Contact Investigation:
An Introduction

Ryan Sealy & Antoinette (Netta) Aguirre

Alex Wu, Celeste Davis, Richard Leman,
Lou Schmitz & Dieuwke Spencer

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What are Coronaviruses?

- Enveloped RNA viruses
- Named for club-like spikes on surface
- >20 of them, 7 cause human disease
- Most usually cause mild cold-like symptoms
- Exceptions include SARS, MERS, and COVID-2019
Key Facts for Contact Investigation

• Time from exposure to onset of illness:
  – Average: 5 days
  – Almost all by 12 days

• Modes of transmission:
  – Droplets ill person breathes out or coughs
  – Contact with ill person’s secretions

• Infectious period:
  – Mostly while person is sick
  – Possibly several days before
Timeline of Infection: Infectious Period

Person infected

Incubation period
(ranges from 2-14 days, but typically 5 days)

Signs and symptoms
(mild illness, about 10 days)
(severe illness, 2 or more weeks)

Infectious period

Starts 2 days PRIOR to symptoms

Most infectious at day 1 of symptoms

Contagion lessens with time

Image source: Center for Teaching and Learning, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.
Defining Their Infectious Period

- Let’s assume that you call the case on May 10
- They tell you that they became ill on May 9
- You know that they were infectious for about 2 days before they became ill, and will be for at least 10 days after their onset

May 9 + 10 days = May 19

Image source: Center for Teaching and Learning, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.
Contact investigations are key to stopping the outbreak and saving lives.
Contact investigations can help “flatten the curve”
Goal: Prevent Further Spread of Illness

Identify people who:

• Were exposed to an ill person while that person was infectious

• Need some public health action to prevent further illnesses
  (Example: Stay Home Order)
Timeline of Infection: Window of Opportunity

**Person infected**
- **Incubation period** (ranges from 2-14 days, but typically 5 days)

**Signs and symptoms**
- (mild illness, about 10 days)
- (severe illness, 2 or more weeks)

**Infected Contact**
- (5 day incubation)
- (10 days signs and symptoms)

**Window of Opportunity** (before they become infectious)

Image source: Center for Teaching and Learning, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.
Goal: Prevent Further Spread of Illness

Share information with contacts about

• Symptoms to watch for

• How they can prevent spread of infection to others
  • Describe what quarantine/isolation means
Use Simple Words

- Avoid technical words
  - Case
  - Contact
  - Infectious period

- Use simple words
  - Someone who is sick
  - Someone who’s been around a sick person
  - The time in which you can spread coronavirus to others
Using Simple Words: Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Why are you calling me?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Don’t</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You came in close contact with a case during their infectious period.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Image source: Center for Teaching and Learning, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Communicate One Message or Question at a Time

► **One question at a time**
  ► Asking multiple questions simultaneously will confuse people
  ► Asking multiple questions at once will not give you clear answers

► **One message at a time**
  ► Your goals are to get information and ALSO give information
  ► People take time to process new information as you talk
  ► Check in frequently to see if they understand you
Plan and Resources

Identify challenges with quarantine (contacts) and isolation (case)
  • Food
  • Medication
  • Laundry
  • Financial Resources
  • Special Needs

Have Tribal resources ready to support challenges
Give a end date for quarantine/isolation
Assess Needs for Medical Care

*Refrain from giving medical advice – refer them to their Primary Care Provider (PCP)*

Advise to seek immediate care and call 911 if:
- Chest pain that doesn’t go away
- Trouble breathing
- Blue in the face or lips
- Disoriented or trouble talking
Reminders

• Recommended to follow-up every day

• Allow person to ask questions and get clarification
Steps to Contact Tracing
1. Once you are notified of a case and have their contact information review the “Case Interview Script” document before contacting the person. It has links in it for the “OHA COVID-19 form”. Review the “COVID-19 Form”.

