

Metrics for Case Investigation and Contact Tracing Conducted by Washington State Centralized Investigations

Washington State Department of Health

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Public health professionals perform case investigations and contact tracing to help slow and prevent the spread of infectious diseases like COVID-19. When public health learns that someone has tested positive for COVID-19, an interviewer reaches out to talk to that person, usually by phone. This is known as a case investigation. When talking to the person who tested positive for COVID-19, interviewers work to determine their close contacts. A close contact is anyone who has been within six feet of the case for 15 minutes or more while the case was infectious. Interviewers then reach out to inform close contacts of possible exposure. This is the next step to prevent the spread of disease, known as contact tracing. Interviewers do not reveal the name of the person who tested positive for COVID-19 when speaking with close contacts.

Local health departments lead case investigation and contact tracing work in Washington State. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and its partners support this work. In certain situations, local health departments may ask DOH to conduct case investigations and contact tracing on their behalf through the DOH centralized investigations team. These situations can include a local health department not having the capacity for conducting investigations themselves either because of insufficient staffing or when experiencing a surge in cases. These requests vary day-to-day and week-to-week.

The purpose of this report is to show the timeliness of reaching COVID-19 cases and their contacts for case investigation and contact tracing activities conducted by the DOH centralized investigations team.

The DOH centralized investigation targets for the timeliness of case investigation and contact tracing are:

- 90% of cases will be reached within 1 day of DOH receiving a positive lab result
- 80% of contacts be reached within 2 days of DOH receiving a positive lab result for the case

These targets represent our long-term goals and we expect to see improvement over time as we refine our processes for successfully contacting people. The most common barriers to successfully meeting these deadlines include missing phone numbers or other contact information and people who require additional follow-up due to an unanswered first call.

The following tables show how close DOH came to meeting these targets for case and contact investigations assigned to DOH centralized investigations for cases reported to DOH between September 13, 2020 and October 10, 2020. During this time frame, 11

counties assigned cases to DOH. All contacts identified by those cases are included regardless of when the case was interviewed. Data on four investigation outcomes are presented below:

1. *The percent with a first call or contact attempt in the specified time frame:* This provides information on when the centralized investigations team made a first attempt to get in touch, regardless of the outcome. For cases, this is the date of the first phone call attempt. For contacts, this is either the date when a text message notification was sent, or when a first call attempt was made.
2. *The percent reached within the specified time frame:* This provides information on how successful we were at contacting an individual. For cases, reaching an individual includes a phone call outcome of: interview completed, partial interview completed, call-back later, or refused. For contacts, being reached also includes confirmation that a text message notification was received.
3. *The percent interviewed within the specified time frame:* This provides information on how often we are able to interview a case or contact. An interview is defined as a phone call that results in a full or partial interview. For contacts, their contact information is only collected during the case interviews. If DOH is unable to complete case interviews, their contacts are not reported to DOH.
4. *The percent of investigations that resulted in an interview:* This provides information on how successful we are at interviewing cases and contacts regardless of timeliness. An interview is defined as a phone call that results in a full or partial interview.

Table 1 below includes information on these metrics for all cases assigned to the DOH centralized investigations. Cases are assigned to a week based on the report date, which is the date the positive lab is reported to DOH. Table 2 below includes all contacts identified by cases with a report date in the specified week. This count includes all contacts identified, regardless of when the case interview was conducted. Many cases that are interviewed choose not to identify contacts, which is why the number of total contacts is less than the number of interviewed cases. The percentage of contacts reached within two days is generally higher because there are fewer contacts, and there is an extra day for them to be contacted.

Table 1. Case investigations conducted by Washington State Department of Health centralized investigations team for cases reported between 09/13/2020 and 10/10/2020

Positive lab report date range	Total cases assigned to DOH*	Percent of total cases with first call attempt made within 1 day of positive lab report	Percent of total cases reached within 1 day of positive lab report	Percent of total cases interviewed within 1 day of positive lab report	Percent of total cases interviewed
9/13/2020 - 9/19/2020	192	91%	66%	47%	65%
9/20/2020 - 9/26/2020	158	89%	63%	48%	63%
9/27/2020 - 10/03/2020	271	72%	46%	40%	67%
10/04/2020 - 10/10/2020	180	85%	65%	54%	77%

*Total cases excluded 17 cases in long term care facilities assigned to centralized investigations. These cases are investigated in collaboration with the facilities and outcomes are tracked separately.

Table 2. Contact tracing conducted by Washington State Department of Health centralized investigations team for cases reported between 09/13/2020 and 10/10/2020

Positive lab report date range	Total contacts of cases assigned to DOH	Percent of total contacts with first contact attempt made within 2 days of case positive lab report	Percent of total contacts reached within 2 days of case positive lab report	Percent of total contacts interviewed within 2 days of case positive lab report	Percent of total contacts interviewed
9/13/2020 - 9/19/2020	55	98%	85%	80%	84%
9/20/2020 - 9/26/2020	33	85%	70%	58%	67%
9/27/2020 - 10/03/2020	257	84%	66%	54%	82%
10/04/2020 - 10/10/2020	249	92%	79%	71%	82%