



Township of Cranford

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Communicable Disease: CASE CONTACT TRACING

In order to answer some questions regarding how a communicable disease investigation is completed the following information is provided to explain Contact Tracing.

First an individual is identified as a potential case by a Doctor/Health Care Professional or Hospital and then a LABORATORY test is completed and if Positive the results are electronically sent to the NJ Department of Health as having a communicable disease in this case COVID19.

It is accepted by CDRSS (Communicable Disease Reporting Surveillance System) almost immediately and then becomes available to the local health department of where the individual lives.

The nursing/professional staff is trained on the state communicable disease reporting surveillance system CDRSS. This allows the staff to have access to the system and receive the name of the patient who is positive for the communicable disease.

The nurses contact that individual or a close family member or person who is knowledgeable about the individual's contacts during the time that the disease could be transferred from one person to another.

Questions are asked to determine if they are close contacts or not close contacts. If individuals were in close contact than they are called in order to determine if they have close contacts. Then the individual is asked if they have any symptoms so a further contact tracing list can be developed if they are symptomatic.

Questions such as: *How long were you with an individual?* and *how far away were you?* are asked. Also, the CONTACT CASE is asked what day they became ill so we would know how likely the disease could be transferred from the person who is ill to their contacts.

Priority is given to contacts that could be elderly with underlying health conditions and also health care workers and when school is in session teachers and students.

The purpose of identifying the contacts is to help reduce the contacts activity in the community or to their household members so they do not transfer the disease to any additional individuals thus slowing or stopping the disease from spreading within the community.

Sometimes these investigations can take 3 or 4 hours when there are several contacts in the community that the positive patient saw within a few days of becoming ill.

The nursing staff works 7 days of week with between 7 and 10 individuals working on case tracing for the entire day and many times longer.

This is a tried and true process that has been completed for more than 50 years for all kinds of communicable diseases and is a very effective although a time-consuming process.

The health department's role is to slow the curve and educate individuals and answer questions so they best understand how quality public health controls: including 6 feet of distancing, cover your cough, not touching your face or eyes and washing your hands frequently are excellent activities to reduce the transfer of Corona virus in our communities.

With all the good efforts everyone is putting forth we will have this virus under control and will be able to move forward with a healthier and safe environment in the very foreseeable future.

Stay Well,

Mike Fitzpatrick
Health Officer