Conducting COVID-19 Case Investigations at a Local Health Department

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Cleveland Department of Public Health
75 Erieview Plaza, Cleveland, OH 44114
• The Cleveland Department of Public Health (CDPH) is the local health organization for the city of Cleveland
• CDPH aims to improve the quality of life in Cleveland by preventing disease, promoting healthy behaviors, and protecting the environment
• CDPH provides clinical, environmental, health promotion and population-based services to the community
• CDPH partners with various organizations and institutions including Case Western Reserve University, Metro Health Medical Center, Cuyahoga County Board of Health, among others

Population
CDPH caters to, and conducts COVID-19 case investigations for the residents of the city of Cleveland

Learning Objectives
• Understand the difference between conducting case investigations and contact tracing
• Describe the “basics” or “fundamentals” of COVID-19 to interviewees as needed during case investigations
• Demonstrate an ability to perform effectively and professionally when communicating with CDPH staff and during case investigation interviews
• Apply tactful communication and negotiation skills to address any concerns or challenges that arise when in contact with COVID-19 case interviewees

Case Investigation
• Is conducted by a local or state health department
• Involves a one-time interview/conversation with confirmed positive COVID-19 cases who have a positive test result
• Typically takes place within 24 hours of a positive COVID-19 test result being entered into a healthcare database

Activities
• Conduct phone call interviews with city of Cleveland residents who have tested positive for COVID-19
• Record and document data from phone call interviews with COVID-19 positive residents/interviewees
• Send e-mails to interviewees including COVID-19 isolation instructions and resources
• Answer COVID-19 related questions that arise from interviewees
  • DO NOT GIVE MEDICAL ADVICE

Contact Tracing
• Is conducted by various partner organizations engaged with local or state health departments
• Involves interviews with close contacts of cases who are identified during the case investigation process
• Typically begins within 24 hours of identification of contacts
  • Contacts are followed up with over a period of 14 days (beginning from the time of exposure)

Deliverables
• Do-It-Yourself (DIY) mask making guide
• COVID-19 case investigation training manual
• Informational brochure containing frequently asked questions (FAQs) that may arise during interviews, and their appropriate responses or actions

Public Health Implications
• Health departments are responsible for conducting COVID-19 case investigations
• Data collected from case investigations enables health departments to identify “hotspots” and/or potential outbreaks
• Case investigation data have epidemiological value, and can be used in public health research
• Case investigation data shows trends in the progression of COVID-19 and keeps the public informed

Lessons Learned
• Establishing trust and rapport between a case investigator and a COVID-19 positive patient is necessary and important to obtain information and ensure cooperation throughout the investigation.
• Good interview skills can be taught/learned, and will improve with practice

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