THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTACT TRACING
IN STOPPING COVID-19

June 7, 2020 – In response to an increasing number of questions and concerns, along with misinformation around case investigation and contact tracing, District Health Department #10 (DHD#10) seeks to educate the public on these long-standing public health tools used to reduce and contain the spread of infectious disease throughout history.

According to Michigan's Public Health Code (Act 368 of 1978), local public health is charged with communicable disease case investigation. Contact tracing is a well-tested tool in case investigation that epidemiologists have used to track and slow the spread of disease since 1813. Since then, contact tracing has been successfully used to contain communicable disease such as tuberculosis, HIV, sexually transmitted diseases, pertussis, and Ebola.

As in all public health responses, tools are adapted to meet the unique challenge of each infection. Contact tracing for COVID-19 requires an adjustment on a significantly larger scale and adaption to the unique challenges of the virus, including asymptomatic spread.

DHD#10's process of contact tracing is outlined below:

1. An individual is tested for COVID-19.
2. The local health department is notified of confirmed and presumed positive COVID-19 cases.
3. A public health professional will contact and interview the case to gather information about their close contacts over their entire infectious period. (A close contact is someone who has been within a six-foot radius of a sick individual for longer than 10 minutes.)
4. The case is placed in **isolation** and provided education on isolation, wellness and prevention of transmission to others.
5. The health department works to contact all close contacts of the case to notify them that they've been exposed to the infection. They are interviewed to determine if they are displaying any symptoms, suggest testing as appropriate, referred for care if they are ill, and placed in a 14-day **quarantine** if they are not**.**
6. On-going monitoring of contacts continues to determine if symptoms arise in the close contacts through-out the quarantine period.
7. If close contacts start to show symptoms, they are referred to a healthcare provider for testing and treatment.
8. If they test positive, they now become a case and the cycle repeats until there are no new cases.

For contact tracing to be effective in helping to stop the spread of COVID-19, it is very important that you answer the call if you are contacted by DHD#10. You can be assured of the following:
- Your identity will be protected
- We will not release your name to anyone we call, including your contacts

- We will NEVER ask for personal identification, like your social security number, driver's license, or credit card information

"If you get a call from DHD#10, please help us, help your parents, your grandparents, your children, and your community" states Kevin Hughes, Health Officer. "If you are a contact of a known COVID-19 case, please answer the call and do your part in assuring that our medically fragile are safe and that our community can continue to stay open. The goal truly is to reduce continued infection and protect your loved ones."

Learn more about contact tracing at www.michigan.gov/containCOVID. For more information about COVID-19, go to: www.dhd10.org, www.michigan.gov/coronavirus, or www.cdc.com/coronavirus

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