

Wolf Administration Reminds Pennsylvanians of Importance of Contact Tracing, Advises of Possible Scams

Harrisburg, PA - The Pennsylvania departments of Health and Aging today warned Pennsylvanians about contact tracing scams and emphasized the need to stay alert as COVID-19 remains a threat in our communities. Scams might include a caller asking for someone's Social Security number or payment for tracing services – neither of which are ever a component of a contact tracing inquiry.

“Contact-tracing is vital in the state's efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19 and we want Pennsylvanians to be confident that if they receive a call from a contact-tracer that the call is legitimate,” Sec. of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “If someone is unsure and would like to verify if the caller does in fact work in contact tracing, they can call the PA Department of Health at 1-877-PA HEALTH (1-877-724-3258) to verify.”

Across the state, the goal is that within 24 hours of receiving the positive result reported into the National Electronic Disease Surveillance System (NEDSS), trained public health staff conduct an interview for a case investigation with the newly confirmed COVID-19 case to obtain a list of close contacts they had while infectious.

Then contact tracers, both trained staff and volunteers, reach out to those close contacts to educate, inform and offer support. Methods used, after initial phone call, may include phone calls, texts, emails and mailings. Contact tracers will not say who exposed the individual in order to keep their information confidential.

Contact tracing is the process of identifying people who have come into contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 so that they can quarantine and monitor for symptoms. Scammers are attempting to take advantage of how this process works by pretending to be contact tracers and trying to get personal information out of victims through phone calls or electronic messages.

A contact tracer may ask:

- For verification of your date of birth, address, and any other phone numbers you may have; and
- If you have already tested positive for COVID-19 they may also ask for the date and location of where you were tested.

A contact tracer will never ask for:

- Your social security number, financial or bank account information, or personal details unrelated to your potential exposure to someone with COVID-19;
- Personal information through SMS/text message or send you to any website link asking for personal information;
- Photographs or videos of any kind;

- Passwords; or
- Money or payment.

A contact tracer will never share your information with any local, state or federal law enforcement agency.

Pennsylvania Secretary of Aging Robert Torres noted that older adults are at particular risk of being victims of this insidious type of scam.

“Scammers prefer to prey on individuals who may be more trusting, are alone, or may respond out of confusion or fear,” said Sec. Torres. “COVID-19 has isolated many older adults from family and other supports. Therefore, it’s understandable that an older adult, hearing that they may have been exposed, would want to cooperate with any effort to protect themselves or a loved one. However, it’s important that they stay alert about any contact from anyone identifying themselves as a contact tracer and do not provide personal information until they are sure the individual and information are legitimate.”

Please visit the Department of Health website for more information on the contact tracing [process](#) and contact tracing [frequently asked questions](#).

Pennsylvanians are reminded that mask-wearing is required when visiting businesses or in any setting outside the home where social distancing is difficult. Remember: My mask protects you; your mask protects me.

The Wolf Administration stresses the role Pennsylvanians play in helping to reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, not your hands.
- Clean surfaces frequently.
- Stay home to avoid spreading COVID-19, especially if you are unwell.
- If you must go out, you are required to wear a mask when in a business or where it is difficult to maintain proper social distancing.

All Pennsylvania residents are encouraged to sign up for AlertPA, a text notification system for health, weather, and other important alerts like COVID-19 updates from commonwealth agencies. Residents can sign up online at www.ready.pa.gov/BeInformed/Signup-For-Alerts.