



COVID-19, CONTACT TRACING, & IMMIGRATION IN CALIFORNIA

¿WHAT IS CONTACT TRACING?

Contact tracing is a public health program that helps slow the spread of infectious diseases, like COVID-19 (coronavirus). When someone tests positive for an infectious disease, health workers ask who they have recently been in contact with and notify those contacts that they may have been exposed. Health workers may then ask contacts to isolate themselves for a period of time to confirm who has been infected and who has not.

Because COVID-19 is very contagious, many states, including California, have implemented contact tracing programs to protect communities from the virus.

HOW DOES CONTACT TRACING WORK IN CALIFORNIA?

In May 2020, California launched California Connected, the state's contact tracing program. The program connects public health workers with two types of individuals: 1) people who have tested positive for COVID-19 and 2) people who may have unknowingly been exposed to the virus. In both cases, health workers will work with the person to check on symptoms, ask if the person has been vaccinated or has had COVID-19 before, offer free and confidential COVID-19 testing, and provide advice on self-isolation and medical care. See tinyurl.com/CAConnected for more information.

HOW WILL I KNOW IF I AM BEING CONTACTED BY A HEALTH WORKER AND NOT A SCAMMER?

Contact tracers are employed by your local health department and are usually career public health workers. However, due to a high demand for contact tracers, California has also employed other government employees, such as librarians, as well as community volunteers to contact potentially affected people. If you are found to be potentially infected, public health workers will call, text, or email you to reach out about the contact tracing program. These health workers will only speak to you about matters related to COVID-19. They **will never ask** about your immigration status, Social Security Number, financial information, or passwords. If you think that you are being scammed, you can contact your local health department to confirm the identity of your health worker.

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WHAT WILL I BE ASKED ABOUT?

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you may be asked for information like your name, age, address, phone number, places you have recently visited, and people you have spent time with.

If you have been exposed to COVID-19, you may be asked to stay home and separate from others (self-quarantine) and get tested., depending on whether you recently had COVID-19 and recovered from it and whether you have been vaccinated. You may also be asked for information like your name, age, address, phone number, places you have recently visited, and the people you have spent time with.

Your health worker will also explain where you can get free and confidential COVID-19 testing, assistance in accessing medical care, and vaccinations, regardless of your income, health insurance, or immigration status. They will also stay in touch with you to check on symptoms, answer your questions about COVID-19, connect you with local resources, and offer guidance on your specific situation.

I DON'T SPEAK ENGLISH. WILL I BE ABLE TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE IN MY OWN LANGUAGE?

California's contact tracing program provides support for many languages, but availability varies from region to region. To see if contact tracers who speak your language are available in your area, you can contact your local health department.

I'M UNINSURED. WILL I STILL HAVE ACCESS TO COVID-19 TESTING, TREATMENT, AND VACCINATIONS?

Yes. Everyone in California has access to free testing, treatment, and vaccinations for COVID-19, even if you are uninsured. You can get access to free testing by speaking to a contact tracer or setting up an appointment on your own. See tinyurl.com/COVIDTestCA for more details. To make an appointment to get the COVID-19 vaccination, see <https://tinyurl.com/COVIDvaccineCA>.

IF I USE THESE FREE HEALTH BENEFITS, WILL I BE CONSIDERED A PUBLIC CHARGE?

No. USCIS will not consider COVID-19 testing, treatment, or vaccinations in a public charge test.

WHAT IF I CAN'T AFFORD TO QUARENTINE MYSELF?

Many people are hesitant to self-isolate because of the financial costs of staying at home. If this applies to you, please consult California's COVID-19 guidance for immigrant Californians at <https://immigrantguide.ca.gov/en/covid19/> and <https://covid19.ca.gov/>, which share ways for immigrants to offset the costs of staying at home, including information on:

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- health care
- food benefits
- cash assistance
- disability insurance & paid time family leave
- unemployment insurance
- tax credits
- housing resources
- small business support
- job and leave benefits

Your health worker may also be able to share information about other resources in your area, depending on your situation.

IF I AM CONTACTED BY A HEALTH WORKER, DO I HAVE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CONTACT TRACING PROGRAM?

No. California does not require contacted individuals to participate, and there are no penalties for not participating.

IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE CONTACT TRACING PROGRAM, WILL MY INFORMATION BE CONFIDENTIAL?

Yes. Your identity and health information are private and will not be shared with those you may have exposed to COVID-19. Your information will not be shared with law enforcement or immigration officials.

WHY SHOULD I PARTICIPATE IN THE CONTACT TRACING PROGRAM?

If you are asked to participate in the contact tracing program, you have either been infected with or exposed to COVID-19. Your participation will help public health workers locate and inform other members of your community who may also have been affected. This information is crucial to halting the spread of COVID-19—**your participation may save lives.**

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Thank you to Rebecca Lei, ILRC law clerk, for her invaluable contributions to this resource.