



**CITY OF PEABODY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**

24 Lowell Street
Peabody, Massachusetts 01960
(978) 538-5926
Fax: (978) 538-5990

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SHARON CAMERON
DIRECTOR

October 20, 2014

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The Peabody Health Department and Peabody Public Schools are closely monitoring reports of Ebola Virus Disease, and the guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Although the risk of Ebola in the United States is extremely low, we want to provide you with information to help you understand the risks and the precautions that are in place to help protect you and your family.

- Ebola is not spread by simply being in the same room with someone who is infected with the virus. Unlike diseases like flu, which are usually spread through the air, Ebola transmission requires direct contact with an infected person's bodily fluids (such as blood, vomit, saliva, urine or feces), or from exposure to contaminated objects such as needles or soiled bedding.
- You cannot get Ebola through the air, through water, or through food.
- People sick with Ebola are not contagious until they begin to show symptoms. A person who is sick with fever from Ebola is unlikely to feel well enough to go out and interact with others.
- Symptoms of Ebola can include fever (greater than 101.5° F); severe headache; muscle pain; weakness; diarrhea; vomiting; abdominal pain; and unexplained hemorrhage.

Travelers entering the US from West African countries where Ebola is epidemic are screened for symptoms at the major airports. Any individuals suspected to be ill with Ebola are reported to state and local health authorities. Health authorities follow protocols which allow them to isolate and quarantine sick individuals and their contacts (other people who are not sick, but have been in contact with a sick individual) – meaning that they can be restricted to their homes or other locations so that they can't infect other people. Public health nurses in the Peabody schools will begin using a risk assessment form developed by MDPH to screen any students or staff returning to school from an affected area or with symptoms consistent with Ebola. Peabody school custodial staff will be enhancing cleaning procedures within the school environment.

Please remember that coming into casual contact with people who do not have symptoms of Ebola poses no risk, even if they have recently traveled to affected countries in Africa.

For more information about Ebola, please visit the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola>, the MDPH website at www.mass.gov/dph/ebola, the Peabody Health Department website at www.peabody-ma.gov, the Peabody Public Schools website at www.peabody.k12.ma.us, or contact the Peabody Health Department at 978-538-5926.

We encourage everyone to get a flu shot to help stay healthy this season. We would also like to remind you about the importance of routine handwashing, especially before meals. Handwashing is one of the simplest and most effective ways to protect yourself from illness caused by viruses and bacteria.

We will continue to provide links to the most current information about Ebola through our websites, but please be in touch if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Sharon Cameron
Director of Health and Human Services
City of Peabody

Joseph Mastrocola
Superintendent
Peabody Public Schools