

## NOTIFICATION OF POSITIVE PATIENTS AND CONTACT TRACING BY HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

LA COUNTY DEPT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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### Background

Health Officer orders were recently issued that require individuals with presumed or confirmed COVID-19 to follow isolation orders and their close contacts to follow quarantine orders. Healthcare providers are asked to instruct their patients with COVID-19 to provide their close contacts with home quarantine instructions. When the patient is unable to inform their contacts (e.g. the patient is hospitalized or deceased), this responsibility falls to the diagnosing healthcare provider. Health and Human Services recently issued a Limited Waiver of HIPAA Sanctions and Penalties During a Nationwide Public Health Emergency to cover these disclosures during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Healthcare provider reporting is an essential part of the public health response to COVID-19. Not only is reporting COVID-19 cases and deaths required by law, it helps shape our response as the information is used to detect outbreaks, identify exposures in high risk settings, and inform the allocation of local resources. Timely and complete reporting of fatalities is necessary to characterize and communicate who is at highest risk of dying at home and in the hospital.

### Notification of Close Contacts of Presumed or Confirmed COVID-19 Cases

Close contacts include household contacts, intimate partners, caregivers, and other persons who were in close contact with the patient beginning 48 hours prior to the patient's onset of symptoms, see full definition.

#### ***When COVID-19 is Diagnosed in Inpatients (including those in skilled nursing facilities) or in a Deceased Patient***

It is the responsibility of the diagnosing healthcare provider to identify and inform the close contacts of a patient with presumed or confirmed COVID-19 if the patient cannot adequately perform notifications or has died. The provider should ask the next of kin about the patient's close contacts and, if appropriate, may ask them to notify and deliver home isolation and quarantine instructions to the close contacts of the case.

Any symptomatic close contacts should be given home isolation instructions.

All other close contacts should be given home quarantine instructions.

#### ***When COVID-19 is Diagnosed in Outpatients***

Clinicians should provide detailed instructions to their patients with presumed or confirmed COVID-19 that include the importance of self-isolation, quarantine of close contacts, recognizing signs of

worsening COVID-19 illness, and when to seek urgent medical care. For more information on counseling and educating outpatients patients with COVID-19, see the March 28 LAHAN, *Ambulatory Patients with COVID-19; Healthcare Personnel Monitoring*.

Materials for clinicians to provide to patients and their contacts are available on the Print Materials webpage of the LAC DPH COVID-19 Provider website.