

**August 19, 2020**

## **Department of Health Pilots COVID-19 Exposure Notification Mobile App to Strengthen Contact Tracing and Mitigation Efforts**

**Harrisburg, PA** – The Pennsylvania Department of Health today announced that it is currently conducting a pilot program for a new COVID-19 exposure-notification mobile app, COVID Alert PA, which will be available to smartphone users starting early September.

The app is designed to help bolster the state's contact-tracing efforts, not replace them. Case investigations and contact tracing are still needed.

The department is partnering with the state of Delaware, along with NearForm, University of Pennsylvania and MIT's Lincoln Laboratory, Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (CSAIL) and Internet Privacy Research Institute (PRI) to build the mobile app that will alert individuals of a possible exposure if they have been in a close contact with a COVID-19 positive individual.

"This innovative solution will not replace our traditional contact tracing process, but it will enhance our COVID-19 response and give residents another tool to stay calm, stay alert and stay safe," Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. "By utilizing this technology, we can quickly notify more people who have been exposed to COVID-19. We hope when this app is available, Pennsylvanians will do the right thing and download, use it and continue to remain alert as we continue to fight this virus."

In September, you can find the COVID Alert PA app for free to download in the Google Play store or Apple App store. This app is voluntary, but the more Pennsylvanians age 18 and older who adopt the app, the more successful efforts can be.

During a COVID-19 case investigation interview, the public health staff will ask if they have the app available and provide a six-digit validation code that the app user can upload and confirm their COVID-19 diagnosis. After the validation is completed, the app will use a push notification and send out an Exposure Alert to any individuals who came in close contact with someone who was diagnosed with COVID-19.

The app does not enable any location services and is designed to be completely anonymous.

This app will further support the more than 1,200 trained contact tracers throughout the state, including 130 state health nurses and county and municipal health departments, leading and conducting COVID-19 contact tracing efforts. Case investigations, contact tracing efforts and ongoing monitoring are proven public health strategies to contain the spread of diseases and are necessary to identify any instances of community spread

and prevent larger outbreaks. You can find more information on the state's contact tracing efforts through our website [here](#).

"We are very committed and conscious of protecting the privacy and security of all Pennsylvanians," Dr. Levine said. "This app will not use GPS to collect movement or geographic location of individuals. Instead, this app will be using Bluetooth proximity enabled exposure notification service technology provided by Apple and Google. It is important for users to know that we are not collecting any personal information with this app."

In addition, the app will provide users with the latest information on COVID-19 in Pennsylvania from the department's [data dashboard](#).

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](http://www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/Signup-For-Alerts).