



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONTACT TRACING

What is contact tracing?

Contact tracing is the process public health authorities use to notify people who may have been in contact with someone with a contagious disease and advise them about self-quarantining to protect their families and community. If you have been in [close contact](#) with someone with COVID-19, a representative from the Delaware Division of Public Health (DPH), called a contact tracer, will call to inform you that you've been exposed. They will ask you to stay at home and self-quarantine. Self-quarantine helps slow the spread of COVID-19 and can help keep your friends and neighbors healthy. It is important DPH to reach out to close contacts of positive individuals in order to provide recommendations for self-quarantine and offer support and connection to services (including testing if available).

What is a close contact?

Close contact means someone who has been within 6 feet or less an individual with COVID-19 for at least 15 minutes starting from two days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic clients, two days prior to positive specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated. This includes (but is not limited to) those who live in the same household as, or is the intimate partner of, someone with COVID-19 would be considered close contacts, as would those who have been providing care to someone with the disease without using recommended protective equipment or precautions. The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people

who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).

Who are contact tracers?

If you are COVID-positive or are a contact of someone who is COVID-positive, you will most likely get a phone call from DPH representatives, or an in-person visit if the health agency does not have a phone number for you. Telephone contact tracers are people hired by NORC at the University of Chicago, who are calling on behalf of DPH. Delaware's field contact tracers are DPH employees in the Community Health Services unit.

What do they do?

Contact tracers reach out to the close contacts of COVID-positive persons to ensure they are able to easily and safely self-quarantine to help slow the spread of the virus. Both telephone and field contact tracers will also be conducting case investigations – meaning, they are also contacting individuals who are newly COVID-19 positive to gather additional information on who they may have been within six feet of for 15 minutes or more, and provide instructions on how to self-isolate safely.



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What information are they collecting about me?

DPH representatives will need to confirm your personal information like name, address and phone number, so they can verify with whom they are speaking. They also need this information to get in touch with you for follow up monitoring to see if you develop symptoms of COVID-19. They will also ask for basic health information such as underlying health conditions, and whether you work in a high-risk occupation such as health care or child care. **DPH will NOT collect social security numbers, bank account information, credit card information, or immigration status.**

What are you going to do with my information?

The information DPH representatives collect will be used to help us monitor your health status through additional phone calls to you during the monitoring period, which is generally 14-days. For instance, we will ask about your temperature, and ask if you are experiencing any of the symptoms of COVID-19. In follow-up monitoring texts, emails, or phone calls, we will ask if you have developed a fever or any of the other symptoms of COVID-19. If you have, it enables us the opportunity to provide guidance on testing and medical care. We do not release any personal information to the public. Your information will not be shared with any person or any organization outside of DPH (including immigration, family services, or law enforcement) and will be only used for public health purposes.

How is my confidentiality protected? What happens to my Information they collected?

Again, your information will not be shared with any person or any organization outside of DPH and will be only used for public health monitoring purposes. Your information is protected as confidential by state and federal statutes, which prohibit DPH from sharing it. It will be used to help us monitor your health status through additional phone calls to you and help stop the spread of the disease. We do not release any personal information to the public.

What happens if I am undocumented?

Nothing. Information you provide is protected and will only help the monitoring team reduce the transmission of COVID-19. DPH does not collect information on immigration status.

If I get infected would they take my kids away?

No, DPH will not take your kids away but will provide you with guidance on how to protect them from the virus while you isolate or self-quarantine.

Can a contact tracer tell me who exposed me?

Absolutely not. They specifically do not have that information to protect the privacy of the person who is COVID-positive.



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What should I expect if contact tracers come to my house?

DPH Community Health employees are trained and started going out into the community in June to reach those for whom we do not have a phone number. There are two DPH Community Health Employees per team. They will have state employee identification, and most likely be wearing a shirt which identifies them as a DPH employee. They will also be wearing a mask, face shield and gloves in order to conduct the interview. They will request your permission to ask you a series of questions. They will not request to enter your home unless they are unable to maintain your privacy outside your home. They will likely be at your home for 30-45 minutes to conduct the interview. If there are several members of your household to be interviewed, they will be there longer.

Why do contact tracers work with face shields and masks?

Because the virus is spread through respiratory droplets, it is critical that DPH workers wear masks and face shields to ensure their safety and safety to the individuals they are serving.

Are contact tracers doing testing?

No, only interviews and guidance. They can provide information on testing locations.

How do I get tested for COVID-19?

Visit de.gov/coronavirus and click on the link for testing to find a list of testing sites statewide. You can also contact your primary care provider for information.

What is the difference between isolation and self-quarantine?

Individuals who are COVID positive are asked to isolate. Isolation is critical to preventing spread of the virus. It means keeping sick people separated from others in the household in order to prevent further spread of the virus. Individuals who need to isolate are to stay home except to get medical care, and individuals should not go to work. Isolated persons should try to remain in a separate room from other household members at all times. If they have to be in a room with others, they should wear a face covering and avoid the use of common areas as much as possible. Persons who experienced symptoms prior to their test, should stay isolated for 10 days after symptoms began. Those who did not experience symptoms should remain isolated for 10 days after their test, or three days after their symptoms go away – whichever is longer.

Individuals who are contacts of COVID-positive individuals are asked to self-quarantine, which means to stay at home for approximately 14 days, except to obtain medical care. These individuals should also not go to work. Contacts of COVID-positive persons should have someone else bring essential items to the home such as groceries and prescriptions. Additional information can be found at: <https://coronavirus.delaware.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/177/2020/04/QuarantinevsIsolation-8-5-11-English-4.13.20.pdf>.



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What if I can't quarantine/self-isolate safely in my home?

DPH will provide you with a phone number for social services so that you can access the services you may need. If you do not have a phone, DPH may be able to assist with making the connection for you.

What are the consequences if I refuse to quarantine/self-isolate?

DPH will ask you to quarantine or self-isolate voluntarily. However, if a person who is, or may be, infected refuses to quarantine or self-isolate, DPH has the legal authority to pursue a court order to require that person to remain at home. Legal action is always the last resort.

If I must quarantine or isolate will I lose my job?

No. Under new regulations by the Delaware Department of Labor, your employer cannot take punitive action (termination, decrease in compensation, etc.) against you while you are directed to be in isolation. If you continue to have concerns, call the Department of Labor at 302- 761-8001 for more information.

What happens if my job/employer calls me to come back during my isolation or quarantine period?

Call the Department of Labor at 302-761-8001 for more information on how to handle this situation.

If someone at my job is COVID-19 positive what does that mean for all of us who work with this person?

It depends on your degree of contact with a COVID-positive co-worker. If you were determined to be a contact, you will most likely be asked to self-quarantine. If you are not determined to be a contact, you will not need to self-quarantine.

How long has contact tracing been going on?

Delaware has had contact tracing for decades for other communicable diseases including tuberculosis and mumps. Specific to COVID-19, contact tracing began in mid-May.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this program?

Visit de.gov/coronavirus and click on the contact tracing button for more information.

How do I apply to become a contact tracer?

Instructions on how to apply can be found at de.gov/coronavirus.