

Health Department Checklist: Developing a Case Investigation & Contact Tracing Plan for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Case investigation and contact tracing are well-honed skills that adapt easily to new public health demands and are effective tools to slow the spread of COVID-19 in a community. Thoughtful planning can help ensure that these activities facilitate compassionate care for the people affected by COVID-19 and also prevent community transmission of the virus.

This checklist is a supplement to CDC’s [Health Departments: Interim Guidance on Developing a COVID-19 Case Investigation & Contact Tracing Plan](#) and is a tool that can assist health departments in developing a comprehensive plan. This tool does not describe mandatory requirements or standards; rather, it highlights important areas for consideration.

For additional information, users can access the corresponding section of the guidance document listed in each header (i.e., *Guidance Section #*).

COVID-19 case investigation and contact tracing activities will vary based on the level of community transmission, characteristics of the community and their populations, and the local capacity to implement both case investigation and contact tracing.

Scaling Up Staffing Roles Involved in Case Investigation & Contact Tracing ([Guidance Section II](#))

Staffing Plan	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Estimate # of case investigators/contact tracers needed			
Recruit and hire surge workforce			
- Include consideration for culturally and linguistically diverse populations that the jurisdiction serves			
Develop organizational structure (identification of staff who will perform key roles identified in CDC guidance)			
Training	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Develop training plan for current and new case investigators and contact tracers, including supervisors/leads			
- Include knowledge-based and skills-based training as well as opportunities for continuous and peer-to-peer learning			
Determine how training will be delivered			
Determine how training will be tracked to ensure all staff are trained			



Case Investigation & Contact Tracing Activities ([Guidance Section IV](#) & [Guidance Section V](#))

Case Investigation & Contact Tracing Strategy	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Define close contact and contact elicitation window			
Develop criteria for discontinuation of self-isolation and self-quarantine			
Develop testing strategy for:			
- Suspected and probable cases			
- Asymptomatic and symptomatic contacts			
- Outbreaks in congregate settings			
- Possibly for community at-large			
Develop case investigation strategy to prioritize cases if unable to investigate all confirmed and probable cases (triaging protocol likely needed)			
Develop close contact monitoring strategy to prioritize close contacts to monitor and/or modify intensity of monitoring depending on public health resources available			
Program Workflow	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Describe how cases are identified in your jurisdiction's data management system (case report CMR, lab test, other)			
Describe how case interview assignments are made			
Diagram and/or describe in detail the program workflow with surge staff and their supervision incorporated			
Procurement	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Procure any needed supplies, including PPE, COVID-19 kits for patients and contacts, materials/equipment for case investigation and contact tracing staff (e.g., laptops, tablets, cell phones)			
Laboratory Services	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Establish linkage to testing sites			
Develop understanding of statewide laboratory capacity and laboratory turnaround time for results reporting			
Identify SARS-CoV-2 tests in use by laboratories serving the jurisdiction			
Protocols	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Develop protocol for triaging cases			
- Obtaining necessary information to inform triaging			
- Determining case assignment			
Develop case investigation protocol			
- Can include interview guides, call scripts			

Case Investigation & Contact Tracing Activities (Guidance Section IV & Guidance Section V) *continued*

Protocols	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protocol covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Confidential notification 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Risk assessment 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Self-isolation instructions including any daily monitoring 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Linkage to self-isolation support services and medical services (if needed) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Linkage to testing (if needed and available) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Close contact elicitation 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Discontinuation of self-isolation 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specimen collection for testing (if applicable to role), proper PPE use 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case investigation when patients are unable to participate (including minors); proxy interviews 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of data collection forms and tools 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish timelines for 1st contact interviews 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop goals for timeliness of interviews 			
<p>Develop contact tracing protocol</p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can include interview guides, call scripts 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protocol covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Confidential notification 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Risk assessment 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Self-quarantine instructions including daily monitoring 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Linkage to self-quarantine support services and medical services (if needed) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Linkage to testing (if available) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Discontinuation of self-quarantine 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contact tracing activities when contacts are minors 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specimen collection for testing (if applicable to role), proper PPE use 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of data collection forms and tools 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Establish timelines for 1st contact interviews 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop goals for timeliness of interviews 			

Case Investigation & Contact Tracing Activities (Guidance Section IV & Guidance Section V) *continued*

