



News Release

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Virginia's State Laboratory receives CDC approval to begin testing for Zika virus

~ Testing capability essential ahead of May 1 mosquito season ~

Richmond, VA – The Department of General Services today announced that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has designated the department's Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services as a Zika virus testing laboratory, which will allow for more timely results for those suspected of being infected by the mosquito-borne illness.

The Division of Consolidated Laboratory Services (DCLS) will perform serologic testing for Zika virus, which can detect antibodies in the blood of an infected person from approximately six days after symptoms are present up to 12 weeks after infection. Since the presence of other closely related illnesses such as Dengue virus could lead to false positive results, the CDC will conduct confirmation testing whenever positive or inconclusive Zika test results occur.

“When facing threats to public health such as Zika virus, accurate and timely laboratory testing is not only important for providing appropriate patient care but also for supporting public health response efforts,” said **Dr. Denise Toney, DCLS Director**.

As of April 14, 2016, the Virginia Department of Health has reported to the CDC 11 cases of Zika virus in Virginia residents associated with travel outside the U.S.

Prior to DCLS being designated as a Zika virus testing laboratory, all patient specimens would be submitted to the CDC for testing. The CDC quickly experienced a backlog of patient specimens arriving from all over the country. In order to expand the number of testing laboratories, the CDC acquired approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

in late February under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) to distribute a diagnostic test for detection of Zika virus to state public health laboratories nationwide that are part of the CDC's Laboratory Response Network, an integrated network of laboratories that include Virginia's DCLS. In order to be able to perform the testing, DCLS participated in required CDC training, conducted a rapid but extensive validation of the method as outlined in the EUA, and successfully completed a proficiency testing panel.

While many people infected with Zika will experience mild symptoms, the CDC advises there is a link between Zika virus infection in pregnant women and subsequent birth defects.

DCLS does not determine whether individuals should be tested for possible exposure to Zika virus. That determination is made by the Virginia Department of Health, which works with healthcare providers through its local health departments to determine if testing is necessary.

The FDA has not approved a commercially available diagnostic test for the detection of the Zika virus. There is no vaccine for the virus, so health officials encourage individuals to avoid mosquito bites.

Currently, travel to Zika-affected areas outside of the continental United States is the primary way Virginians risk exposure to Zika virus. DCLS is represented on a statewide task force Governor Terry McAuliffe created to increase preparedness efforts prior to the start of mosquito season on May 1.

For more information about Zika virus, visit www.vdh.virginia.gov.

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