

Q&A GPNP COVID-19 Community Call March 26, 2020

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Medical

Can Allegheny County Health Department expand on the current practices for contact tracing among diagnosed positives? Specifically, are current positives advised to go back one week prior to symptoms and inform those with whom they (and all of those who are part of their household) had contact?

ACHD contacts a case and asks that they identify any of their close contacts (defined as within 6 feet for a couple minutes) starting 1 day before onset of illness. That applies only to the case, not all household contacts. The household and other close contacts are put under quarantine and asked to monitor for symptoms. Should a quarantined person develop symptoms, we test for virus, and if they are positive, quarantine their contacts.

Can Dr. Lee (UPMC) speak to the expected peak [in infections in Pittsburgh]?

This is impossible to predict accurately and still very dependent on what we do as a community as our current actions in terms of “social distancing,” keeping people away from each other will definitely influence how the current pandemic will take shape in the Western Pa region. What is clear is that we will not be totally spared (not clear any region will be) and there is COVID-19 in our community and to some degree community spread is occurring. However, the situation is different from NYC and some other metropolitan areas where there is already so much spread that the overwhelming of the medical/emergency system is inevitable. Most of us believe that the situation locally is modifiable but it will take a very coordinated and sustained effort from the government, Nonprofits, Health care organizations, and most importantly the public in general. The peaks will occur at different times for different regions of this country. For each of the regions, the goal is to push down the magnitude of the peak and delay it as much as possible. This maximizes the chance that the peak in the region will not exceed the capacity of emergency and health care services in the region. In addition, delay increases the chance that some of the identified weak points in our national system (lack of universally available testing, supply shortages, etc.) can be mitigated or that there is seasonality to COVID-19 (this has not been proven and it is not necessarily likely, but

possible) so that warmer months are less lethal. The exact peak cannot be predicted for this region, but it is important to understand and accept that we are not at the peak at this time and that what we do now will help to determine the size and time of that peak and hence our ability to weather the pandemic with minimum number of lives lost and minimum amount of long term economic and social disruption.

What should providers do about clothing worn in the hospital when they go home?

PPE required while caring for a COVID patient should preclude contamination of clothing.

Is there a protocol recommended for training our volunteers and staff to minimize exposure - especially given that we have no/limited access to protective gear or even simple hand sanitizer?

It is difficult to make blanket statements given the nature of human contact that is required for the services varies so much. The most important concept is to minimize direct contact. The services that can be rendered telephonically or virtually should be done so for the short and intermediate term. Deliveries that are required should be done by leaving it in the doorway, etc. without direct human to human contact. This is against our very nature, but it is important to remember that this is for the protection of the client as well as volunteer/staff. Otherwise within the means and resources that are available, it is important to follow CDC guidelines for contact and hand hygiene.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>

Can you confirm the messages that you are giving to those who have been diagnosed as [having] COVID-19? Are you telling these individuals to go back one week prior to symptoms to those with whom they (and all of those who are part of their household) had contact?

If we look at countries that seem to be getting better control of the pandemic across the world, they tend to have robust capacity to test and a well funded and strong public health system which is able to aggressively pursue contact investigation and isolation. Although testing is increasing in our region and throughout the United States, neither of these applies to

our country. The state department of health has stated that given the number of infections documented in Pennsylvania, it can no longer contact trace and hence the recommendation which is noted above that those who are tested positive voluntarily contact trace. This is clearly suboptimal from a public health standpoint. In addition because testing is still limited, there are clearly many people who are positive for COVID-19 who are unable to get tested. ACHD as well as local health care systems are pursuing contact tracing but do not have the resources or the reach to carry out truly comprehensive contact tracing. Important also to remember that many of our counties do not have county health departments and are dependent on the state.

It is also important to remember that contact tracing and broad testing is only helpful if we are able to act on it. In this case, that means that those who are alerted of high risk contact and those who test positive will quarantine for 7-14 days or until symptoms fully resolve in cases of COVID+. For everyone, this is a daunting task, but for the less privileged in our region, this is nearly impossible without significant help. We may be asking them to live in a separate place from the rest of the family and not leave, so would need to have someone provide food, etc. In the countries where containment seems successful, such quarantines are required in both contact and test positive situations but also funded by the government so that barrier is removed. The nonprofit sector will be critical to try to fill some of these gaps in our region.

What is being done as far as readiness and response? What are the proactive research and development strategies for future events?

Allegheny County Health Department is currently working with modelers to predict the trajectory/duration of the current situation. ACHD is looking at surveillance for this as a respiratory virus in the community to predict future outbreaks.

Data

Is there evidence in the data collected on COVID-positive cases that points to neighborhood/community clusters?

Allegheny County Health Department added a map to their website that contains geographical information on positive cases: bit.ly/ACHDcovid-19.

How might stakeholders help with filling in some of the gaps in analytics?

Email DHS-COVID19Planning@alleghenycounty.us

Resources

What is the phone number for the Allegheny County Health Department COVID-19 question line?

888-856-2774

What is the status of WIC offices, including taking new client referrals?

The WIC program is moving to a modified operating schedule through March 30, 2020. The following WIC office locations will be open Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.:

- **McKeesport**
- **Mt. Oliver**
- **Wilkinsburg**
- **Downtown Pittsburgh**

Springdale WIC office will be open for benefit pickup Thursdays and Fridays from 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. through March 30, 2020. If you are coming to an appointment, please:

- **Contact WIC staff ahead of time to schedule your benefit pick up**
- **Leave your children at home to reduce their risk of exposure**
- **Stay at home if you are feeling sick.**

A proxy may be added over the phone to pick up benefits. All other WIC offices will be closed during this time; however, WIC staff will be able to provide consultation over the phone. Please contact your local WIC clinic for questions regarding your appointment. If you have any additional questions call 412-350-5801

What resources or information are in place for essential service providers to use if there is exposure to the virus in one of our locations (e.g. a food pantry)?

When an ill person is identified, the Health Department contacts the individual to determine where they have been during their illness. If they had meaningful contact (less than 6 feet from an individual for a couple minutes), in your facility or elsewhere, we provide these contacts to our contact tracers to notify individuals or organizations exposed and provide

guidance. Organizations can also call ACHD COVID hotline at 888-856-2774 with any concerns. Organizations should continue to frequently clean high-contact surfaces and to ask ill employees or volunteers to return to or remain at home during the duration of their illness.

Emergency Action Fund

Where can I find the application guidelines and criteria for the Emergency Action Fund by the Pittsburgh Foundation?

Visit [The Pittsburgh Foundation's website](#) for information regarding the Emergency Action Fund.

When will the Pittsburgh Foundation begin accepting applications for grants from the Emergency Action Fund?

The application portal for the Emergency Action Fund will open April 1, 2020.

Federal Legislation

Where can I find information pertinent to nonprofits regarding the Families First Act and the CARES Act?

Visit the [National Council of Nonprofits' website](#) for analyses of both the Families First Act and CARES Act. Are small nonprofits included in the employee retention fund for small businesses?

Visit the [National Council of Nonprofits' website](#) for an explainer of loans available to nonprofits under the CARES Act.