Department of Health

Contact Tracing
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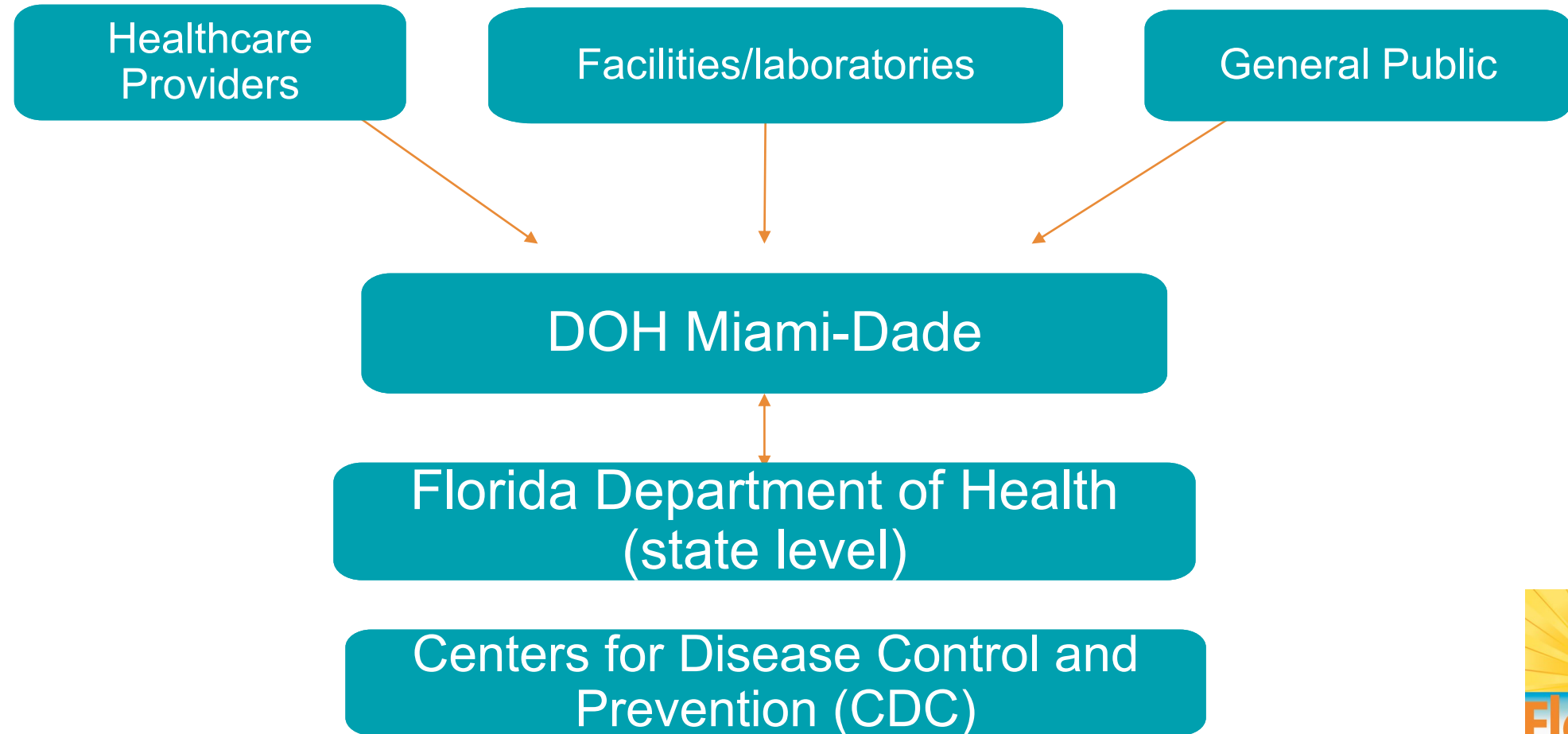
Florida
HEALTH

What is Contact Tracing?

- Contact tracing is **one** of the strategies used by health departments to prevent the spread of infectious disease.

- There are many other strategies we are using such as promoting social distancing, use of face masks, and frequent hand hygiene. County-wide mitigation efforts are also being used.

- Contact tracing involves identifying people who have an infectious disease (**cases**) as well as the people who may have been exposed (**close contacts**) and working with them to interrupt disease transmission.

- For COVID-19, this includes asking cases to isolate and contacts to quarantine at home voluntarily.

