

The Virgin Islands Consortium

C.D.C. Awards \$60 Million To Help States And Territories Battle Zika

Health / **Published On July 22, 2016 08:49 AM /**

Staff **July 22, 2016**



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will begin making awards totaling nearly \$60 million to states, cities, and territories to support efforts to protect Americans from Zika virus disease and adverse health outcomes that can result from Zika infection, including the serious birth defect microcephaly, a press release the federal agency issued Thursday has made known.

The funding, distributed through CDC's [Epidemiology and Laboratory Capacity for Infectious Diseases Cooperative Agreement](#) (ELC), will support activities to protect the health of the American public, especially pregnant women, including epidemiologic surveillance and investigation, improving mosquito control and monitoring, and

strengthening laboratory capacity. It will also support participation in the U.S. Zika Pregnancy Registry to monitor pregnant women with Zika and their infants, as well as Zika-related activities in U.S.-Mexico border states.

“Local, state and territorial health departments are on the front lines in the fight against Zika,” said CDC Director Tom Frieden, M.D., M.P.H. “These CDC funds will strengthen state and territorial capacity to respond to Zika virus, an increasingly concerning public health threat for pregnant women and babies. We hope Congress will provide the additional resources we need to fully support the Zika response.”

This new funding will be available to jurisdictions August 1 and is in addition to \$25 million awarded on July 1 as part of CDC's preparedness and response funding to states, cities, and territories in areas at risk for outbreaks of Zika. On August 1, CDC also will award another \$10 million to states and territories to quickly identify cases of microcephaly and other birth defects linked to Zika and to refer affected families to services.

The Obama Administration has requested \$1.9 billion that public health experts identified as necessary to combat Zika and protect the homeland, but the budget has not been approved by Congress. While this ELC funding is an important tool to help communities prepare for and respond to infectious diseases like Zika virus, additional support will be needed to help further expand mosquito control capabilities and develop a Zika vaccine and diagnostics, among other priorities.

Zika virus spreads to people primarily through the bite of an infected *Aedes* species mosquito (*Aedes aegypti* and *Aedes albopictus*), although *Aedes aegypti* are more likely to spread Zika. Zika infection can also be spread by men and women to their sex partners. There is currently no vaccine or treatment for Zika. Zika infection is often asymptomatic; among those who have symptoms, the most common complaints are fever, rash, joint pain, and conjunctivitis (red eyes).

The illness is usually mild with symptoms lasting for several days to a week after being bitten by an infected mosquito. However, Zika infection during pregnancy may cause microcephaly and other severe brain defects in the developing fetus. Zika also has been linked to Guillain-Barré syndrome, an uncommon sickness of the nervous system in which a person's immune system damages nerve cells, causing muscle weakness and sometimes paralysis or death.