Protocols	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Develop protocol for assessing need and eligibility of patients and contacts for support services, triaging requests, and providing linkage to needed services			
Develop protocol for medical monitoring of patients with COVID-19 who are at higher risk for severe disease			
Develop protocol for using interpretation services if case investigator/contact tracer is not fluent in primary language of patient with COVID-19 or close contact			
Develop protocol for providing case investigation and contact tracing services to people who are deaf or who have hearing loss			
Develop protocol for serving public health orders for isolation and quarantine, if applicable			

Outbreaks ([Guidance Section VI](#))

Complex Investigations	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Develop guidance for handling complex investigations (e.g., outbreaks in congregate living or workplace settings)			
- Formation of interdisciplinary team(s)			
- Triage protocol for handing over investigations to team			
- Plan for surge staffing if needed			

Special Considerations ([Guidance Section VII](#))

Protocols	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Develop protocol for managing case investigations when a patient is unable to participate (e.g., cognitively impaired, deceased, intubated, unconscious, a minor)			
Develop protocol for interjurisdictional case investigation and contact tracing			
Develop protocol for case investigation and contact tracing for flights (or other mode of public transportation) arriving in the US or between US states, or cruise ships arriving at US ports of entry			

Building Community Support ([Guidance Section VIII](#))

Communications and Community Engagement Strategy	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Develop a communications and community engagement strategy			
- Engage local community leaders, public officials, and influencers			
- Develop clear, empowering messages that create awareness of case investigation and contact tracing activities and encourage acceptance			
› Also share messages that dispel misinformation and direct public to reliable sources			
- Use all available communication channels to reinforce messages			

Communications and Community Engagement Strategy	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
- Ensure messages and materials are culturally sensitive			
- Tailor messages to reach specific audiences, including vulnerable populations in the community			
- Develop or adapt existing health education materials to share with patients and close contacts			
› Translate into primary languages of affected community members (also consider translating data collection instruments)			
› Include materials for low literacy levels and that are graphics-based (more images than text)			
- Identify communication avenues (social media, newspapers, TV news stories, billboards, TV ads)			

Data Management (Guidance Section IX)

Data Management Infrastructure	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Develop and implement data management infrastructure			
- Laboratory, provider, and contact case reports should be transmitted electronically and seamlessly imported into the system in an automated fashion			
- Develop modules for:			
› Case investigations of confirmed and probable cases,			
› Patient risk assessment (including contact elicitation),			
› Contact investigation (including risk assessment)			
› Should be editable without the need for vendors/contractors			
› Should be able to link multiple individuals within the system			
- Establish user roles in data management system			
- Develop routine canned reports for feedback to staff			
- Develop routine canned reports to review program successes and identify areas for improvement			
- Develop interview forms for patients and close contacts that incorporate critical data elements			
- Collaborate with healthcare providers for data sharing (e.g., access to electronic health records)			
- Ensure that local data security and confidentiality standards are being met			

Evaluating Success ([Guidance Section X](#))

Evaluation and Quality Improvement	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Develop plan for evaluation and quality improvement			
- Consider setting targets for select metrics			
- Select process and outcome metrics to routinely review			
- Use reports to identify areas for training and help leadership identify any necessary program adjustments			
- Identify staff member who will run reports			
- Identify staff who will receive reports			
- Determine frequency reports will be run			
Develop protocol for supervisory review and feedback on case and contact investigations			

Confidentiality and Consent ([Guidance Section XI](#))

Security and Confidentiality	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Develop plan addressing security and confidentiality			
- Assess standards currently in place to protect patient information and determine if modifications are needed for COVID-19			
Develop Protocols for:			
- Security of confidential case investigation and contact tracing information			
- Maintaining confidentiality, including legal requirements for public health personnel			

Support Services to Consider ([Guidance Section XII](#))

Support Services	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Develop plan for providing support services			
- Assess services available for patients, contacts, and their families			
- Fill critical gaps in wraparound services			
- Establish eligibility criteria			
- Provide alternate housing to support the isolation of patients and quarantine of close contacts who are unable to do so safely at their home			
- Provide telemedicine safety net pool of providers for on-call clinical consult with patients and contacts who do not have a primary healthcare provider			
- Partner with local community groups and organizations that can help support specific populations			
- Establish processes for connecting patients and contacts to support services			