

# COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES for PRINCIPALS

10/2014

## ABOUT

*Principles for Principals offers key information and messages for principals to consider in communicating the basics and getting parents involved. It is written and published by the DoDEA Communications Office.*

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## EBOLA AWARENESS, PREPARATION, AND RESPONSE PLANNING IN DODEA

In recent weeks, reports on the Ebola virus outbreak have been dominating the news. Some information came from primary reliable sources and some from misunderstood or incorrectly interpreted information reported in the media. Our students will be talking about Ebola and our schools need to be ready with factual information about the virus to prevent anxiety and promote humanitarian compassion.

**THIS tip sheet will provide Principals with information, resources, and strategies in addressing this important concern in our schools. The health, safety, and welfare of our students and communities are always our top priority.**

## BACKGROUND

An outbreak of Ebola has been ongoing in West Africa since March 2014. Although the risk of additional cases or an outbreak in the United States is very low, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and its partners are taking precautions to prevent this from happening.

Ebola, previously known as Ebola hemorrhagic fever, is a rare and deadly disease caused by infection with one of the Ebola virus strains. Ebola can cause disease in humans and nonhuman



larger health issues taking a back seat to Ebola during the time of this outbreak.

It is critical for us to foster confidence among our employees, commands, and parents in our ability to work cooperatively and collaboratively with local commands to handle anything that may occur. Our employees need to be examples of calmness when responding to student or parent concerns.

## URGENCY AND IMPACT

The President and the Secretary of Defense have called upon the men and women of the U.S. Armed Forces and other government personnel to provide critical support as part of the international response to the Ebola outbreaks in West Africa. Accordingly, affected commands and installations have or will put measures in place prior to, during, and after deployment in order to protect our service members, families and communities. All deploying personnel will receive needed equipment, get the right training, and be closely monitored before, during, and after deployment.

These military missions and the high visibility of the Ebola crisis in the media can lead to great concern and anxiety among our employees and students. The safety of our people is one of our highest priorities. The Military Health System brings deep expertise in infectious disease prevention and treatment and the DoD is taking every precaution to ensure the health and welfare of all service members and their families.

There are no cases of Ebola in any of our schools or communities. However, prudence dictates that we plan for a variety of scenarios and be ready to respond should the need arise. Talking to children about Ebola and helping to separate fact from fiction is critical. They will ask questions in class and out teachers will need to have factual information to answer their questions.

## TALKING TO STUDENTS ABOUT EBOLA

The Ebola outbreak is being widely reported in the news media, parents, teachers, and others who work with children may need advice on how to talk with children about this serious issue in ways that allay their fears and worries.

Experts advise adults to acknowledge, listen and reassure children, permitting them to express their concerns and ask questions about the disease. Talking to children about Ebola can help to separate fact from fiction. Depending on the age of their students, teachers may use the Ebola crisis as a teaching opportunity. Discussion topics might include sharing with classes the facts about how the disease is spread, how misunderstanding and misinformation can be harmful, how all of us can help the countries most affected by the disease, and the heroism of health care workers who are caring for the sick.

You can find a number of teacher resources on our Ebola web page at <http://www.dodea.edu/StudentServices/Health/Ebola/index.cfm>.

**THERE ARE NO CASES OF EBOLA IN ANY OF OUR SCHOOLS OR COMMUNITIES. HOWEVER, PRUDENCE DICTATES THAT WE PLAN FOR A VARIETY OF SCENARIOS AND ARE READY TO RESPOND SHOULD THE NEED ARISE. TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT EBOLA AND HELPING TO SEPARATE FACT FROM FICTION IS CRITICAL. THEY WILL ASK QUESTIONS IN CLASS AND OUR TEACHERS WILL NEED TO HAVE FACTUAL INFORMATION TO ANSWER THEIR QUESTIONS.**

*THE EBOLA SITUATION IS RAPIDLY CHANGING FROM DAY TO DAY. DODEA, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MILITARY HEALTH COMMANDS, IS CLOSELY MONITORING DEVELOPMENTS AND IS PREPARED TO ADJUST CURRENT PRACTICES IF THE SCIENCE DICTATES THAT WE DO SO.*

## THREE IMPORTANT RESOURCES FOR PRINCIPALS

**The DoDEA School Health Services Guide** covers three areas: health education, health services, and the maintenance of a healthy school environment. It is a comprehensive program that promotes and maintains optimum health for all students. DoDEA Manual 2942.0, "School Health Services Guide".  
<http://www.dodea.edu/StudentServices/upload/DoDEA-School-Health-Services-Guide.pdf>

**DoDEA Regulation 4800.5, Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Program**, standardizes bloodborne pathogen exposure controls, policy, procedures, and responsibilities for the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA). This regulation (June 2013) conveys the Exposure Control Plan and communicates authorization for selective medical services support and authorizes and encourages coordination with host Service component medical service officials in support of joint Service component efforts to control exposure to bloodborne pathogens.