Purpose

- Identify potentially exposed contacts
- Notify contacts of their potential exposure in order to prevent them from accidentally spreading the infection to others if they start to get sick
- Provide education and resources as well as support for self-quarantining
- Follow-up with contacts and identify whether they developed symptoms

How COVID-19 is Reported

Healthcare Providers

Facilities/laboratories

General Public

DOH Miami-Dade

Florida Department of Health (state level)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Florida HEALTH

Contact Tracing Process

1. **Case investigation:** Public health staff work with a patient (case) to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the time when they may have been infectious.

   - We will ask for information such as name, date of birth (or age), last date of contact with the person, and their best contact phone number.

2. **Contact tracing:** Public health staff begin contact tracing by notifying exposed individuals (contacts) of their potential exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible, **not revealing the infected patient's identity.**

Contact Tracing Process

3. **Contact support:** Contacts are provided with education, information, and support to help them understand their risk, what they should do to separate themselves from others who are not exposed, and how to monitor themselves for illness. In addition, they are informed of the possibility that they could spread the infection to others even if they do not feel ill.

4. **Self-quarantine:** Contacts are encouraged to stay home, monitor their health, and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others until 14 days after their last exposure to the infected patient, in case they also become ill.

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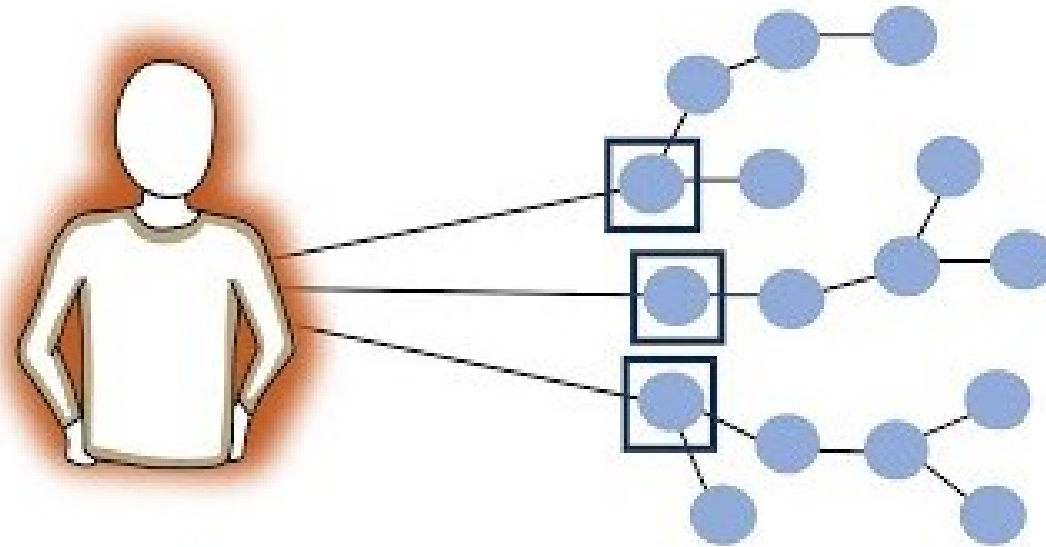
Close Contact

A close contact is anyone who has been within 6 feet of a confirmed COVID-19 case for 15 minutes or more starting from 48 hours before the person began feeling sick until the time the patient was isolated.

Within about 6 feet
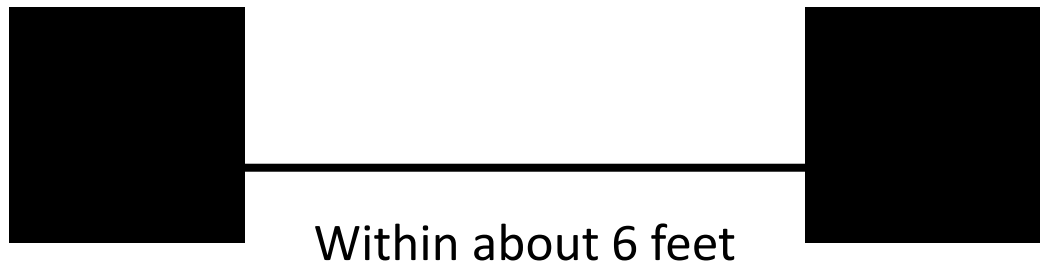
Communication Methods Used

- Department of health employees may attempt to reach cases and their close contacts via a phone call, text message, or e-mail.

