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Agency of Human Services

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To all Vermont health care providers and facilities:

The Ebola outbreak in West Africa continues to present tremendous hardships for the people in the affected countries and for the health care and other responders who are there to help. Until disease transmission in West Africa is stopped, there will continue to be a low risk of an Ebola case in Vermont.

On September 5, the Health Department and Fletcher Allen Health Care held a call with Vermont hospitals to discuss Ebola preparedness. While every Vermont hospital must be prepared to triage and isolate suspected cases, implement the appropriate infection control precautions, and consult with the Health Department to determine whether Ebola testing is indicated, Fletcher Allen has stated its willingness to accept Ebola patients from any other Vermont hospital. There are still many unanswered questions, such as whether mildly ill suspect cases should be transferred and whether rule-out testing for other possible infectious causes should be performed prior to transfer. We're working to get answers to as many of those questions as we can. We're also ensuring the Health Department is prepared to do contact tracing and monitoring should that be necessary.

In addition, the Health Department is providing guidance to EMS and will present updates on Ebola in the coming weeks at meetings of the Vermont Infection Control Professionals Association, the Vermont Medical Society, and the Vermont Chapters of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians.

The Health Department is planning another call for hospitals on Friday, October 24 at noon. Call-in information will be 1-877-273-4202, room #8001806. In addition, we will be providing a tabletop exercise that hospitals and emergency departments can use to help ensure they are prepared. If you have specific issues that you hope we can address in the call or the exercise scenario, please send them to VTHPP@state.vt.us. Please note, this email address is only for this purpose and not for epidemiology or emergency inquiries.

Please share this information widely with your colleagues and within your institutions.

Sincerely,

Patsy Kelso, PhD
State Epidemiologist for Infectious Disease