **Ebola Guidance for Principals**

*(Updated 11/24/2014)*

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) are working together to provide you with the most up-to-date Ebola guidance to share with parents and staff. There have been **no cases** of Ebola in children in the United States, and the risk of your students and staff being exposed to Ebola is **extremely low**.

### Important facts:

- Ebola is spread only by **direct personal contact** with the body fluids (such as blood, urine, saliva, sweat, feces, vomit, and semen) of a person who is sick with Ebola virus disease (EVD). Symptoms may include headache, muscle pain, weakness, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain or unexplained bleeding. However, any of these symptoms, even in people who traveled to the affected areas, are most likely due to more common infectious illnesses, like the flu.
- You cannot be infected simply by being near someone who has Ebola. Ebola is not airborne. Ebola is not circulating in NYC. Widespread transmission of Ebola virus disease is occurring in the West African countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Currently, there also is limited transmission in Mali (Bamako, Kayes and Kouremale are considered affected areas).
- All returning travelers from Ebola-affected countries are routed through five US airports where they are screened and reported to the DOHMH, which monitors them for 21 days.
- If, within 21 days of returning from an area affected by the outbreak, a student or staff member has a fever or another early symptom of Ebola while not on school premises, he or she should not come to school (per DOHMH instructions) and should call 911 immediately, identifying his or her symptoms and travel history. Health care will be provided throughout New York City with no questions asked about immigration status and regardless of ability to pay.
- If it has been more than 21 days since a student or staff member traveled to Liberia, Guinea, Sierra Leone or Mali, or had contact with someone sick with Ebola, he or she is not at risk.
- If someone has recovered from Ebola, he or she is no longer contagious and cannot spread Ebola.

New York City is collaborating closely with local, state and federal partners to protect New Yorkers. **The risk of exposure to Ebola to your staff and students is extremely low. You can help alleviate concerns that parents, students and staff might have by providing accurate information to your school's community.**

### Key messages to the school community:

- Reassure staff, parents and students that school nurses and all medical providers in New York have been trained to recognize signs and symptoms of Ebola, be familiar with risk factors and take immediate steps to isolate people who may be infected.

- Direct staff, parents and students to [nyc.gov/ebola](http://nyc.gov/ebola) or 311 for accurate information about Ebola. Additional information is also posted on the DOE's website at [schools.nyc.gov](http://schools.nyc.gov).
- Encourage your staff members to be vigilant about how this issue may be affecting individual students. Address any discriminatory statements made against any members of the school community. As you do so, remind your staff members about Respect for All, the DOE's policy for creating a safe and inclusive school environment for all students. Respect for All resources for school staff can be found at [schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/RespectforAll/](http://schools.nyc.gov/RulesPolicies/RespectforAll/).
- For more information on how to speak to children about Ebola, direct parents to the CDC website ([www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/children](http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/children)), or AAPs Healthy Children Website (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/infections/Pages/Ebola.aspx>)
- Reiterate that there are no enrollment restrictions. New students must be registered and enrolled when they arrive at their school or enrollment center. As set forth in Chancellor's Regulation A-101, no student may be denied enrollment based on race, color, creed, national origin, gender, gender identity, pregnancy, immigration/citizenship status, disability, sexual orientation, religion or ethnicity.

The DOHMH and DOE have developed the following guidance specifically for schools:

**Preparing your school in advance:**

1. If your school does not have a nurse or school-based health clinic, identify a principal's designee. The designee is a member of the Building Response Team (BRT) who will handle some of the logistics as described below.
2. You or your designee must select a room to accommodate any individual who needs to be isolated while waiting for EMS to arrive. This room does not have to be a vacant room but should be one that can quickly be vacated for isolation purposes. When a school nurse is present, the medical room should be used to accommodate an ill student. The principal and nurse should have a contingency plan in place for students who have medications and or scheduled treatments in the medical room.
3. Ensure that contact information for your parents, students and staff is updated.
4. Maintain communication with all staff who will be involved in the response, and ensure that they are apprised of your school's preparation plans, including the School Nurse and/or School Based Health Center (SBHC) Provider.
5. Always treat any student or staff member who is sick with respect, and make him or her as comfortable as possible.