- They will always identify themselves as department of health employees and will ask to speak specifically to the case or close contact, or their guardian.

- Text messages may be used to monitor the health status of close contacts. We will always ask for your consent before sending a text message.

- E-mails from department of health employees will be sent from an e-mail address ending in **@flhealth.gov**.

Know the Symptoms

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches

- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

Close Contacts and Symptoms

Close contacts that are experiencing symptoms:

- Will be asked to self-quarantine for 10 days

- May be referred to testing

- Will be advised to stay in one room away from household members, including pets, and have sole use of a bathroom if possible

- Will be advised to wear a mask and keep a distance of 6 feet if they need to be around other people

- Will be asked to keep track of their symptoms

- May be asked about close contacts

Close Contacts and No Symptoms

Close contacts that are NOT experiencing symptoms:

- Will be asked to self quarantine for 14 days

- May be referred to testing

- Will be asked to wear a mask and maintain 6 feet if they need to be around other people or pets within the home

- Will be asked to monitor themselves by checking their temperature twice daily and watching for symptoms of COVID-19.

What's the difference between quarantine and isolation?

If you might have been exposed to COVID-19, you should stay home. This is called **quarantine**.

cdc.gov/coronavirus

If a Contact is Missed

- If they develop symptoms, they may choose to get tested
- If they don't have symptoms they may not choose to be tested
- This contact can unknowingly spread the virus to others

If You Are Diagnosed With COVID-19...

- A case investigator from the health department may call you to check-in on your health, discuss who you've been in contact with, and ask where you spent time while you may have been infectious and able to spread COVID-19 to others.

- You will also be asked to stay at home and self-isolate, if you are not doing so already.

- If your symptoms worsen or become severe, you should seek medical care.

- Severe symptoms include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face.

I Tested Positive for
COVID-19
Now what?

If You Have Been In Close Contact With Someone Who Has COVID-19...

- A contact tracer from the health department might contact you to inform you that you've been exposed to COVID-19.

- You should stay at home and self-quarantine for 14 days, starting from the last day you were possibly exposed to COVID-19.

- The contact tracer will help identify the dates of your self-quarantine.

- The contact tracer can also provide resources about COVID-19 testing in your area.

You expose yourself to COVID-19 if:

You've been within 6 feet of an infected person for about 15 minutes—with or without face masks.

What Will NOT Happen

- Your name **will not** be revealed to those you may have exposed, even if they ask. The health department will only notify your close contacts that they might have been exposed to COVID-19.

- A case investigator or a contact tracer will never ask you to provide health insurance or financial information such as Medicare number, bank account information, credit card information, or ask you to send money through any means.

- If you suspect COVID-19 health care fraud, report it immediately online at https://www.oig.hhs.gov/fraud/report-fraud/ or call 800-HHS-TIPS (800-447-8477).

COVID-19 Fraud

Frequently Asked Questions

Am I considered a close contact if I was wearing a cloth face covering?

- Yes, you are still considered a close contact even if you were wearing a cloth face covering while you were around someone with COVID-19. Cloth face coverings are meant to prevent someone from transmitting the disease to others, and not to protect someone from becoming infected.

What will happen with my personal information during contact tracing?

- Discussions with health department staff are confidential. This means that your personal and medical information will be kept private and only shared with those who may need to know, like your health care provider.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does contact tracing damage my privacy and violate HIPAA laws?

- No. Department of health employees take measures to protect the privacy of patients and maintain strict adherence to HIPAA regulations. Contact tracers will only notify close contacts that they might have been exposed to COVID-19 but the infected person's name is not disclosed.

What if I have been around someone who was identified as a close contact?

- If you have been around someone who was identified as a close contact to a person with COVID-19, you should closely monitor yourself for any symptoms of COVID-19. You do not need to self-quarantine.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is COVID-19 testing free?

- There are many testing locations around Miami-Dade County where testing is free of charge. There are a few facilities that use your health insurance to cover the cost or are self-pay. To find out which testing facilities are free please call (305) 470-5660 or visit: https://www.miamidade.gov/global/initiatives/coronavirus/testing-locations.page

Can someone test negative and later positive on a viral test for COVID-19?

- Yes, it is possible. You may test negative if the sample was collected early in your infection and test positive later during this illness. Even if you test negative, you should still take steps to protect yourself and others.

If you have any questions, please contact the

Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County

at

305-470-5660

You can also visit the CDC's website for
updates regarding COVID-19
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html