Case Interview Script

COVID-19 Case Interview Script & Protocol

General Suggestions:
- The primary goal of leaving a text or voicemail is to get the case on the phone with you.
- Leaving a voicemail after the first call attempt is good practice – it allows the case to associate your number with a name and reputable agency, rather than as a spam caller.
- It is okay to call the case more than once in the same day; this may help to indicate the urgency of your call.
- It is a good idea to explore different modalities (e.g. text) if you are unable to contact cases by phone.
- Texting can lead to conversation gains, but DO NOT text your case before the first call attempt, we recommend texting cases after your second call attempt.

Before calling review:
- Use the current COVID-19 Report Form

Leaving a Voicemail Message:
“Hi this is [interviewer’s name] from [agency name], I am contacting you about your recent illness. Please call me back at [predetermined contact number], I will be in the office [availability], if I don’t answer, please leave a voicemail and I’ll get back to you as soon as possible.”

Case Interview Script for COVID-19

Hi, this is [interviewer’s name] calling from [agency name]. May I speak with [respondent’s name]? (or, “Am I speaking with [respondent’s name]?”)

IF THE CONTACT IS A LESS THAN 18 YEARS OLD, ASK TO SPEAK TO THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF THE MINOR FIRST.

COVID-19 Form

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus)

Name: ________________________________
Address: ________________________________
Street: ________________________________
City: ________________________________
Zip: ________________________________

If Congregate setting, List type and Point of Contact:
If last housed, give details:

Phone number:

E-mail:

Preferred Communication: ________________________________

ALTERNATE CONTACT:

If DOB unknown, AGE: ______

Sex: ________________________________
Female: ____________ Male: ____________

Preg: ____________ V: ____________ UNK: ____________

Language: ________________________________
Country of birth: ________________________________
Refugee: ____________

Work/school/day care center: ________________________________
Occupation/grade: ________________________________

Race, Ethnicity, Language, and Disability (REALD)

How do you identify your race, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, country of origin, or ancestry?

Amer Indian
- Alaska Native
- American Indian
- Alaska Native
- Canadian Inuit, Métis
- First Nation
- Indigenous Mexican
- Central American
- South American

ASIAN
- Asian Indian
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Hmong
- Japanese
- Korean
- Latina
- South Asian
- Other

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Guamanian
- Chamorro
- Micronesia
- Marshallese/Pala’un (CIFA)
- Native Hawaiian
- Samoan
- Other

Middle Eastern
- Northern African
- Other

White
- Eastern European
- Nordic
- Western European
- Other White
2. Contact the case. Using the “Case Interview Script,” complete the “COVID-19 form” as thoroughly as possible.
3. Send the case a “Preventing COVID-19 for Cases” letter by mail, text, or email.

Dear [Name],

You are receiving this letter because you were recently diagnosed with COVID-19, and we want to provide you with steps to help prevent the disease from spreading to people in your home and community.

**Symptoms of COVID-19**
The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Sometimes people may have loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, sore throat, and muscle pain, and they may feel very tired. Most people with COVID-19 will have mild disease, but some people will get sicker and may need to be hospitalized.

**Stay home except to get medical care**
You should stay home except if you need medical care. Do not go to work, school, or public areas. To the extent possible, avoid using public transportation, ride-sharing, or taxis.

**Separate yourself from other people and animals in your home**
Stay in your own room and away from other people in your home as much as possible. Use a separate bathroom, if available. Increase airflow in shared spaces like the kitchen or bathroom by opening windows. If you need help, have just one person who is healthy provide care.

Available at:
https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le2295.pdf
4. Call all contacts found through the case interview ASAP using the “Contact Interview Script”, ideally within 24 hours of interviewing the case. Contact tracers can typically manage 8-10 contacts.

**CONTACT Interview Script**

*If no answer, leave a generic voicemail:*

Hi, this is [interviewer name], I am helping [agency name] in their COVID-19 response. I am part of a team that is following up on people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 and it is important that I talk with you. Please call me back at [predetermined contact number]. I will be in the office [availability]. If I don’t answer, please leave a voicemail and I’ll get back to you as soon as possible.”

