



Department of Health

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

MARY T. BASSETT, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner

KRISTIN M. PROUD
Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner

September 28, 2022

Re: Declaration of an Imminent Threat to Public Health for polio virus

Dear Local Health Department Commissioner/Public Health Director:

Polio virus is a serious, life threatening disease. It affects the nervous system and can cause muscle weakness, paralysis or death. It is very contagious, and it can be spread by someone even if they aren't sick or experiencing symptoms. Symptoms range from having no symptoms, to mild flu-like symptoms, to serious symptoms, including paralysis, permanent disability and death.

The polio virus enters the body through the mouth, usually with hands contaminated with the stool of an infected person. Respiratory and oral-to-oral transmission through saliva may also occur. In communities with lower vaccination rates, polio can spread even more easily, and this is why people two months and older should get vaccinated against the virus as soon as possible.

Local health departments (LHDs) are actively responding to this virus through the sampling of wastewater, contact investigation, identification and monitoring, vaccine administration for those targeted high-risk populations that are unvaccinated, and provision of education and outreach.

Due to the ongoing threat of this virus, coupled with the at-risk population that is primarily impacted by transmission and the significant risk that polio virus poses to human health, I have determined that an Imminent Threat to Public Health (ITPH) exists throughout New York State, pursuant to Public Health Law § 621.

Accordingly, LHDs should continue to work closely with the Office of Public Health Practice (OPHP) to establish the eligibility of costs for reimbursement consistent with Public Health Law and the process to claim reimbursement for polio virus activities during the period of the declaration, which is July 21, 2022 through December 31, 2022. These funds will be made available only after all federal and state as well as other forms of aid that might become available have been expended.

Any questions should be directed to Loretta Santilli, Director of OPHP, at (518) 473-4223. Thank you for our partnership to advance the health of New York State.

Sincerely,

Mary T. Bassett, M.D., M.P.H.
Commissioner of Health