

March 10, 2017

Dr. Tristan Denley,
Vice Chancellor for Academics
Academic Affairs
Tennessee Board of Regents
1415 Murfreesboro Road, Suite 350
Nashville, TN 37217-2833

Dear Dr. Denley,

As you are aware, many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are continuing to experience outbreaks of Zika virus disease, and limited local transmission has also occurred in Florida and along the southern border of Texas. The Tennessee Department of Health is committed to preventing the spread of this virus in our state and is eager to work with you and others in our network of educational institutions to protect students, staff members and families from becoming infected.

In 2016, 63 travelers returned to Tennessee infected with Zika virus after visiting areas outside of our state where the disease was circulating. In each of those cases, we worked quickly to reduce risks that the virus would not spread to others. While this disease is mild in most people, its threat to pregnant women and their fetuses is significant. Complications from Zika can include microcephaly, a condition where a baby's head is smaller than normal, and other health challenges including physical and speech impairments, seizures, hyperactivity, coordination problems and other brain/neurological disorders.

With spring and summer travel vacation on the horizon for many, I wanted to make you aware of recent guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for District and School Administrators in the U.S. This guidance is endorsed by the Tennessee Department of Health and can be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/schools.html>. **I ask you to please share this guidance with colleges and universities you serve.**

The key points of this guidance are:

- Follow all CDC travel recommendations
- Nondiscrimination and privacy and confidentiality measures should be maintained for all students and staff members.
- It is not recommended for schools to remove students or staff members who have Zika virus disease or who were exposed to Zika virus, or to cancel school-related activities because of Zika virus concerns.

- School administrators can help provide safe school environments through mosquito bite prevention efforts and sharing accurate Zika virus information with staff members, students, and families. “Fight the Bite” messages are extremely important to prevent mosquito-borne illnesses from spreading.
- Finally, the CDC has created Zika Communication Toolkits for schools serving pre-kindergarten through high school students and for institutions of higher education. These toolkits may be found at: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/comm-resources/toolkits.html>

Extensive additional information is available on the Tennessee Department of Health website (<http://tn.gov/health/topic/zika-virus>); you may also call your local or regional health department with questions (<https://www.tn.gov/health/topic/localdepartments>). You may also, as always, reach our state health department staff 24/7 for urgent matters, at [\(615\) 741-7247](tel:6157417247).

We are grateful for your assistance in helping protect Tennessee residents and visitors from Zika and other mosquito-borne illnesses. If you have any suggestions for additional messaging strategies for those you serve, please know those are welcomed and appreciated.

Sincerely,



Timothy F. Jones, MD
State Epidemiologist