

Context: Why Is DC Health Implementing A Large Scale Contact Tracing Program:

- 1. As all of us are aware, the nation, and the District, continue to confront the devastating consequences of the widespread exposure to the COVID 19 virus. This pandemic has been especially challenging for public health officials to control, in large measure because of its highly contagious nature and that even *people without symptoms* can spread the virus to others simply by talking to them in close proximity, or by coughing and sneezing. Also, as of now, and for quite some time, there is no vaccine available or proven effective pharmaceutical treatment. The disproportionate impact of this pandemic on people of color and socio-economically challenged populations is well and tragically documented.**
- 2. Given the economic and other consequences of the *still essential* city and region wide quarantine mandates and other preventive guidance such as wearing masks and regular hand washing, it is important to create the public health initiatives and infrastructure necessary to permit the loosening of the current citywide isolation mandate. While social distancing measures are working, they cannot be sustained indefinitely at this scale. The Mayor has announced that there will be a sequence of steps and criteria that will gradually begin to allow the lifting of the current mandates. Going forward to the next stages in this fight, we require the ability to immediately test and rapidly report newly infected individuals; identify and interview their recent contacts (called “contact tracing”); and, where necessary, have identified individuals who may be at risk to self quarantine for a specific period of time until they are themselves no longer at risk of spreading the virus to others.**
- 3. If DC Health and our collective city are together unsuccessful in meticulously implementing such a program, as well as the continuing need for hand-washing, use of masks, social**

distancing and other guidance, the consequences will be devastating for all of us.

4. **Martin Luther King spoke eloquently about “The Beloved Community.” It is necessary for all who share this dream, and who love our community, to be called to action.**

What Is Contact Tracing And What Does It Entail:

1. **The aim of contact tracing is to reach out to every person diagnosed with COVID-19, gather their contacts, and then interview every contact discovered to assess their status and risk for infecting others.**
2. **The essential work of contact tracing involves four tasks:**
 - **successful contact and notification of exposure**
 - **assessment of symptoms and clinical linkage, if needed**
 - **education and instructions for quarantine**
 - **arrangements for social supports, if needed; continued monitoring and closeout.**
3. **Close contacts are defined as having direct contact with, or being within 6 feet for at least 10 minutes, of a case-patient while not wearing recommended personal protective equipment.**
 - **Caregivers and household members of the case-patient are considered close contacts.**

4. Interviews with the asymptomatic close contacts can be conducted by telephone, text monitoring system, video conference or in person.

- **If public health personnel must interview the asymptomatic close contact in person, the public health personnel will stay at least 6 feet away from the asymptomatic close contact and ask them if they have had fevers or respiratory symptoms.**
 - **The public health personnel will wear a face mask when entering the home as well as the individual**
- **Public health workers will solicit information such as**
 - **name and nickname, email, all phones, social media handles, address, and assess risk type**
 - **When did you begin experiencing symptoms?**
 - **What symptoms did you experience?**
 - **What activities were you engaged in during that time?**
 - **Who were you in contact with at those events?**

4. All contacts will be notified anonymously...the identity of the index patient will not be revealed and not confirmed if asked

5. The close contacts of confirmed cases will be required to be under home or central quarantine, with active daily monitoring for at least 14 days, or according to the latest CDC guidance.

- **Tools such as Symptom Self-monitoring Forms are used to track any increased temperature and respiratory symptoms.**

- **Monitoring for symptoms twice a day (morning and evening) for 14 days from the date of last contact with the case-patient or for 14 days after the case-patient's isolation ends if in continued contact throughout their illness, i.e. household members of the patient, fellow residents of congregate living facilities, etc.**
- **On day 15, the day after their last day of monitoring, the individual receives an 'End of Monitoring' notification to let them know that their monitoring period is over.**
- **Key Terms:**
 - **Quarantine**
 - **used to keep someone who *might have been exposed to COVID-19* away from others. Someone in self-quarantine stays separated from others, and they limit movement outside of their home or current place. A person may have been exposed to the virus without knowing it (for example, when traveling or out in the community), or they could have the virus without feeling symptoms. Quarantine helps limit further spread of COVID-19.**
- **Isolation**
 - **used to *separate sick people from healthy people*. People who are in isolation should stay home. In the home, anyone sick should separate themselves from others by staying in a specific "sick" bedroom or space and using a different bathroom (if possible). Isolation for public health purposes may be voluntary or compelled by federal, state, or local public health order.**
- **Social Distancing**
 - **Social distancing, also called "physical distancing," means *keeping space between yourself and other people* outside of your home. To practice social or physical distancing:**

- Stay at least 6 feet (2 meters) from other people
- Do not gather in groups
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings

6. Diagnostic tests will be immediately administered to any close contacts who develop symptoms, and they will become a case whose contacts deserve, and will be notified.

