

October 22, 2014

Dear Provider,

I am writing to update you on the current outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) and to ask for your cooperation in protecting the health and safety of State residents. This communication, which reflects our current understanding, replaces the previous communication you may have received from OASAS. In addition, guidance from federal authorities changes quickly as more knowledge is gained about the situation. Therefore we recommend that you check the following websites daily to remain current. For your individual site we recommend staying current and in compliance with NYS DOH guidance.

Below are the links to CDC, NYS DOH and NYC DOHMH where guidance is updated. Please check these sites daily.

<http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/ebola/>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/prevention>

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/diseases/ebola.shtml>

The 2014 Ebola epidemic is the largest in history, affecting multiple countries in West Africa. There were a small number of cases reported in Nigeria and a single case reported in Senegal; however, these cases are considered to be contained, with no further spread in these countries. Despite the efforts of the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and multiple volunteer organizations, the upward trend has continued in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Additionally, one imported case from Liberia and two associated, locally acquired cases in healthcare workers have been reported in Texas. As such, the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) requests that all healthcare providers in ambulatory/outpatient settings facilitate rapid identification of potential EVD cases as follows:

- 1. Collect a travel history in all patients.** Asking about travel is particularly important to rapidly recognize any potential communicable disease associated with an overseas outbreak, including EVD. Travel history should be asked of all patients who present at reception in primary or urgent care settings. Signage asking patients to provide travel history should also be prominently posted¹. Establishing processes to routinely and immediately ask any ill patient about recent travel is critical to protecting health and safety.
- 2. Immediately isolate in a private room** and use standard, contact and droplet precautions to the maximum extent possible for any patient that meets the following:
 - Clinical criteria which includes fever and additional symptoms such as severe headache, muscle pain, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, or unexplained hemorrhage; **AND**
 - Epidemiologic risk factors within the past 21 days before the onset of symptoms, such as contact with blood or other body fluids or human remains of a patient known to have or suspected to have EVD; residence in—or travel to—an area where EVD transmission is active²; or direct handling of bats or non-human primates from disease-endemic areas.

¹ International Travelers Posters are available in multiple languages at <http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/ebola/>

² <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/outbreaks/2014-west-africa/distribution-map.html>

- 3. Immediately call your Local Health Department (LHD).** LHD contact information is available at <http://goo.gl/wfRgjb> and the New York City Health Department can be reached at 1-866-692-3641. Providers who are unable to reach their LHD can contact NYSDOH's Bureau of Communicable Disease Control at 518-473-4439 during business hours or the NYSDOH Public Health Duty Officer at 1-866-881-2809 evenings, weekends and holidays.

Providers should be prepared to discuss clinical information and travel history with epidemiologists from the health department. The LHD will help providers further assess risk exposure history and determine whether additional evaluation in the inpatient setting is appropriate. The LHD will also help facilitate transportation to help minimize potential exposures.

Additional information about EVD is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html> and detailed EVD checklists for ambulatory providers can be downloaded at <http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/pdf/healthcare-provider-checklist-for-ebola.pdf>.

I appreciate your partnership in protecting the health and safety of New York State residents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Morgan', written over a horizontal line.

Charles W. Morgan, MD, FASAM, FAAFP, DABAM
Acting Medical Director
NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Services