

CONTACT TRACING?

Contact tracing is the practice of identifying and contacting people who may have had close contact with someone who has tested positive for diseases such as measles, pertussis and most recently, COVID-19. KDHE does not use any application relying on GPS or Bluetooth technology to locate cases or contacts.

Basic Information

- Contact tracing is critical to monitor and contain infectious disease spread. Since COVID-19 does not have a treatment or vaccine, public health tools such as social distancing and contact tracing are used to mitigate the spread of the disease.
- Contact tracing is a practice used worldwide to trace contagious and sexually transmitted disease and has been used regularly since the 1930s. KDHE and local health departments currently conduct contact tracing for many diseases including measles, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, syphilis and pertussis, among others.
- Typically, contact tracing is done by local health departments (LHDs).
- However, the scale of COVID-19 requires additional resources for contact tracing.
- LHDs can request support from KDHE if they need additional assistance with contact tracing.
- **KDHE does not use any application relying on GPS or Bluetooth technology to locate cases or contacts.**

How does it work?

- Public health case investigators work with positive cases to identify all individuals who may have been in contact with the person during the timeframe they were contagious. These people are known as “close contacts.”
- When possible, the positive case provides the names and contact information (phone numbers, email addresses) for the people that were in close contact with him/her during the infectious period. Case investigators may also have to work with employers, businesses, schools or other entities if a positive case attended while infectious but cannot remember who they came into close contact with.
- The case investigator then communicates with the close contacts, letting them know of the potential exposure. Close contacts are asked to quarantine for 14 days since last exposure to the positive case and to look for symptoms of COVID-19 disease during their quarantine period.
- They also provide instruction, education and support to ensure they do not infect additional individuals.
- Contact tracers check-in with identified close contacts, typically daily, to inquire about symptoms and provide support to ensure they have what they need to remain quarantined for 14 days from last exposure.
- Contact tracers will also ask people in quarantine if they have left their quarantine location at any point or if they have had any visitors. This information is important because, if the close contact becomes a case, then anyone they might have infected will need to be contacted.
- Case investigators and contact tracers are trained in HIPAA regulations and KDHE ensures private information of positive cases and close contacts is kept confidential.
- **A reminder, if you test positive for COVID-19 and are contacted by a case investigation, your status is kept confidential.**

