



Austin/Travis County Health and Human Services Department



TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Shannon W. Jones III, Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely of Shannon W. Jones III.

DATE: August 24, 2016

SUBJECT: Zika status update

The City of Austin Health and Human Services Department (HHSD) continues its local public health efforts to prepare and respond to Zika virus. We wish to update you on these ongoing efforts. For the latest area Situational Report, updated weekly, see the following link, <http://www.austintexas.gov/zika>

As of August 17, a total of 2,260 laboratory-confirmed Zika virus disease cases have been reported to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from 48 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. Texas has 121 Zika virus disease cases.

As of August 11, CDC reports that there are 529 pregnant women with laboratory evidence of possible Zika virus infection within the U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

The first local transmission of Zika virus has recently been reported in the Continental United States. The Florida Department of Health has identified an area in one neighborhood of Miami where Zika is being spread by mosquitoes. CDC is working closely with Florida public health officials to investigate these cases. CDC and Florida are issuing travel, testing, and other recommendations for people who traveled to or lived in the Florida-designated areas on or after June 15, 2016, the earliest known date that one of the people could have been infected with Zika.

As of August 19, 2016, staff have identified 266 persons (53 percent are pregnant women) in the City of Austin and Travis County for whom clinical specimens have been submitted to the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) for Zika virus testing. Results have been reported for 166 persons; six persons have tested positive for Zika, two for Dengue, two for Chikungunya, one for West Nile, and one was inconclusive. Testing results are pending for 30 persons (70 additional individual specimens were not able to be tested). The six persons with evidence of Zika virus disease were exposed to infected mosquitos outside the United States. There are no reported severe illnesses or deaths from Zika virus.

We anticipate that local transmission of Zika virus may also occur in Austin/Travis County and in Texas, however, we do not think that it will be as widespread as has been seen in Brazil and Central and South America. Because of very different living conditions, including screened-in homes, air conditioning, and less crowded housing, we anticipate that if we see local transmission, it may be in small clustered areas. We continue to remain vigilant for whatever events arise.

Our current activities to date include:

Planning– The Department continues to actively participate on workgroups with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Texas Association of City and County Health Officials (TACCHO), the Texas Medical Association (TMA), the Travis County Medical Society, and other groups to coordinate planning efforts at the local, state and federal levels and have developed a local Zika Virus Strategic Action Plan. In particular, plans are now focusing on our response after identification of local transmission.

Investigation of Human Cases – Department staff continue to follow up and investigate suspect cases of Zika infection, and work with local physicians and other healthcare providers to assess the need for laboratory testing and facilitate collection of lab specimens.

Integrated Mosquito Management –Since early May the Environmental Health Services Division staff began trapping for mosquitoes as indicated in the Integrated Mosquito Management Plan. Staff collect mosquito specimens throughout Travis County and deliver to the Texas Department of State Health Services Zoonosis lab for mosquito species identification and disease presence testing. Their lab reports help to identify the types of mosquitoes present and if there is any presence of disease in the County. The program also involves property site assessments, investigating mosquito complaints, engaging in larviciding activities to reduce the number of breeding sites, engage in adulticiding activities to reduce the number of adult mosquitoes present, give presentations to community gatherings as requested, and assess the need for other mosquito control activities to refer to appropriate departments (i.e. standing water on private property allowing mosquito breeding).

Assessment and reporting of human and mosquito data – Department staff continually review reports of human cases and also review data from mosquito collection to assess the need for additional control measures. Data are analyzed with updated reports and maps.

Communications with area healthcare providers - We are in ongoing contact with the Travis County Medical Society (TCMS) and other area healthcare providers about any novel disease such as Zika. Our contacts include almost every medical provider and hospital in Central Texas. We send them updated medical guidance on testing, how to advise their patients who are currently pregnant, symptoms to check for and a reminder to report “notifiable conditions” to us, the local health department, as required by law. Notifiable conditions refers to diseases and sickness that state and local health authorities need to be notified about such as tuberculosis, Ebola, West Nile Virus, and now Zika.

Community Assessment for Public Health Emergency Response (CASPER) –Our public health department conducted door-to-door surveys on June 17th and 18th to ask Travis County residents about their knowledge of mosquito-borne diseases, mosquito prevention, and household emergency preparedness. Over 170 households in 30 neighborhoods were surveyed. The information from the surveys is being used for planning additional messaging efforts regarding Zika virus, as well as other future public health, emergency communications and planning efforts for the Central Texas region.

Videos - We have produced brief educational videos (in English and Spanish) on what people can do to reduce the mosquito population around their property and protect themselves from mosquito bites. <https://youtu.be/DUrpPkGr9AQ> <https://youtu.be/SxghipwnlX4>

Flyers: We have created and distributed flyers in English and four other languages with similar messages to limit mosquito populations and exposure to mosquito bites.
<https://www.austintexas.gov/zika>

Weekly Cross Surveillance discussions - Our disease surveillance staff, epidemiologists, Health Authority (Dr. Phil Huang), and others across the Department meet every Monday to discuss disease outbreaks, environmental health issues and other emerging public health issues in Austin. Each week, our epidemiological staff produces a “Zika Situational Report” and that report is linked it to our public website. <https://www.austintexas.gov/zika>

Partnerships -We’ve met with a dozen other city departments, city management, and external agencies to look out for standing water, to educate, and to notify us. For example, we partnered in early April with Keep Austin Beautiful to provide messaging during one of their biggest cleanups of the year. We also recently partnered with UT to receive feedback on our communications strategies, tools and tactics. The feedback we received positively reinforced our current efforts.

Other

- Working frequently with local media to conduct interviews and continuously educate the public.
- Using “Next Door” app we have communicated prevention tips to users of that list serve.
- Have presented at neighborhood community meetings about Zika virus upon request.
- Presented to the Lakeway City Council to updated them on the Zika virus situation and inform them regarding current response and preparedness activities.
- Presented to the Wellness Clinic at Apple Computer to assist them with responding to Zika virus for their 6000+ employees.
- Presented to the Austin Metropolitan Breakfast Club to educate community and business leaders regarding Zika virus and the City’s response.
- Presented to the Texas Department of State Health Services CHIP Coalition regarding our local Zika preparedness activities to inform them of how local communities are responding.
- Presented to the North Austin Civic Association regarding Zika virus and the City’s response.
- Have been working with the local blood bank to plan for the impact on blood collection efforts if local transmission of Zika virus is identified.
- Have been working with the Texas Department of State Health Services regarding coordination of efforts if local transmission of Zika virus is identified. This includes plans for additional laboratory testing, and contingency contracts for backpack and aerial spraying for mosquitoes if needed.
- Our website www.austintexas.gov/zika contains the most current information and guidance for the general public, pregnant women, healthcare providers as well as travel alerts.
- Developed an article for the May 2016 “Power Plus” insert in Austin Energy bills that reached over 400,000 residents

- Worked with Austin Fit magazine to produce an educational story on Zika virus which appeared in their June 2016 issue.
- Our Facebook and Twitter sites have posted messaging regarding confirmed cases, guidance and prevention tips.
- Participating in discussions with experts who focus on clinical implications of the virus and mosquito control strategies.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this response. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have questions or need additional information.

cc: Marc A. Ott, City Manager
Bert Lumbreras, Assistant City Manger
Dr. Philip Huang, Health Authority, Health and Human Services
Janet Pichette, Chief Epidemiologist, Health and Human Services