



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**November 3, 2020**

## **Department of Health Shares Oct. 18-24 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 and encouraged Pennsylvanians to download the COVID Alert PA app to aid in contact tracing efforts.

“Across Pennsylvania we are seeing an alarming trend of high COVID-19 cases and low response rates when public health professionals are calling, yet we still are monitoring large numbers of contacts, which means people are disclosing with whom they come in contact,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “We are calling on Pennsylvanians do their part and answer the call – answer the call when a case investigator or contact tracer is calling you, answer the call to download the app, answer the call to do your part to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Together, we can continue to fight this virus.”

Contact tracing is the process of identifying, notifying, and monitoring anyone who came in close contact with an individual who has COVID-19 while that individual was 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 with whom the individual came in contact and where the individual went while 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, October 18 and Saturday, October 24, there were 11,926 COVID-19 cases statewide and 30 percent of all cases had a case investigation started within 24 hours of receiving the positive report. Public health professionals will continue calling to complete the case investigation after the 24-hour period. An additional 10 percent of all cases had a case investigation started within 48 hours.

After the initial case investigation is complete, contact tracing begins. Within the same time period of October 18 to October 24, there were 1,434 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 as well as volunteers from Co-County Wellness in Berks County and Penn Medicine Lancaster General Health.

Currently, all of the allotted 1,000 people have been hired through [a partnership with Insight Global](#). Some of these contact tracers have been promoted to perform case investigations to meet the immediate needs of case investigations. There are 40 supervisors, 12 regional field managers, and 10 care coordinators who will help to refer Pennsylvanians to services during quarantine [across the commonwealth](#).

These staff monitored 10,930 contacts who were identified during the case investigations.

On September 22, the department launched [COVID Alert PA](#), a free mobile app that uses Bluetooth technology to let a person know that they have been exposed to COVID-19 without compromising the identity or location of either the person using the app, or of the person to whom they may have been exposed. There have been over 410,000 downloads thus far.

This app helps the contact tracing process by identifying and notifying those people identified as close contacts through Bluetooth technology when a person with COVID-19 does not know or remember everyone with whom they may have come in contact while infectious; for example, someone they sat next to on a bus. To best support those close contacts identified through the app, there are contact tracers specifically assigned to support if those close contacts would like to talk to someone and ask questions about their next steps.

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](mailto: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.
- Download the COVID Alert PA app and make your phone part of the fight. The free app can be found in the [Google Play Store](#) and the [Apple App Store](#) by searching for "covid alert pa".

**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](#)

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