



## **New Jersey's Statewide Contact Tracing Program**

In the absence of treatment or a vaccine, contact tracing is critical to contain and control COVID-19, a global pandemic. Contact tracing is a necessary tool for New Jersey's safe reopening. Like many other states, New Jersey has had to procure a contact tracing system that is easily scalable and flexible to expand existing contact tracing efforts for COVID-19. Modifying the existing Communicable Disease Reporting and Surveillance System (CDRSS) was not feasible within the existing timeframe, so the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) chose a system that had the best existing functionality and flexibility to expand Contact Tracing in New Jersey.

**CommCare** is a platform that supports uniform and focused efforts on COVID-19 cases and their contacts to ensure they are identified and notified in a timely manner.

### **Features of CommCare:**

- Daily symptom monitoring for contacts via SMS to report to LHDs if their health changes.
- Ability to assign by municipality was implemented in Phase 1. In Phase 2 (by statewide rollout), NJDOH seeks to make this process simpler and more streamlined to assign by local health jurisdiction (LHD) to support New Jersey's unique local health structure.
- Data on confirmed cases are imported from CDRSS and data from interviewed cases are brought back into CDRSS on a daily basis. This ensures CDRSS remains the system of record while having all COVID-19 investigation work completed in CommCare.
- A shared county view may allow for the identification of COVID clusters that might not be apparent when viewing cases are limited to a single LHD.
- Quick identification and transfer of a case that needs to be handled in a language other than English.

### **Process when CommCare goes live for a County:**

- Cases are reported to CDRSS via electronic lab reporting (process unchanged).
- NJDOH will transfer cases to CommCare for LHDs to assign to their existing LHD staff
- If LHD capacity allows, LHDs may also assign named contacts to existing LHD staff.
- When LHDs identify that cases/contacts exceed the capacity of existing staff, communication with a county point person (TBD) will be necessary to have additional trained staff support (see below re: staffing).
- Data points updated in CommCare are transferred back to CDRSS and cases are updated and closed in CDRSS.

## Staffing

- Staff will be hired for the Community Contact Tracing Corps via Rutgers School of Public Health and a staffing vendor (to be selected). **These staff are funded by NJDOH.** These staff are temporary and will be scaled up and down according to the disease burden and progression. While the number of staff to be hired depends on the disease burden/progression, it is estimated that between 1,000-4,000 contact tracers will need to be hired by August to prepare for a potential fall surge.
- Every effort will be made to pair contact tracers in their locales; however, they may be called to work in other areas of the county and/or state should a surge of COVID cases occur elsewhere. Staff will work from home unless directed otherwise.
- While staff are working from home, efforts will be made by NJDOH to have a virtual meet and greet for new staff and the LHD(s) they are supporting to build the relationship and ensure they know their potential auxiliary contact tracing staff.
- If the local health department has volunteer contact tracers that the LHD has already trained, NJDOH will work to get them onboarded as part of the paid workforce if they desire full time employment. While we will attempt to place them with the LHD who identified and trained them initially, they may be asked to help at the county level or in other areas of the state depending on the current COVID disease burden.
- Existing LHD disease investigators and contact tracers working on COVID-19 are **not** eligible for reimbursement/payment via the state expanded contact tracing program.

## Training

- There are two trainings available: training on contact tracing and training on CommCare.
- All users (existing staff from LHDs and newly hired staff) are required to complete CommCare training prior to being assigned login credentials.
- The training on contact tracing is provided by Rutgers School of Public Health (SPH) via the Canvas platform and is required for all newly hired contact tracers whether from Community Contact Tracing Corps or staffing vendor.
- The SPH training is 18 hours and includes Johns Hopkin's Contact Tracing training, a primer for understanding local health in New Jersey, lessons to enhance interviewing skills, and 5 hours of CommCare training videos.
- Both trainings are free and open to anyone in your LHD who wants a refresher on contact tracing.

