U.S. Department of Education Issues Updated Ebola Guidance for Schools

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Categories:

Publications

Last month, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan wrote a letter to Chief State School Officers, advising them that the U.S. Department of Education issued updated Ebola guidance for schools. The letter provides resources on how to respond to Ebola. It also explains that Ebola is a very rare disease that has affected only a handful of people. Also, the letter explains that no cases of Ebola in U.S. schools have been identified. The letter provides links to resources addressing Ebola concerns at school, including a resource from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention addressing Ebola infection concerns in K-12 schools.

Educators need to be aware of practical steps they can take if they need to respond to situations related to Ebola. Educators should:

- Review their school emergency operations plans. These plans should be revised if needed to address Ebola and other infectious diseases.
- Teach students, teachers, and staff to take everyday preventive actions (staying home when sick, washing hands often, cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects, and avoiding contact with sick people).
- Review protocols to ensure the school complies with OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogens and Hazard Communication Standard for management of exposure to blood or other infectious material.
- Encourage teachers, staff, and parents to obtain annual influenza immunization.
- Train teachers, teachers' aides, and school nurses in early recognition of children with symptoms of Ebola (such as fever).

Educators should provide opportunities for continuity of teaching and learning for persons who are absent from school for an extended period of time while under direct active monitoring. Note that a person who has been under direct active or active monitoring

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and who has not developed Ebola disease within 21 days since the last potential exposure is not infected by Ebola, cannot spread the disease, and does not pose a health threat to others.

Also, the letter outlined helpful tips to stay healthy during the flu season, and encouraged educators to remind teachers, students and others of this information. The tips included washing hands often; avoiding close contact with sick people; avoiding touching eyes, nose or mouth; covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing with a tissue; and staying home for at least 24 hours after a fever is gone.

What You Need To Know

While it is very unlikely there will be an Ebola outbreak at your school, it is worthwhile to take this opportunity to review your school emergency operations plan and educate teachers and staff on steps to take if they have an infectious disease concern.

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