

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 29, 2020

Department of Health Shares Weekly Update on COVID-19 Investigations, Contact Tracing, Monitoring Efforts

Harrisburg, PA – The Department of Health today shared its weekly update on Pennsylvania’s COVID-19 case investigation and contact tracing data.

“Contact tracing is an important public health strategy to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while informing any close contacts about their exposure anonymously, and we appreciate that Pennsylvanians are doing their part to answer the call,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “For case investigations, it is important for our fellow Pennsylvanians to pick up the phone when public health professionals call to ensure that public health staff can inform them of the important steps they can take to protect their communities and those close to them. If you are a close contact, we need you to answer the call to stop this virus in its tracks before it could affect your loved ones, co-workers or friends across the state.”

Contact tracing is the process of identifying, notifying, and monitoring anyone who came in close contact with an individual who tested positive for COVID-19 while they were infectious. The contact tracing process is not possible without a case investigation by a public health professional. Case investigators make the initial call to those with positive COVID-19 test results.

During the case investigation, public health professionals spend 30 to 60 minutes asking questions to ensure all potential close contacts are identified. They collect information about who the case came in contact with and where they went while they were infectious. Information collected during the case investigation process is not shared publicly unless doing so would help the department in its efforts to stop the spread on a broader scale. Between Sunday, September 12 and Saturday, September 19, there were 5,747 COVID-19 cases statewide and 55 percent of all cases had a case investigation started within 24 hours of receiving the positive report.

After the initial case investigation is complete, contact tracing begins. Within the same time period of September 12 to September 19, there were 1,303 contact tracing staff working with local and county health entities, partner organizations and the Regional Response Health Collaboration Program within the Department of Human Services. Currently 290 paid employees are being onboarded through [a partnership with Insight Global](#).

Of the current 1,303 contact tracers there are 67 volunteers, 10 care resource managers, and 20 contact tracing supervisors. These staff monitored 8,927 contacts that were identified during the case investigations.

As of the [August 2020 report](#) released August 14, there were 1,032 contact tracing staff in operation with the following breakdown in each regional health district in Pennsylvania:

- Northcentral: 32 contact tracing staff
- Northeast: 114 contact tracing staff
- Northwest: 52 contact tracing staff
- Southcentral: 62 contact tracing staff

- Southeast: 408 contact tracing staff
- Southwest: 74 contact tracing staff

As the contact tracing program expands, the Department of Health continues to work in partnership with over 150 organizations, in addition to the county and municipal health departments, through regional partnerships to help gather and answer questions, identify problems and find solutions to improve contact tracing efforts within the region. Each regional partnership has met at least once, and includes public health staff, health providers, academic institutions, community organizations, and other stakeholders interested in helping to coordinate and engage around contact tracing efforts.

Organizations and entities interested in partnering in these efforts should reach out to RA-DHCONTACTTRACING@pa.gov.

You can find more information on the state's contact tracing efforts and all available contact tracing positions at the Department of Health's website [here](#).

Pennsylvanians are reminded that mask-wearing is required when visiting businesses or in any setting outside the home where social distancing is difficult. Remember: My mask protects you; your mask protects me.

The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out, you are required to wear a mask when in a business or where it is difficult to maintain proper social distancing.

Updated Coronavirus Links: Press Releases, State Lab Photos, Graphics

- [Daily COVID-19 Report](#)
- [Press releases regarding coronavirus](#)
- [Latest information on the coronavirus](#)
- [Photos of the state's lab in Exton](#) (for download and use)
- [Coronavirus and preparedness graphics](#) (located at the bottom of the page)
- [Community preparedness and procedures materials](#)
- [Map with the number of COVID-19 cases](#)

All Pennsylvania residents are encouraged to sign up for AlertPA, a text notification system for health, weather, and other important alerts like COVID-19 updates from commonwealth agencies. Residents can sign up online at www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/Signup-For-Alerts