**Additional Resources** provided by NJDOH during this effort include:

- Use of a language line to ensure contact tracers are able to communicate in any language that our clients speak.
- Access to Thomson Reuters CLEAR to assist with incomplete patient demographic information to ensure cases can be investigated in a timely manner.

- AWS Connect internet-based phone system by county to allow for universal local phone numbers to aid in getting people answer the calls. Caller ID from AWS Connect will say “Health Dept” to aid in getting people to answer the call.
- Public awareness campaign to raise awareness and trust of contact tracing. This campaign will be in multiple languages and materials will be available for LHDs to incorporate in their messaging.

LHDs are not required to provide funding for these activities. NJDOH is funding the Community Contact Tracing Corps staff, all training, the CommCare platform, and resources mentioned above. As the statewide contact tracing program is implemented, NJDOH will work with LHDs to ensure address concerns and barriers in a timely manner. This may include standardizing policies and procedures, relaxing or waiving requirements, or issuing executive directives.

The CommCare system is a work in progress. With input and feedback from your experienced local health disease investigators, NJDOH hopes to expand the capacity of CommCare through collaboration to build a robust disease investigation and contact tracing system that will allow for a better response should a second wave of COVID cases occur. Per [Executive Order No. 141](#) issued May 12, 2020, all local, county, and regional health departments are required to use the CommCare platform to support their contact tracing efforts. In concert with the EO and targeted CommCare rollout schedule, all health departments in the state should be using the platform by July 6, 2020.

**Information shared with Health Officers on Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup> LHD 12pm call & emailed Saturday, June 20<sup>th</sup>:**

Dear Health Officers,

Please fill out and forward this enrollment link (<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5134153460948878607>) to all your case investigators, contact tracers, social supports, supervisors involved in COVID response. **Please encourage all staff to complete ASAP** as this will maximize their time to complete the training. Within 24 hours of completing this registration, your staff should receive a link from Rutgers Canvas and CommCare to begin training. Please check your spam folders for emails from: “Rutgers University Canvas [notifications@instructure.com](mailto:notifications@instructure.com)” & “[commcarehq-noreply-production@dimagi.com](mailto:commcarehq-noreply-production@dimagi.com)”

For Essex and Camden county partners: Please forward this link to any staff that have not completed CommCare training. Existing CommCare users **are not** required to fill out this enrollment form as your prior registration will be shared with Canvas so you have access to the training materials for reference.

As a recap from Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup> LHD 12pm call:

- a) *After enrollment, they will get a link to Canvas from Rutgers (same account if you already have one to review the training materials developed for new Contact Tracers) for CommCare training*
- b) *Training has to be completed by **Thursday, June 25<sup>th</sup> (11:59pm)** to be evaluated for being able to go-live on Monday, June 29<sup>th</sup>. If your county wants to **go live on June 29<sup>th</sup>**, all HOs in that county **must email Shereen and Greta by Tuesday, June 23<sup>rd</sup> 5pm** to facilitate communication and planning*
  - a. *Friday, June 26<sup>th</sup> – HOs will get an email to approve their users access – they must respond by COB Friday, June 26<sup>th</sup>.*
  - b. *Friday, June 26<sup>th</sup> 10-11:30am– we will have an “office hours” to review the training, and answer any questions*
- c) *If training is not completed by Thursday, June 25<sup>th</sup> – all remaining Health Departments will go live on July 6<sup>th</sup>. Training must be complete on July 1<sup>st</sup> (11:59pm). HO approval and office hours would be on July 2<sup>nd</sup>.*

If you don't receive an email from or have issues with Canvas, please email [help@canvas.rutgers.edu](mailto:help@canvas.rutgers.edu)

If you don't receive an email from or have issues with CommCare, please email [oit-esd@tech.nj.gov](mailto:oit-esd@tech.nj.gov)

AWS Connect (telephone system) information will come later.

-----End of Information Shared-----