

RALEIGH — The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) announces today the Carolina Community Tracing Collaborative, a new partnership with Community Care of North Carolina (CCNC) and the North Carolina Area Health Education Centers (NC AHEC) to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

This new initiative builds on the long-standing relationship NCDHHS has with both organizations. The Carolina Community Tracing Collaborative is part of [Governor Roy Cooper's initiative](#) to slowly lift restrictions by focusing on testing, tracing and trends. This collaborative will build upon existing local health department tracing efforts to help meet the surge in demand for contact tracing staff expected as COVID-19 testing increases.

"Extensive contact tracing is a key strategy for North Carolina to stay ahead of the curve," said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen, M.D. "Our local health departments are North Carolina's experts doing this essential detective work and slowing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. This collaborative will be a critical addition to our state's capability to do widespread contact tracing and ease restrictions."

Contact tracing is the process of supporting patients and notifying contacts of exposure in order to stop chains of transmission. When a person tests positive for COVID-19, contact tracing identifies who that individual may have been in contact with so those people can take precautions to avoid infecting others. Contact tracing is a core disease control measure that has been used for decades by local and state health departments, including during the response to COVID-19.

Selection of a partner for this activity was based on the entities' ability to recruit a locally-based workforce, experience training a workforce and in field outreach, prior experience working with North Carolina's local health departments and ability to work with North Carolina data systems.

CCNC has over 20 years of experience supporting North Carolina's primary care delivery system through care management and practice support programs. The NC AHEC program has for nearly 50 years worked through a network of 10 Regional AHECs to develop and implement educational programs that recruit, train and retain North Carolina's health workforce. They will work with Partners in Health, a nonprofit organization with extensive experience in contact tracing that has deployed a nationally recognized model in their home state of Massachusetts. All three will coordinate with and build upon the contact tracing

expertise and workforce available in the local health departments.

“We are excited to partner with DHHS and with local health departments and to use our deep roots in North Carolina to help with this important work,” said CCNC President Tom Wroth, M.D., MPH.

“Supporting the educational and training needs of local and state public health has always been a focus of our work and this project builds on the long-standing partnership between AHEC and public health,” said NC AHEC Director Hugh Tilson, JD, MPH.

Through this collaborative, up to 250 additional local staff will be hired and trained initially to support contact tracing efforts with the potential to add more. The collaborative will work with local health departments to deploy trained contact tracing staff to areas where they are most needed.

Recruitment will start immediately; interested applicants should visit the [collaborative's webpage](#). Special consideration will be given to those who are unemployed, have community engagement experience and live in the communities that they will serve. Successful contact tracers require excellent communication skills with an empathetic mindset.

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