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CMS Awards \$66.1 Million in American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Florida to Fight Zika

Today, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) announced \$66.1 million in funding to health departments in American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Florida to help combat the Zika virus. Congress authorized this funding in the Continuing Appropriations and Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2017, and Zika Response and Preparedness Act (P.L. 114-223).

Zika remains a serious health concern, as Zika virus infection during pregnancy has been linked to fetal death and other adverse birth outcomes; including microcephaly and other potentially severe fetal brain defects. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) note that several countries that have experienced Zika outbreaks recently have reported an increase in the number of people who have Guillain-Barré syndrome, a sickness that causes damage to a person's nerve cells.

In accordance with the Zika Response and Preparedness Act (P.L. 114-223), entities eligible for this funding opportunity included states, territories, tribes or tribal organizations with active or local transmission of the Zika virus, as confirmed by the CDC. At the time of the funding opportunity announcement, on November 9, 2016, the CDC designated American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Florida as areas with laboratory-confirmed active or local Zika virus transmission. As such, this emergency funding opportunity was only available to the territorial and state health departments in these areas. There are states with laboratory-confirmed Zika cases that were not currently eligible for these funds because the cases are travel associated and not locally acquired.

Through these awards, \$66.1 million is available over a three-year period, with \$60.6 million directed to Puerto Rico, which has the highest incidence of locally transmitted Zika cases. Allocations of funds are based on the percent of active and local Zika cases reported by the CDC and the size of the populations in these areas. Funds will support prevention activities and treatment services for health conditions related to the Zika virus, including improving provider capacity and capability.

“This funding will help prevent the spread of the Zika virus and meet the health needs of people who have been infected” said Vikki Wachino, Deputy Administrator, CMS, Director, CMCS.

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