When Will Our City Be Able To Return To Work and School...When Must This Next Stage Of Extensive Contact Tracing Infrastructure Be In Place

In order to begin opening up society and begin to move away from the “slow the spread” period the city must achieve all the following:

- A sustained reduction in cases for at least 14 days
- Hospitals in the city are safely able to treat all patients requiring hospitalization without resorting to crisis standards of care
- The city is able to test all people with COVID-19 symptoms
- The city is able to conduct active monitoring of confirmed cases and their contacts. Surveillance is essential for quickly identifying any increases in cases in the city.

Why It Is So Important To Get This Right

Because COVID 19 can be transmitted before people have symptoms, it is essential that contacts be identified and quarantined immediately after the case with whom they have had contact is identified

- COVID-19 can cause large outbreaks quickly, so even 1 missed case can significantly undermine control efforts.

- It is estimated that each infected person can, on average, infect 2 to 3 others. This means that if 1 person spreads the virus to 3 others, that first positive case can turn into more than 59,000 cases in 10 rounds of infections.

Why We Need Your Help As A “Community Influencer”

1. The challenge is to implement this initiative at a large scale in a city with numerous socio-economically vulnerable individuals and populations
 - Many people in our city are distrustful of Governmental and health system interventions based on painful episodes from our history
 - Our city has many people who are poor and who live in densely crowded communities and who share their homes with many family members and others
 - The homeless; recently returned incarcerated people; those suffering from addiction and other chronic diseases such as HIV; and the elderly and disabled face special challenges that need our collective attention.
 - The anticipated number of contacts is potentially massive, given the considerable number of new index cases identified each day and the highly infectious nature of the virus.
 - Like every jurisdiction, DC has a limited workforce...volunteer collaboration is essential
2. As such, if we are to save the lives of our friends, neighbors and relatives, DC Health will require your support and ***personal influence***

to reach key communities that comprise our city. We need the community itself to take a leadership and collaborative relationship with our Public Health and other government officials. If we are truly in this together, and we are, then government requires the lived experience of our community to inform, help shape, monitor and refine the necessary interventions. As such, we are reaching out to representatives from:

- The Faith Community**
- Community focused political leaders**
- Community organizations**
- Worker representatives, especially front line people engaged in mail handling, transportation and retail stores**
- Our ‘Cultural Icons’ and historians who have significant influence in community life**
- Advocates for the incarcerated and newly returned**
- Advocates for the homeless and those in public housing**
- Health and medical care professionals**
- Musicians and artists**
- Seniors and the disabled and their advocates and service organizations**
- Young people and their advocates and service organizations**
- Advocates and organizations working with individuals with substance abuse challenges**
- Advocates and organizations serving the chronically ill and living with HIV disease**

- **Community media**
- **Communication specialists**
- **Academics and researchers**

Key Challenges That Must Be Addressed

- 1. Provide Social Services to People in Isolation and Quarantine:**
Crucial public health messages can only have the desired impact on reducing transmission if support systems are in place to enable residents to comply with instructions.
 - **DC Health is working with DHS to organize and coordinate appropriate access to the needed services listed below**
 - **Whether based on test results or symptoms, people asked to self-isolate and close contacts asked to self-quarantine can only adhere to these recommendations if they have appropriate housing and sufficient food and medicine for the entire period of isolation/quarantine.**
 - **Thermometers and masks**
 - **Identify existing resources to assist people who need them with social services, including alternative housing, food, and medicine.**
 - **Triage the need for these resources among people who are told to isolate or quarantine through the call center and community sites.**

- **Provide alternative housing for people with isolation or quarantine orders who are healthcare workers, homeless, in group housing, living with vulnerable people, or discharged from hospitals to any of the above circumstances before testing negative for COVID-19.**
- **Give home-bound individuals who need assistance a number they can call for help**
- **Hoteling services for the 14d quarantine period may be necessary for individuals who live with vulnerable individuals, are precariously housed, unsheltered, or homeless, or who otherwise cannot remain in their current residence.**
- **Link to case managers who can direct people to available resources.**
- **financial support for individuals to recover lost income during the quarantine period. These could include:**
 - **Stipend from government to those without sick leave or who need to take care of child or elderly dependents**
- **Work with employers to provide support, with possible tax credits**
- **Incentives to reinforce quarantine such as:**
 - **Passwords for on-demand movies, e-books, learning channels**
 - **Access to high-speed internet and laptop**
 - **Encouraging note from the mayor**

2. Link to primary care provider and Telehealth engagement

Remember: We Need To Continue To Adhere To Protective Measures

General physical distancing precautions including

- **teleworking as much as possible**
- **maintaining hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**
- **wearing a mask in public**
- **regularly disinfecting high-touch surfaces**
- **initially limiting social gatherings to fewer than 50 people.**

How to Wear a Cloth Face Covering?

- **Cloth face coverings should**
 - **fit snugly but comfortably against the side of the face**
 - **be secured with ties or ear loops**
 - **include multiple layers of fabric**
 - **allow for breathing without restriction**
 - **be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape**

For More Information:

DC Coronavirus Website: <https://coronavirus.dc.gov/>

