



**Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services**

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## **Missouri State Zika Virus Readiness Activities Update**

### **Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services**

In May 2015, the World Health Organization reported the first local transmission of Zika virus in the Western Hemisphere, with cases identified in Brazil. By January 15, 2016, local transmission had been identified in at least 14 countries or territories in the Americas, including Puerto Rico, with further spread to other countries in the region identified as likely. As of September of 2016, Zika virus transmission has occurred in 49 countries in the Americas, including the U.S. (Florida).

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) put together Zika virus preparedness and response procedures to provide a framework to monitor human cases of the disease in the state, control potential exposures through sexual and mosquito contact, institute mosquito studies to determine the environmental risk for mosquito-borne Zika and finally to educate Missouri's citizens, health care providers and public health partners on the means to prevent Zika Virus from gaining a foothold in Missouri. The information known about Zika virus can change on a day-to-day basis, so procedures have to be adaptable. Here are descriptions of the ongoing activities:

#### **Zika Case Identification**

DHSS and the local public health agencies in the state have established a robust surveillance system to identify individuals infected with the Zika virus. The initial warnings and educational materials from the CDC helped individuals traveling to Zika infected areas to understand their potential risk for exposure:

- Both CDC and DHSS started sending [Health Alerts](#) to medical and public health providers beginning in January of 2016. Frequent updates of those documents provide guidance on disease identification and testing protocols.
- Testing for Zika at the Missouri State Public Health Laboratory was [established in May 2016](#), which expedites both test results and interventions by medical providers and public health agencies.
- DHSS and local public health staff will continuously work with health care providers to identify those patients in need of a Zika virus test, utilizing criteria established by the state communicable disease epidemiologists. Once identified for testing, health providers are requested to advise patients to avoid contact with mosquitos, utilize DEET insect repellent and

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to reduce the risk of sexual transmission to others to minimize risk of further transmission while waiting for testing results.

- As of September 15, 2016, almost 400 individuals have been tested at the State Public Health laboratory, 29 of which were positive for the Zika virus.

### **Zika Case Monitoring and Infection Prevention**

Once an individual is diagnosed with an active Zika virus infection, state and local public health professionals work to reinforce [previous prevention messages](#) and further reduce the potential for transmission to others. **To this point only travel-related cases have been found in Missouri, and no cases of local transmission have been found in the state.** Here is a description of steps that are taken when a case is found:

- The individuals are interviewed to identify any other family or sexual partners that may be at risk and provided resources (DEET wipes, condoms, literature, etc.) to mitigate that risk.
- Homes and work environments of those infected are evaluated for possible mosquito breeding sites and, if necessary, mitigated.
- The infected individual and close contacts are monitored for a period of time (approximately two weeks) to make sure the virus is contained by ensuring no contacts develop symptoms of Zika.
- DHSS recently received a federal grant to expand the birth defects registry into an active registry, with an emphasis on identifying and tracking births impacted by the Zika virus.

### **Mosquito Surveillance Study**

DHSS worked very quickly with the Missouri State University ([Dr. David Claborn](#)) to develop and conduct a mosquito survey of the areas in the state previously considered potential habitats for the *Aedes aegypti* and the *Aedes albopictus* mosquitos.

The greatest unknown when assessing the risk of Zika virus transmission in Missouri was whether or not there were any mosquitos that were ‘competent’ vectors for this virus in the state. Two types of mosquitos have been identified as capable of transmitting Zika to people: the *Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*. Currently, *Aedes aegypti* mosquitos are considered the most significant threat because of their propensity to live near people and even in homes.

**The collection of larvae and adult mosquitos from all throughout Missouri is complete for this year, and no *Aedes aegypti* were found.** However, this study is only the initial effort to provide baseline data for further development of a statewide mosquito surveillance program with

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additional resources. More information about the study is available in this article distributed by the Associated Press: <http://bit.ly/2cKZC5Y>

## Communications, Education and Outreach

A key part to preparedness efforts is the education of health care providers, public health professionals, policy makers and the general public. Critical partners in these efforts are other state and federal agencies, hospitals, federally qualified health care centers, other health care providers and the local public health agencies. Activities include:

- Issuing [news releases](#) statewide regarding all positive cases of Zika virus and sharing social media messaging about how to avoid and prevent the transmission of Zika virus.
- Providing DEET wipes and spray, along with educational materials to the Department of Conservation and the Division of State Parks (DNR) to provide to visitors at ranger stations and park facilities in Missouri to reinforce the need to use DEET or other appropriate protection against mosquitos.
- Providing DEET wipes and spray in WIC clinics, to Missouri State Fair participants and to participants in the various home visiting programs for mothers, infants and children.
- Developing and distributing Zika prevention messages to new and expectant mothers to be sent via text message through the Text4Babies program.
- Maintaining a website for health care providers and the general public to find the most up-to-date information on Zika.
- Utilizing the statewide Health Alert System to notify health care providers and facilities of both DHSS and CDC recommendations/procedures for Zika identification, testing and treatment.
- The State Epidemiologist is conducting presentations for health care providers and [developed a webinar](#) in cooperation with the Missouri Hospital Association for health care providers.

The next step is a statewide outreach and education campaign that will reach the general public with key health and environmental intervention messages.

- DHSS is working with the State Emergency Management Agency to provide federal funds for a statewide comprehensive education and outreach campaign to be launched in the spring of 2017. Focus is on prevention of mosquito habitats (getting rid of standing water mosquitoes use for breeding), use of DEET insect repellent and other methods to prevent mosquito bites.

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- Educational materials will be developed to be purchased and distributed statewide, with an emphasis on social media outreach.
- DHSS will be working on Implementation of a crowd sourcing component of the ARC GIS software, currently being used by Missouri, to allow citizens to identify potential mosquito breeding concerns in their communities.
- Communications to blood banks in Missouri will be developed to reinforce CDC guidance on blood testing will also be a component of ongoing communications planning.

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