

## Message from Sara H. Cody, M.D., Santa Clara County Health Officer Ebola Update 11/12/14



The Santa Clara County Public Health Department continues to prepare for the unlikely event that a person with Ebola arrives in Santa Clara County. Of equal importance, our Department is helping to address our community's concerns about Ebola with clear information. If our medical and public health community are called upon to care for a person with Ebola, we want to be prepared to ensure rapid access to the best medical care and maintain the safety of the community we serve.

The Public Health Department has three main objectives regarding Ebola preparedness. First, to prepare the local healthcare system; second, to provide clear, concise and consistent information to the public; and lastly, to make sure that our public health system is ready to respond. We have provided information and guidance to all hospitals and clinics in our county so that they know how to report suspected cases of Ebola to us, and a member of our Health Officer team is on call 24/7 to quickly respond to reports of any urgent communicable disease, including Ebola.

In late October, with state health departments and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, local public health departments throughout the country began monitoring all returning travelers from the West African countries with widespread transmission of Ebola. This monitoring includes checking for a fever and other symptoms of Ebola twice a day for 21 days. If any returning travelers develop Ebola symptoms, we will immediately evaluate and safely transport them to the hospital for testing and medical care. It is important to remember that individuals who develop Ebola cannot transmit the virus before they show symptoms.

The Ebola epidemic in West Africa has cost over 5,000 lives there and raised fears about how Ebola might pose a risk to us here. As outlined above, we are addressing these concerns, but we should also guard against the real harm that fear itself can create. We must act to prevent discrimination against people of African descent, whether they are immigrants, visitors, or long-time residents. Our department has started conversations with key community African leaders to understand if anyone in our community is suffering from discrimination as a result of concerns about Ebola, and to ensure our messages about Ebola are culturally sensitive. We welcome any suggestions you may have to help us improve our efforts.

Our staff salutes the health professionals of Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Mali and from around the world who are fighting the epidemic at its source in West Africa—they are the ones who are helping to bring this epidemic to an end. If you are a health professional, please consider volunteering.

We continually update our website with information about Ebola. Please visit [www.sccphd.org](http://www.sccphd.org) to view our Ebola Fact Sheet and Q&A. If you have questions about Ebola, please contact the California Department of Public Health's toll-free Ebola Hotline at **855-421-5921**.