<http://www.dodea.edu/Offices/Regulations/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&pageid=273040>

**The DoDEA Crisis Management Guide** is a resource designed to assist school administrators and other personnel in understanding effective crisis management procedures and the role of the crisis management team. A major focus of the guide is on Incident Response Planning.

[http://www.dodea.edu/crisis/upload/DoDEA\\_Crisis\\_Manag\\_Guide\\_07.pdf](http://www.dodea.edu/crisis/upload/DoDEA_Crisis_Manag_Guide_07.pdf)

## AWARENESS, PREPAREDNESS, AND RESPONSE

### AWARENESS

- ✓ Establish a continuing relationship with the local military health facility/command for information, training, emergency response, and protocols.
- ✓ Provide factual information and updates consistent with local command information to employees, parents, and students about Ebola as information becomes available.
- ✓ Know which communities are affected by deployments in support of related humanitarian missions and coordinate school participation and support with the Family Support Director.
- ✓ Keep confidence high among our employees, commands, and parents in our ability to work cooperatively and collaboratively with local commands to handle anything that may occur.

### PREPAREDNESS

- ✓ Comprehensive preparedness must start with the principal and key staff -- fostering leadership, communication and collaboration within the school and community is vital.
- ✓ Define roles and responsibilities before a crisis occurs with for school level personnel. When responding

to a critical incident, administrators, school staff/faculty, students and others must know what to do.

- ✓ Work closely with our military commands and communities on practices, protocols, policies, and training.
- ✓ Use communication tools provided by the command, DoD, and CDC. Tailor communications to our DoDEA mission needs and ensure that student information is age appropriate.
- ✓ Have family support practices and networks with the command and local family support services in place in communities impacted by Ebola related deployments.
- ✓ Promote good hygiene and healthy practices such as hand washing as a matter of routine with our students and employees.
- ✓ Take every precaution to ensure the health and welfare of all students and employees, and their families while in school.

*THE MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM BRINGS DEEP EXPERTISE IN INFECTIOUS DISEASE AND HOW TO MEDICALLY PREPARE OUR PEOPLE FOR ALL CONTINGENCIES. IT IS A SYSTEM THAT ON A DAILY BASIS RAPIDLY IDENTIFIES/ ISOLATES PEOPLE SUSPECTED OF BEING SICK AND FINDS/CONTACTS PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN POTENTIALLY EXPOSED TO THE SICK PERSON.*

*UNIVERSAL PRECAUTION/BLOOD BORNE PATHOGENS PROCEDURES ARE IN PLACE IN EACH DODEA SCHOOL.*

## RESPONSE

- ✓ Monitor and appropriately respond to events.
- ✓ Keep calm.
- ✓ Implement established protocols or steps that are in your local plans.
- ✓ Notify and communicate with appropriate personnel and the school community in a timely and factual manner.

## KEY POINTS TO COMMUNICATE

- ✓ The Ebola situation is rapidly changing from day to day. DoDEA, in partnership with the military health commands, is closely monitoring developments and is prepared to adjust current practices if the science dictates that we do so.
- ✓ The Military Health System brings deep expertise in infectious disease and how to medically prepare our people for all contingencies. It is a system that on a daily basis rapidly identifies/isolates people suspected of being sick and finds/contacts people who have been potentially exposed to the sick person.
- ✓ Universal Precaution/Blood Borne Pathogens procedures are in place in each DoDEA school.
- ✓ There are no cases of Ebola in any of our schools or communities. Presently, there is no action that people who live in our communities need to take as a result of the Ebola cases identified in the United States.

- ✓ Prudence dictates that we plan for a variety of scenarios and are ready to respond should the need arise.
- ✓ Talking to children about Ebola and helping to separate fact from fiction is critical.
- ✓ The safety of our people is one of our highest priorities. DoD is taking every precaution to ensure the health and welfare of all service members, DoD civilians, and their families.

**THERE ARE NO CASES OF EBOLA IN ANY OF OUR SCHOOLS OR COMMUNITIES. PRESENTLY, THERE IS NO ACTION THAT PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN OUR COMMUNITIES NEED TO TAKE AS A RESULT OF THE EBOLA CASES IDENTIFIED IN THE UNITED STATES. PRUDENCE DICTATES THAT WE PLAN FOR A VARIETY OF SCENARIOS AND ARE READY TO RESPOND SHOULD THE NEED ARISE.**

## THREE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Three separate files are attached that will help you in working with school nurses/health aides and in providing tips for parents on how to help their children when speaking about Ebola.