*If voicemail is full or unavailable, please note this along with the day and time, then try again at different times. Please attempt to make contact 3 times.*

Hi, this is [interviewer’s name], I am helping [agency name]. May I speak with [respondent name]? (or “Am I speaking with [respondent name]?”)

**IF THE CONTACT IS LESS THAN 18 YEARS OLD, ASK TO SPEAK TO THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF THE MINOR FIRST.**

**IF THE PERSON PREFERENCES A LANGUAGE OTHER THAN ENGLISH, PLEASE TELL THEM YOU WILL CALL THEM BACK WITH AN INTERPRETER. PROCEED WITH INTERVIEW ONCE YOU HAVE AN INTERPRETER ON THE LINE.**
4a. Send each contact a “COVID Prevention for Contacts” letter by mail, text, or e-mail.

Dear {Enter name of contact}:

You are receiving this letter because you have been exposed to someone diagnosed with COVID-19. We want to help you and those around you stay safe and healthy. It is important that you know how to get medical help safely and, should you get COVID-19, how to avoid spreading it to others. This letter describes how to monitor yourself, how to keep yourself safe, and what you should do if you develop symptoms.

Starting today and until [date] please:

- Stay at home as much as you can. Practice physical distancing, including avoiding group settings and staying at least 6 feet from other people. You may exercise outside alone. If you are a healthcare worker, please consult with occupational health at your facility.
- Check your temperature each morning and evening and record the temperature using the chart at the end of this letter. Check your temperature with a digital thermometer the same way every day, at about the same time. Do not let anyone else use the thermometer during this period.
- Monitor yourself for cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or new loss of taste

Available at:
https://sharedsystems.dhsoha.state.or.us/DHSForms/Served/le2294.pdf
5. Use the “Active Surveillance Script” to follow-up with contacts. Follow the chart on page 1 and script on page 2 based on the situation.

**Active Surveillance Script, Page 1**

- Send text/email to contact
- **Response within 8 hours?**
  - **N** → Resend text/email and call within same 24h period
  - **Y** → Send confirmation of receipt. Log responses
  - **Response within 24**
    - **N** → After 24 hours without contact, call the emergency contact and notify supervisor
    - **Y** → Did this person report symptoms?
      - **N** → Quarantine period complete?
      - **Y** → Perform symptom rapid assessment

**Active Surveillance Script, Page 2**

**Email or text template:**

Hello [contact name], this is [contact monitor name]. I am helping [agency name] with daily symptom checks.

Have you:

1) Developed a temperature of 100°F or greater? If YES, please provide your highest temperature

2) Experienced any of the following symptoms: cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, loss of smell or taste, sore throat, abdominal pain, headache, chills, runny nose, diarrhea, muscle aches, nausea, or vomiting? If YES, please list which symptoms.

Thank you! If you have any problems or questions, please let me know or contact your local health department at [LPHA phone number]

**Confirmation template:**

I have received your response and I will review the information you provided. Thank you for helping prevent the spread of COVID-19.

**If symptoms are reported:**

- **Symptom rapid assessment**
  - Cough
  - shortness of breath
  - fever (>100F)
  - loss of smell or taste
  - radiographic evidence of viral pneumonia*

*Note: Clinical diagnosis will need to confirm this.
6. If, during monitoring, a contact develops COVID symptoms or tests positive for COVID, repeat steps 1-5.

Either cough, trouble breathing, or

At least *two* of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Headache
- Chills
- Sore throat
- Muscle Pain
- New loss of sense of taste or smell
Please thoroughly review the forms you will use (ID, OR, WA, or tribal forms)

We’re glad to take questions!

Antoinette Aguirre aaguirre@npaihb.org
Celeste Davis cdavis@npaihb.org
Richard Leman richard.f.leman@dhssoha.state.or.us
Lou Schmitz Lou.Schmitz.AIHC@outlook.com
Ryan Sealy rsealy@npaihb.org
Dieuwke Spencer Dieuwke.Spencer@dhw.idaho.gov
Alex Wu awu@npaihb.org