



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

201 W. Preston Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Martin O'Malley, Governor – Anthony G. Brown, Lt. Governor – Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary

MEMORANDUM

To: Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Secretary
Laura Herrera, M.D., MPH, Deputy Secretary for Public Health

From: Christopher Garrett, Director of Communications

Date: October 31, 2014

Re: Communications Policies in Relation to Prospective Ebola Patients

Maryland expects to be actively monitoring several hundred recent travelers from Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea, nations currently fighting an outbreak of Ebola infection. It is expected that some of these individuals may develop symptoms that should be evaluated in order to rule out Ebola infection.

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) will work with the local health department, the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS), and the hospital to support safe transport to the nearest available Emergency Department for prompt evaluation. DHMH will run its lab 24/7 for testing if needed.

If experience is a guide, the news media will ask questions about potential cases. In order to protect patient privacy and avoid confusion during the evaluation period, I propose the following communications plan:

1. DHMH will be the lead in coordinating communications with the local health departments involved, MIEMSS and the hospital.
2. DHMH will issue this statement: “Maryland is actively monitoring more than 100 travelers from affected nations in West Africa. It is expected that some will develop symptoms that should be evaluated in order to rule out Ebola infection. In the interest of privacy, we will not be discussing the details of individual cases during the evaluation period. Should a patient test positive for Ebola infection, we will provide information to the public in coordination with the hospital and local health department.”
3. Hospitals and local health departments should not publicly comment on a patient under evaluation or hold their own press conferences.

Should a patient be found positive for Ebola, DHMH will coordinate with local and state officials and hospital leadership to communicate with the news media and the public.