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Public Health
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Canton City Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Stark County Emergency Health Care Planning Coalition Prepares for Disease Outbreaks

With the second case of Ebola in a health care worker in the United States and travel of this person in Ohio, there are many questions about the state of preparedness of our local community to address this serious disease. Since 1999 there has been a very active group of partners that include public health, hospitals, emergency management, EMS, fire, police, and other health care providers that have been planning for just this kind of emergency. Called the Emergency Health Care Planning Coalition, this group of dedicated individuals have been revising and testing disease response plans for the past 15 years.

Dovetailing with the Stark County Emergency Operations Plan, the public health response plan details how public health, hospitals, health care providers, and others will work together to address any number of serious disease threats. “We are working hard to assure that the current planning recommendations from the CDC are implemented in our community” states Jim Adams, Health Commissioner for the Canton City Health Department. “Our partnership with the EHPC has allowed us to build the critical relationships that we will use in any public health emergency. It is an absolutely critical piece of our successful planning efforts.”

According to Adams, public health, hospitals, and others test parts of their plans on a regular basis. Plans are changed in response to new information and the experience gained during these exercises. “Disease outbreaks are very tricky”; according to Adams. “But with our planning coalition and the skill of the various professionals in our public health departments, hospitals, laboratories, and others, we feel very confident in our ability to respond to threats in our community.”

In this particular case, local public health would be responsible to conduct careful contact tracing for individuals who may have been in close association with the person of interest. Public health would collect detailed information from the contacts and instruct them to report symptoms, including fever, to the health department at least twice a day for 21 days. “We take our responsibility to conduct meticulous contract tracing very seriously”, stated Adams. Contact tracing is a normal process for health departments. There as been no reports of any contacts to the individual who traveled to Ohio in Stark County at this time. Adams stressed that the situation is very fluid and this may change as more information is collected.

For more information on Ebola, visit us on the web at www.cantonhealth.org , follow us on Facebook or call the Canton City Health Department, Division of Nursing at 330-489-3322.