Contact Tracing during COVID-19

Applies to

This Policy applies to all Faculty and Staff across all University departments, Institutes, Centers and Schools.

Definition

Contact Tracing: Contact tracing is used by health departments to prevent the spread of infectious disease. In general, contact tracing involves identifying people who have an infectious disease (cases), any contacts (people who may have been exposed) and working with them to interrupt disease transmission. For COVID-19, this includes asking cases to self-isolate and contacts to self-quarantine at home voluntarily.

Close Contact: The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) defines close contact for COVID-19 as anyone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes starting from 48 hours before the person began feeling sick until the time the patient was isolated.

Self-isolation: Self-isolation is used to separate people infected with the virus (those who are sick with COVID-19 and/or those with no symptoms) from people who are not infected. People who are in self-isolation should stay home until it is safe for them to be around others. In the home, anyone sick or infected should separate themselves from other people and pets by staying in a specific “sick room” or area and using a separate bathroom (if available). Self-isolation helps slow the spread of COVID-19 and can help keep your family, friends, neighbors, and others you may come in contact with healthy.

Self-quarantine: Self-quarantine is used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. Self-quarantine helps prevent spread of disease that can occur before a person knows they are sick or if they are infected with the virus without feeling symptoms. People in self-quarantine should stay home, separate themselves from others, monitor their health, and follow directions from their state or local health department.

Procedures

Contact tracing for COVID-19 typically involves:

- Interviewing people with COVID-19 to identify everyone with whom they had close contact during the time they may have been infectious,
- Notifying contacts of their potential exposure,
- Referring contacts for testing,
- Monitoring contacts for signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and
- Connecting contacts with services they might need during the self-quarantine period.

The general process that takes place during contact tracing includes:

- Case investigation: Public health staff work with a patient to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the time when they may have been infectious.
- Contact tracing: Public health staff begin contact tracing by notifying exposed individuals (contacts) of their potential exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible, not revealing the infected patient’s identity.
- Contact support: Contacts are provided with education, information, and support to help them understand their risk, what they should do to separate themselves from others who are not exposed, and how to monitor themselves for illness. In addition, they are informed of the possibility that they could spread the infection to others even if they do not feel ill.
- Self-quarantine: Contacts are encouraged to stay home, monitor their health, and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others until 14 days after their last exposure to the infected patient, in case they also become ill.

To prevent the further spread of disease, COVID-19 contacts are encouraged to stay home and maintain social distance (at least 6 feet) from others until 14 days after their last exposure to a person with COVID-19. Contacts should monitor themselves by checking their temperature twice daily and watching for symptoms of COVID-19, which include, but are not limited to:
• Fever or chills
• Cough
• Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
• Fatigue
• Muscle or body aches
• Headache
• New loss of taste or smell
• Sore throat
• Congestion or runny nose
• Nausea or vomiting
• Diarrhea

In order to assist Public Health in contact tracing and the case investigation, Clarkson University requires all faculty, staff and students to complete a daily health screening at the start of their shift and a daily interactions log at the end of their shift. The daily health screening ensures that no individuals come to campus if they are experiencing any COVID-19 related symptoms in the past 14 days, if they have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days, if they have come in contact with someone that has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days or if they have traveled outside New York State or to an area within New York State that is not in Phase 2 or greater in the past 14 days. It also asks where you anticipate going on campus for the day. The daily interactions log, completed at the end of the day, then asks individuals where they were on campus, who they came in contact with and at what capacity (time, proximity, presence of face mask). Several members of Clarkson University’s cabinet, Human Resources department and Environmental Health & Safety department have also gone through contact tracing training to be able to better assist Public Health if such a scenario arises.

Related Information

• Clarkson Returning to Work Safety Training COVID-19 Presentation: https://intranet.clarkson.edu/administrative/hr/covid-19-workplace-policies/covid-19-return-to-work/
• Daily Health Screening Questionnaire: https://forms.gle/XD9LyTrzzaB9swi9tq9
• Daily Interactions Log: https://forms.gle/uhJ7Cd1T8YFnCisp8

Revision History