

USET Tribal Epidemiology Center

Recommendations for Tribal Consideration

USET TEC COVID-19 Guidance 2020-004: Contact Tracing During an Outbreak or Pandemic



Background

Contact tracing is a public health method that is used to identify people who may have encountered an infected person. Contact tracing is implemented to control or decrease the spread of infectious disease, identify potential cases, and identify a potential source of the disease. The USET Tribal Epidemiology Center (TEC), in accordance with World Health Organization (WHO) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, recommends that contact tracing be conducted until community spread is observed. Contact tracing may be performed by the state/local health departments and Tribal Nation officials may wish to coordinate information with these departments or may wish to conduct their own contact tracing process. Please contact the USET TEC at usetepi@usetinc.org for assistance with adapting the contact tracing process to better meet your needs.

Contact Tracing Process

Contact tracing begins by identifying a possible or suspected case. A questionnaire (in this case, the USET COVID-19 surveillance tool) can be used to determine the true occurrence of clinical symptoms or laboratory specimens could be collected to determine the number of asymptomatic cases. Contact tracing can be broken down into three steps:

1. Contact Identification

Once someone is confirmed as infected with COVID-19, contacts are identified by asking about the person's activities and the activities and roles of the people around them since the onset of illness. Contacts are anyone who has been in contact with an infected person for a minimum of 10 minutes and within 6 feet of them (e.g., family members, work colleagues, friends, or health care providers).

- Information that should be collected: name, address, and telephone number are essential for investigators to contact patients for additional questions and to notify them of laboratory results and the outcome of the investigation.

2. Contact Listing

All persons considered to have contact with the infected person should be listed as contacts. Efforts should be made to identify every listed contact and to inform them of their contact status, what it means, the actions that will follow, and the importance of receiving early care if they develop symptoms.

- Contacts should also be provided information on prevention and control measures—including isolation and quarantine—that need to be taken.

3. Contact Follow Up

Regular follow up should be conducted with all contacts to monitor for symptoms and test for signs of infection.

- Follow up with each contact should be conducted over the phone. The time required for follow up starts from the date of exposure to the COVID-19 case and extends for 14 days.
- Assess if the contact has developed symptoms, taken daily temperatures, followed the isolation/quarantine guidelines, and had contact with anyone since they were informed of their exposure to COVID-19.