HOW EMPLOYERS CAN SUPPORT CONTACT TRACING

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Organizations of all sizes can do their part to stop the spread of COVID-19 through contact tracing. Together, testing and tracing can help restore public health and spur economic recovery.

Contact tracing is something organizations of all sizes can do to stop the spread of the virus.

Whenever someone tests positive for COVID-19, it is important to identify individuals who may have been exposed to the virus and notify them of the steps they can take to protect themselves and others from further infection. Well-coordinated contact tracing efforts can prevent business closures and future cases of COVID-19. The action steps below are based on guidance from the CDC and best practices from employers:

Assign a COVID-19 Lead
The POC will manage workplace health and safety plans. Free contact tracing courses are offered by The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials and Johns Hopkins.

Keep Good Records
Do you have the ability to contact every employee, vendor or customer who might need to know that they had prolonged contact with someone who was later found to be infected with COVID-19? Make sure employee contact information is up to date. If possible, ask customers to sign-in with their name, phone number, and the date and time when they enter your business. As needed, you can share this information with local public health officials to use during the contact-tracing process.

Screen Your Team
Ask employees screening questions prior to the start of each working shift to identify potential COVID-19 cases.

Respond Swiftly to Cases
Identify and inform employees who had close contact with a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19. Trace close contacts back to 48 hours prior to a positive COVID-19 test or the onset of symptoms. Do not disclose the name of the employee with the COVID-19 case unless the employee provides consent.

Talk Through a Plan

Educate employees on how COVID-19 most commonly spreads through close contact. Direct employees to report COVID-19 symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to a confirmed COVID-19 case. Encourage employees with confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 to speak with public health workers. Reference the CDC's guidance for isolation after confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19.

Answer the Phone

It sounds easy, but contact tracers are still struggling to get people to answer their calls. Health department personnel may contact employers when investigating a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19. Provide potential contacts who worked in the same area and on the same shift as an individual with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19. Share workplace records of customers and community members who may have been exposed to COVID-19.

DEFINITION: CLOSE CONTACT

The CDC defines close contact as someone who has been within six feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. An infected person can spread SARS-CoV-2 starting from two days before they have any symptoms (or, for asymptomatic patients, two days before the positive specimen collection date), until they meet criteria for discontinuing home isolation.

How Contact Tracing Works

Contact tracing identifies and supports in quarantine the contacts of those who have tested positive for COVID-19.

TESTING

Contact tracing begins with those who have tested positive for COVID-19. The method is most effective when integrally linked to widespread testing.

IDENTIFICATION

Contacts are identified and listed: those who have had meaningful exposure to the diagnosed individual during the period of potential transmission, which begins before the onset of symptoms.

NOTIFICATION

Contacts are notified of their status, and informed of implications and next steps, such as how to find care. Depending on local health guidance, quarantine or isolation could be required for high-risk contacts.

FOLLOW-UP, MONITORING & SUPPORT

Contacts are monitored regularly for symptoms and tested for infection. Results of monitoring help determine the most appropriate intervention, including quarantine.

Source: World Health Organization

For additional information, reference the CDC's full guidance and easy to read resource on contact tracing as well as FAQs for suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Approaches to contact tracing share basic elements but can differ in terms of technology; traditional contact tracing uses telephone and in-person contact; newer approaches use mobile apps and data. Governments need to evaluate the implications of alternative approaches to tracing for privacy and individual liberties.