- ✓ [School Nurses -- What They Need to Know and Do](#)
- ✓ [Practicing Universal Precautions](#)
- ✓ [How Parents Can Help Students/Children](#)

The DoDEA Ebola page has many more resources and factual information to assist you at <http://www.dodea.edu/StudentServices/Health/Ebola/index.cfm>.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional clarification, please contact your Area Student Support Services Instructional Systems Specialist:

- ✓ Europe: Mr. John Keating, [john.keating@eu.dodea.edu](mailto:john.keating@eu.dodea.edu)
- ✓ Pacific: Dr. Renee LaFata, [renee.lafata@pac.dodea](mailto:renee.lafata@pac.dodea)
- ✓ Americas: Dr. David Hermann, [david.hermann@am.dodea.edu](mailto:david.hermann@am.dodea.edu)
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# Ebola Awareness, Preparation, and Response Planning in DoDEA

## SCHOOL NURSES -- WHAT THEY NEED TO KNOW AND DO

- ✓ Get informed and share the clear-cut facts about Ebola with your faculty, students, and community to make sure they know the facts from myths about Ebola.
- ✓ Know and teach facts about Ebola.
- ✓ Practice the Universal Precaution/Blood Borne Pathogens procedures that are in place in each school and review them periodically with staff.
- ✓ Ensure that staff are provided with disposable gloves and instructed in proper use.
- ✓ Promote the importance of proper hand washing with soap and water. HAND WASHING is the first and most important step in preventing the spread of infectious diseases!
- ✓ Work closely with the local military treatment facility and follow their protocol on reportable infectious diseases.
- ✓ Do not diagnose
- ✓ Inquire about a history of travel to West Africa in the 21 days before illness onset for any student presenting with fever or other symptoms consistent with Ebola;
- ✓ Isolate students who report a travel history to an Ebola-affected country (currently Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea) and who are exhibiting Ebola symptoms in a private room with a private bathroom and implement standard, contact, and droplet precautions (gowns, facemask, eye protection, and gloves)
- ✓ Immediately notify the local installation MTF/clinic or state health department if the travel history, direct contact with known positive Ebola sick person is reported and the symptoms of possible Ebola are present.

The DoDEA Ebola page has many more resources and factual information to assist you at <http://www.dodea.edu/StudentServices/Health/Ebola/index.cfm>.

<http://www.dodea.edu/StudentServices/Health/Ebola/index.cfm>

# Practicing Universal Precautions

Source: *Heath Services Guide*, p 37

## THE FOLLOWING UNIVERSAL PROCEDURES SHOULD BE FOLLOWED BY ALL SCHOOL STAFF:

- ✓ Students should be encouraged to take care of their own minor injuries, cuts, scrapes and bloody noses whenever possible. The student may need a reminder to thoroughly wash his or her hands afterward.
- ✓ Large blood spills — as from serious nosebleeds or wounds — may require assistance from school staff. The school employee must always wear gloves when making contact with the wounded person.
- ✓ Employees need to thoroughly wash their hands after contact with body fluids whether or not gloves were worn.
- ✓ Employees must wear disposable gloves for clean-up. They must use a disinfectant solution for cleaning (a bleach solution of 1.5 cups per gallon of water). Frequent hand-washing and use of alcohol based hand sanitizers when hand-washing is not feasible.

The DoDEA Ebola page has man more resources and factual information to assist you at <http://www.dodea.edu/StudentServices/Health/Ebola/index.cfm>.

# Ebola Awareness, Preparation, and Response Planning in DoDEA

## HOW PARENTS CAN HELP STUDENTS/CHILDREN

- ✓ Be aware of the facts; do not get consumed with irrational fears.
- ✓ Avoid over-exposure to media, which may lead to greater levels of fear and stress around the issue.
- ✓ Be watchful of your children's exposure to media and images that may raise their levels of fear and anxiety.
- ✓ Be aware of your own reaction to the crisis and media exposure; children are very sensitive and tend to respond to their parents' own feelings around an issue.
- ✓ Regardless of your children's ages, speak to them about the issue and find out how they are feeling about it. Speak with them about the facts so that there are less rumors and misinformation about Ebola.
- ✓ Take care of yourself by getting the proper rest and exercise to manage your stress levels.
- ✓ This is the perfect time to remind us all of the single most effective means of preventing the spread of infectious diseases; hand washing with soap and water. School nurses are an excellent source for hand hygiene. Visit the CDC site for hand washing lessons:

<http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/>

The DoDEA Ebola page has man more resources and factual information to assist you at <http://www.dodea.edu/StudentServices/Health/Ebola/index.cfm>.

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