

Contact Tracing in the Workplace

PURPOSE

Tulsa County employers need to work together with the Tulsa Health Department to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Contact tracing and self-quarantining of people with COVID-19 and close contacts are critical to help slow transmission in our communities. This document provides employers guidance in the event they are notified by the Tulsa Health Department about a positive case of COVID-19 with an employee at their organization or business.

CONTACT TRACING

Contact tracing is a disease control measure used by local and state health departments as a strategy to break the chain of transmission of a highly contagious disease and involves health department efforts to identify, test and isolate people with suspected or confirmed infection.

Contact tracers are trained public health professionals who call individuals diagnosed with a contagious disease to determine who they may have been in contact with and potentially exposed. Since COVID-19 is highly contagious, it is crucially important to identify those who have been exposed by coming into contact with an infected person.

Contact tracers ask for information including date of birth, address and about any additional occupants in the home who may also be at risk of exposure. Contact tracers work with a patient to help them identify whom they have had close contact during the time they may have been infectious. A close contact is someone who has been within six feet of a positive case for at least 10 minutes or more during their infectious period, which could begin up to 48 hours before symptom onset.

Contact tracers then contact and inform these close contacts of their potential exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible. This may involve the support and assistance from an employer. A legitimate contact tracer will never ask for personal details such as a social security number, banking information or credit card number.

EXPECTATIONS

To protect patient privacy, contact tracers cannot give the name of the positive employee to an employer. Contact tracers may ask employers to identify workers who were present at a specific area at a specific time for a specific duration that may have been potentially exposed to the known positive case.

These employees are then informed by contact tracers that they may have been in close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19. They are not told the identity of the patient. These individuals are provided with education, information and support to understand their risk from our contact tracers. They are informed on how to monitor themselves for illness and how to curtail the possibility that of spreading the infection to others, even if they are not experiencing symptoms.

These contacts are encouraged to quarantine at home and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others in the home until 14 days after their last exposure, in case they also become ill. They should monitor themselves by checking their temperature twice daily and watching for cough or shortness of breath. Contacts who develop symptoms should promptly isolate themselves and notify public health staff.

KEY ACTIONS

Help us slow transmission and answer the call to slow the spread by picking up the phone when the Tulsa Health Department calls. It's recommended to follow all public health guidance. The Tulsa Health Department may make recommendations on modifications in the workplace to eliminate/reduce close contact. For more information on business and industry-specific guidelines, visit tulsa-health.org/COVID19. Making a choice to help your health department in the fight against COVID-19 keeps you, your family and your community safer.