

Contact Tracer Assignment Information for State Departments

Issued May 28, 2020

This information, drafted by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) in partnership with the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR), complies with applicable laws, policies and memoranda of understanding governing the state workforce.

What is contact tracing and who is performing this work?

In the ongoing efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, Governor Gavin Newsom launched California Connected (californiaconnected.ca.gov), the state's comprehensive contact tracing program and public awareness campaign. As part of California Connected, public health workers from communities across the state will connect with individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and work with them, and people they have been in close contact with, to ensure they have access to confidential testing, as well as medical care and other services to help prevent the spread of the virus.

The state's program is led by the Administration in collaboration with CDPH, local public health departments and the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and Los Angeles (UCLA), which have launched a robust online training academy to develop a culturally competent and skilled contact tracing workforce.

Contact tracing has been used by public health departments for decades to slow the spread of infectious disease, like TB, measles, HIV/AIDS, and many other infectious diseases. It works by slowing the spread and avoiding outbreaks, and allowing California to maintain healthcare capacity and modify Stay-at-Home orders. Contact tracing helps public health workers connect with anyone who might have come in close contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 and provide them with support and resources, including access to free, confidential testing and medical care, if needed. This helps to stop the disease from spreading further. The more people who participate – by answering the call – the more lives and jobs California saves.

CDPH determined that California needs more than 10,000 contact tracers to support existing state and local public health departments, and the State is using employees from across state service to fulfill this role. All State departments were required to identify 5% of employees for redirection to contact tracing.

How are State employees trained for the contact tracing assignment?

To prepare State employees to take on the role of contact tracer, CDPH, in partnership with UCSF/UCLA, launched a virtual training academy for contact tracers. The training consists of 20 hours of subject matter and skills-based training and is completed remotely (office or home). Contact tracers also complete the self-paced ASTHO/NCSO course Making Contact: A Training for COVID-19 Contact Tracers and are required to provide a certificate of completion prior to taking the virtual training academy. Please note, the ASTHO training is most readily accessible via Google Chrome web browser. Contact Tracers also receive training on the data management platform just before being deployed to support a local public health department.

Once I have been selected as a contact tracer, when does the assignment start (when would the first day be)?

Once a contact tracer completes the virtual training academy, the contact tracer will be placed in the queue for assignment to a local public health department. As requests for staffing are submitted by local public health departments, state staff will be selected from the queue and assigned. CDPH will make every effort to provide contact tracers at least 3 business days advanced notice of assignment to local public health departments.

What do I do once I complete training and I am waiting to be assigned to a local public health department?

For all time between training and until contact tracers are assigned to a local public health department to perform contact tracing work, State employees should continue to perform their regular work assignment. Once assigned, contact tracers should inform their regular supervisor of the assignment and their regular job duties should be reassigned within the department.

What equipment is needed and what equipment will be provided?

Redirected State employees will need to use a computer or laptop, stable internet, and a mouse. A headset with microphone that plugs into the computer and a privacy screen may be provided by CDPH.

Where is the contact tracing work performed?

This work can be done either via telework or State office space. Where the work is completed is dependent on access to basic office equipment needs, internet and system access, and a quiet and private space to work and hold phone conversations.

How will contact tracers be managed/supervised?

Redirected State employees will be assigned virtually to support a local health department and will be directly supervised by a State supervisor.

What is the expected length of the contact tracing assignment?

Employees will be redirected for a period of six to nine months.

Is this full time work?

It is anticipated that local public health departments will need State employees full time. However, part-time employees may serve as contact tracers in a part-time capacity. Upon assignment, contact tracers will be notified of schedule needs.

What if I do not want to be a contact tracer?

Every effort has been made to solicit volunteer State employees. Based on the number of State employees needed, some redirections may be mandatory. State employees designated for the contact tracing assignment have been mission tasked by the Office of Emergency Services under the direction of the Governor. In addition, all applicable unions have been or will be (for additions to the contact tracing team) notified about the contact tracing assignment for State employees redirected to this critical function.

Will State employee's salary, benefits or service credit be impacted by assignment as a contact tracer?

Assignment as a contact tracer will not impact State employee salary, benefits, or service credits.

How will pre-approved and upcoming time off requests be handled while assigned as a contact tracer?

Contact tracers should work with the State supervisor they are assigned to, while serving as a contact tracer, regarding any pre-approved and/or upcoming time off requests.

How will time be tracked while assigned to contact tracing work?

Time worked, during the contact tracing assignment, will be tracked on a paper timesheet that will be signed/authorized by the assignment supervisor and provided to the employee's regular supervisor for authorization of the department's regular timesheet.

How will the current supervisor and assignment supervisor communicate on the status of the contact tracer's assignment and return to department work activities?

The current supervisor and assignment supervisor will be provided with one another's contact information, so they are able to communicate on changes in assignment for the contact tracer.

Can State employees serving a probationary period be assigned as a contact tracer?

State employees on probation can be assigned as a contact tracer and their probationary period will run concurrent with the assignment. Departments should assess probationary periods to allow sufficient time performing duties in the probationary classification to evaluate the employee.

Questions?

- Regarding the virtual training academy registration: enroll@uclaextension.edu
- Regarding the virtual training academy course content: vta.uc.info@gmail.com
- Regarding ASTHO registration or content: Learn@astho.org
- All other questions: CAContactTracing@cdph.ca.gov

Scope of this Communication

This communication is intended to provide general information on the contact tracing assignment. Every effort has been made to provide current information.