



## Letter to Chief State School Officers about information and resources to guard against viruses spread by mosquitoes such as the Zika virus disease

July 26, 2016

Dear Chief State School Officers:

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) would like to refer you to information and resources for state and local leaders, schools, school-based health staff, and educators on steps that can be taken to guard against viruses spread by mosquitoes such as dengue, chikungunya, and Zika virus disease (Zika). We continue to appreciate the work you do to foster a healthy environment in America's schools and hope that these materials will support your efforts.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has developed interim guidance, <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/schools.html>, for kindergarten through grade 12 (K–12) district and school administrators on public health actions pertaining to Zika virus infection. Zika virus is transmitted to people primarily through the bite of an infected mosquito. Zika can also be transmitted through sex with an infected person or passed from a pregnant woman to her fetus. The CDC guidance is intended to address concerns about the risk of Zika virus infection in K–12 schools in the United States, provide school districts with information for planning school-related activities, and recommend actions that can be taken, in consultation with local public health authorities and government officials, to reduce the potential risk of Zika virus transmission on school premises and among members of the school community.

Complete information about Zika and how to prevent it is given at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika> and at <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/comm-resources/toolkits.html>. Prevention of mosquito bites through multiple mosquito mitigation efforts is of paramount importance for avoiding Zika virus infections. We encourage you to share the CDC guidance with your district and school leaders and to remind teachers, students, and others that the best way to prevent diseases spread by mosquitoes is protection from mosquito bites.

As with all health-related issues, districts and schools must maintain the privacy and identity of individual students and teachers consistent with all applicable privacy laws.

We hope that you will familiarize yourself with these resources and that you will share them through all of your available networks and communication vehicles to help ensure they reach the appropriate audiences. In the appendix to this letter you will find a checklist for district and school leaders that we hope will be a valuable resource.

Thanks for all you do every day to support the health, safety, and education of our students.

Sincerely,

John B. King, Jr.

cc: Council of Chief State School Officers



## Mitigation Strategies Checklist for District and School Leaders

### 1. Inform the school community

- The risks of mosquito bites and how to protect themselves
- [Symptoms of Zika](#)
- How to [apply insect repellent to children](#)
- How to [talk to children about Zika](#)
- [Sexual transmission of Zika](#)

### 2. As appropriate, encourage the use of the following

- [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)-registered insect repellents](#) containing one of these active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus or para-menthane-diol
- Long-sleeved shirts and long pants
- Clothing and gear treated with permethrin that will provide an added layer of protection
- Lightweight, loose fitting clothing during the warmer months. When wearing longer sleeves and pants, take additional steps to prevent [heat-related illnesses](#) (for example, drink additional water and take rest breaks)

### 3. Conduct routine mosquito control around school properties

- Once a week, empty and scrub, turn over, cover, or throw out any items that hold water where mosquitoes lay eggs
- [Repair septic tanks](#) and screens on windows and doors
- Treat standing water that cannot be removed and will not be used for drinking or swimming with larvicides
- Use outdoor and indoor insecticides according to label instructions to kill mosquitoes
- Contact your local mosquito control district for assistance with applying insecticides and conducting larval control in water that will not be used for drinking

### 4. Support members of the school community

- If requested, consider reassigning anyone who indicates she is or may become pregnant, or who is male and has a sexual partner who is or may become pregnant, to indoor tasks to reduce their risk of mosquito bites
- Ensure that staff and students receive prompt and appropriate medical evaluation and follow-up after a suspected exposure to Zika virus
- [Provide resources specifically for parents and caregivers](#)
- Provide [resources for those traveling](#)