

August 17, 2020

## **Wolf Administration: Update on COVID-19 Contact Tracing, Staff Now at 1,205, Training and Recruitment Continue**

**Harrisburg, PA** – The Department of Health today shared an update on Pennsylvania’s contact tracing program expansion and current program data. 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 of COVID-19.

“Pennsylvania has prioritized and mobilized contact tracing efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 ever since the pandemic struck the commonwealth,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “We are grateful for our volunteers and staff conducting this work. By hiring more contact tracing staff, we will strengthen and diversify our public health and contact tracing workforce.

“We are working to carefully hire staff to help with immediate contact tracing needs and will hire more staff as needed. Our work protects and balances the health and safety of residents and taxpayer resources to stop the spread of COVID-19 with ensuring successful contact tracing efforts across the commonwealth.”

There are currently 1,205 contact tracing staff working with local and county health entities to respond to COVID-19 cases; 955 are trained and executing calls and an additional 250 are being [hired and onboarded through a partnership with Insight Global](#).

The contact [tracing process](#) is not possible without a case investigation by a public health professional. For this reason, Pennsylvania is investing federal funding to hire an additional 75 nursing staff to strengthen the infrastructure for conducting case investigations. This federal investment will increase the current staffing complement, bringing the total to 185 community health nurses statewide.

From June 25 to July 24, there were 22,989 COVID-19 cases and 375 case investigators across the commonwealth. More than 68 percent of these cases had a completed case investigation within 24 hours of receiving their positive COVID-19 test result. The vast majority of the remaining cases had a complete investigation within 48 hours of their positive COVID-19 test result.

Of the completed case investigations, there were 588 contact tracing staff assigned to trace the 14,101 named close contacts during a case investigation across the state. The contact tracing staff assigned also include those who perform both case investigations and contact tracing.

Insight Global is recruiting, interviewing, hiring, training, and supporting contact tracers, contact tracer supervisors, and care resource manager positions. Both full- and part-time positions will be offered as needed and will provide ongoing skill development and training for those interested in public health careers.

Recruitment efforts for these positions will include previous and current volunteers, volunteer applicants, and those who lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The department works with partners in local communities to ensure that individuals hired represent the diversity of the state.

The department will continue to accept and enroll individual volunteer applications through [ServPA](#) and coordinate volunteer groups; however, individuals may experience a delay as the department

expands part- and full-time paid contact tracing positions and trains these large volunteer groups, such as students from colleges and universities.

As the program expands, the department continues to promote and be involved in six regional partnerships to help gather and answer questions, identify problems and find solutions to overall better understand any potential areas to effectively contact trace within that respective region. These regional partnerships include 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.

### **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).