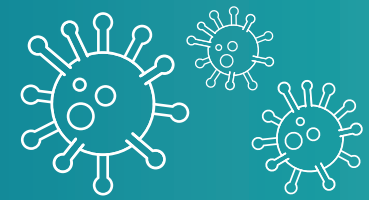


Prioritizing Case Investigations and Contact Tracing for COVID-19 in High Burden Jurisdictions



The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services asks any local health department that does not have the resources to investigate every confirmed case of COVID-19, to contact the Department's Communicable Disease/Epidemiology Program at 406-444-0273.

Please consider working with local health care providers to augment your case investigation capacity. Many COVID-19 tests are ordered by a provider who is involved with the patient. According to Montana Administrative Rule 37-114-501, healthcare providers may be authorized by their local health officer to initiate, assist, or complete case investigations. Many are willing to do this and do it routinely for other conditions.

When to Prioritize

- High burden could be defined as a backlog of cases and contacts for each interviewer that is at least twice the number (100% more) they are able to interview each day.
- Medium burden could be defined as a backlog of cases and contacts for each interviewer that is 50% more than the number of cases they are able to interview each day.
- Low burden could be defined as a reasonable number of cases and contacts for each interviewer to call each day.

Prioritization Strategy

- Prioritize the most impactful public health activities.
- Implementation should be guided by what is feasible, practical, and acceptable for your community. This will vary by area.
- Feasibility of case investigation and contact tracing is determined by the volume and trajectory of new cases, as well as staff resources and capacity.
- Health departments should continue to emphasize broader community mitigation measures.

When health departments are facing a high burden of COVID-19 cases, they may not have the resources to complete timely case investigation and contact tracing activities for all reported cases of COVID-19. The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services asks any local health department that does not have the resources to investigate every confirmed case of COVID-19, to contact the Department's Communicable Disease/Epidemiology Program at 406-444-0273.

HIGHEST PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

Prioritize case investigations for people diagnosed with COVID-19.

- People diagnosed with COVID-19 should be strongly encouraged to notify all their household contacts to immediately self-quarantine and seek additional guidance from their health department or [CDC's COVID-19 website](#).

For contacts, prioritize:

- Household contacts
- People living, working or visiting congregate living facilities, high density workplaces or other settings (or events) with potential extensive transmission

NEXT LEVEL PRIORITY ACTIVITIES

As resources allow, expand contact tracing to people outside the household who are:

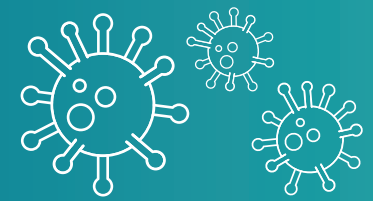
- At increased risk for severe illness
- Part of a cluster
- Any other contacts

If more than 14 days have elapsed since specimen collection, case investigation and contact tracing should generally not be pursued.

BURDEN DECREASING/
CAPACITY INCREASING



Prioritizing Case Investigations and Contact Tracing for COVID-19 in High Burden Jurisdictions



PRINCIPLES FOR PRIORITIZING COVID-19 CASE INVESTIGATION AND CONTACT TRACING

Protect Household Contacts



- People (contacts) who live with, provide care for, or visit the person diagnosed with COVID-19

Prevent Outbreaks & Clusters



- Known clusters or outbreaks
- People living, working, or visiting congregate living facilities, high-density workplaces, other settings (or events) with potential for extensive transmission

Protect People at Increased Risk



- People at increased risk for severe illness*
- People who may need additional precautions against COVID-19
- People living with, working with, visiting or providing services to other people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19

Why prioritize household contacts?

- Household transmission of COVID-19 is common.
- Most close contact exposures are with family members and other household contacts.

Why prioritize settings (or events) with potential for extensive transmission?

- Cases and contacts related to congregate living facilities, high density workplaces and other settings (or events) with potential extensive transmission should be prioritized to prevent large-scale community transmission.

Why prioritize people at increased risk?

- Helps to assess health status, facilitate medical monitoring, and connect people to healthcare, should emergency warning signs or other serious complications arise.
- Many testing sites use self-administered risk questionnaires and have minimal interaction between the person (case or contact) being tested and a healthcare professional.
- Interaction with the health department during the case investigation interview or notification of exposure (contact tracing) may be the **only** opportunity for some people at risk for severe illness from COVID-19 to become connected to healthcare and medical monitoring.

*The list of underlying medical conditions and populations at risk is continuously updated on the CDC website as new data emerges. Health departments are encouraged to check the website frequently and update protocols accordingly.

Additional Tools:

CDC's Case Investigation & Contact Tracing Guidance <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/overview.html>
CDC's COVID-19 Case Investigation and Contact Tracing Hierarchies <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/investigating-covid-19-case.html>



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Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/contact-tracing/contact-tracing-plan/prioritization.html>, December 3, 2020.
Personal communication with Jim Murphy, Co-Administrator, Public Health and Safety Division, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, 2/6/21.