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2022 brings changes to COVID-19 disease investigation and contact tracing methods across Illinois

Contact tracing and disease investigation remain valuable public health tools. The McLean County Health Department (MCHD) involvement in the process of COVID-19 disease investigation and contact tracing is changing as Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) changes to a centralized statewide program starting on January 13, 2022.

Local health departments such as MCHD will have little direct involvement with COVID-19 disease investigation or contact tracing after January 13. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 will be notified via an automated text message from the IDPH Surge Center to the phone number given at the time of testing. Positive cases can “opt-in” to receive additional contact from the IDPH Surge Center by calling **1-312-777-1999** and leaving a message. This is also the phone number that they can call if they have tested positive for COVID-19 but have not received an automated text message.

The IDPH Surge Center and local health departments are focusing on individuals who are at the highest risk for severe illness or hospitalization due to infection. Because of the high volume of positive cases of COVID-19 being seen across the state, individuals who have tested positive or have been identified as a close contact to a positive case but are not high-risk may not receive a callback from a contact tracer before their isolation or quarantine period is finished.

Under the new centralized contact tracing structure, the MCHD will not be providing “release from isolation” or “release from quarantine” letters. Any letters would need to be obtained from the IDPH Surge Center.

Businesses need to be prepared for a possible delay or stoppage of release from isolation or quarantine letters, meaning an employee may not have a letter available to present to prove that isolation/quarantine is over. Businesses may want to re-evaluate their protocols in requiring these return-to-work letters.

Since the first positive case of COVID-19 was identified in McLean County in March of 2020, MCHD and our public health partners have continuously adapted our pandemic response as updated data and science has emerged. We are now at a point where vaccines are widely available for a majority of our public. These vaccines have proven to reduce hospitalizations and deaths due to COVID-19.

If you test positive for COVID-19 or have been identified as a close contact to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 do not wait to hear from state or local public health to begin your isolation or quarantine.

What if I tested positive for COVID-19? (Isolation)

You can still spread the virus even with no symptoms.

- Do not wait to hear from state or local public health to begin your isolation.
- Immediately self-isolate for at least 5 full days. The day you tested positive or your symptoms began is considered Day 0.
- If you have no symptoms or your symptoms are resolving after 5 days, you can leave your house on Day 6. **If you have a fever, continue to stay home until your fever resolves.*
- During your isolation avoid contact with all humans and pets, and don't share personal items like cups, towels, and utensils.
- Arrange for food and necessities to be delivered and left at your door. If you cannot make arrangement for someone to assist you, please call 211.
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Stay home unless to seek medical help.
- Seek emergency care if symptoms are severe, letting medical personnel know you have COVID-19.
- Notify your close contacts---anyone who was within 6 feet of you for a total of 15 minutes over a 24-hour period up to 48 hours before you tested positive or symptoms started, even if you both wore masks.
- If possible, stay in a separate room from others in your household and use separate bathrooms.
- Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days (a total of 10 days).
- For more information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/steps-when-sick.html>

What if I am a close contact to someone who tested positive for COVID-19? (Quarantine)

A 'close contact' is anyone within 6 feet of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for a cumulative 15 minutes over a 24-hour period up to 48 hours before the person tested positive or their symptoms started, even if both wore masks.

- Do not wait to hear from state or local public health to begin your quarantine.
- People who have completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccines or the primary series of J&J vaccine and who are boosted do not need to quarantine unless they have symptoms.
- If you have completed the primary series of Pfizer or Moderna vaccine over 6 months ago and are not booster OR have completed the primary series of J&J vaccine over 2 months ago and are not boosted, you must quarantine.
- Stay home for at least 5 full days. The last day of exposure to the person testing positive is considered Day 0. You would be able to leave quarantine on Day 6.
- Continue to wear a mask around others for 5 additional days (a total of 10 full days).
- Watch for fever (100.4°F), cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of COVID-19.
- If possible, stay away from people you live with, especially people who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19.
- Testing is recommended 5 days after exposure or immediately if symptoms develop.
- For more information: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html>

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