**Guidance for schools about a student or staff member showing signs or symptoms of Ebola in a school building:**

- A. If *a student* suspected of having Ebola develops fever or Ebola-compatible symptoms while at school:
  1. Isolate the student and have him or her assessed immediately by the school nurse or SBHC provider. Have a staff member supervise the student at all times.

2. If the student presents to the medical room:
    - i. Clear the medical room of all remaining students
    - ii. Keep the door closed at all times
  3. If the situation is an emergency (for example, if the student is having trouble breathing), call 911, as per normal protocol.
  4. If the situation is not an emergency, but Ebola is suspected, have the school nurse, SBHC provider or your designee reach out to the main office to check for absenteeism. If the student has had more than three consecutive days of absence, have the staff member contact the parent.
  5. If the parent confirms that the student has traveled to one of the affected countries, contact DOHMH (at 347-396-7972).
  6. If travel cannot be confirmed by the parent, contact DOHMH (at 347-396-7972) about the student's recent travel history (or absences if travel history is not available).
  7. **If DOHMH makes the determination that the student in question does not appear to be at risk for Ebola**, have the school nurse or SBHC provider follow established protocols to manage the illness and call custodial staff to clean up any body fluids.
  8. **If DOHMH determines that the student is at risk for Ebola**, DOHMH will notify 911 and arrange the response with EMS and the school. [Note: This is an update from the guidance of the previous guidance materials.]
    - i. If DOHMH notifies 911, have the nurse and/or principal's designee supervise the ill student until EMS arrives.
    - ii. Call the Emergency Information Center (EIC) and your superintendent and give updates on the situation.
    - iii. Await any further guidance from DOE and DOHMH.
    - iv. Activate your Building Response Team (BRT) and await next steps from the first responders.
- B. If a **staff member** develops fever or another symptom of Ebola while at school:
1. Isolate the staff member within the school. If the situation is an emergency, call 911, as per normal protocol.
  2. If the situation is not an emergency, but Ebola is suspected based on travel history, you or your designee must contact the DOHMH (at 1-866-692-3641) about the staff member's symptoms as well as travel within the past 21 days, if known.
  3. **If DOHMH determines that the individual is at risk for Ebola**, DOHMH will notify 911. DOHMH will inform the school that 911 is being called. [Note: This is an update from the previous guidance materials.]
    - i. If DOHMH notifies 911, call the Emergency Information Center (EIC) and your superintendent, and give updates on the situation.
    - ii. Await any further guidance from DOE and DOHMH.
    - iii. Activate your school's Building Response Team (BRT), and await next steps from the first responders.
  4. **If DOHMH determines that the staff member in question does not appear to be at risk for Ebola**, follow normal protocols to manage the illness and call custodial staff to clean up any body fluids.

- C. If a **student** or **staff member** presents with symptoms compatible with Ebola infection while in school after returning from abroad, and the school is **unable to identify where the individual traveled**, the school must treat the individual as a suspected case, follow the steps outlined above, and contact DOHMH for guidance. If the situation is an emergency, call 911 as per established protocol.
- D. If an ill **student** or **staff member with a confirmed or questionable travel history** has **released body fluids** such as vomit, diarrhea, etc. in a classroom or shared space:
1. Close these areas and relocate other students or staff from that area until DOHMH has completed its investigation.
  2. Follow the steps as outlined above.
  3. Do not allow school staff to clean up the site until DOHMH determines whether the student is at risk for Ebola infection and what level of cleaning is necessary. DOHMH is responsible for managing the cleanup process for confirmed cases of Ebola.
  4. If DOHMH determines that the individual in question does not have Ebola, follow normal protocols to clean up any body fluids. Guidance for custodians can be found on [nyc.gov/ebola](http://nyc.gov/ebola) under “Workplace Resources”.
  5. In the event that a student or staff member who became ill in the school setting is confirmed to have Ebola, DOE and DOHMH will work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to issue guidance to school leaders and the school community about steps to be taken.

As community leaders, your staff and students look to you in times of concern. By teaching compassion for those affected by the Ebola epidemic, and by correcting rumors with facts, you can help your community conquer divisive fear and misinformation. Thank you for your continued leadership. If you have questions, please contact the Office of School Health at 347-396-4720.