



## Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

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### News Release

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### Immediate Release

#### ***Dickinson-Iron District Health Department explains their process of Contact Tracing for COVID-19***

**Iron River and Kingsford, Michigan – July 10, 2020.** Local public health departments have done contact tracing for communicable diseases for decades. Public health has used contact tracing as a strategy to minimize the spread of contagious illness such as tuberculosis, foodborne diseases, sexual transmitted diseases, pertussis, and many more. “Some would argue that public health was founded while doing contact tracing to identify the source of the Cholera outbreak that ended 1849 after a contaminated well was identified” say Ruth Manier, RN, BSN, Director of Community Health Services at the Dickinson-Iron District Health Department. “Contact tracing is nothing new for our staff and has always been a pillar to public health practice.

During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, Dickinson-Iron District Health Department’s nursing staff has been working diligently to identify close contacts of all individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. All positive COVID-19 tests are reported to the local public health department and individuals are contacted immediately. An interview is conducted to identify any close contacts they have had during their identified infectious period. A close contact, in regards to COVID-19, is defined as someone who is within 6 feet for longer than 15 minutes. “We are well trained in asking questions in a manner to get the most information we possibly can. We are asking about workplaces, locations that are visited, social gatherings, and travel. We are asking where they’ve been and the nature of visits,” says Manier.

All close contacts are asked to remain home for 14 days from the date of their exposure and they are asked to monitor symptoms. Health Department staff follow up to be certain that recommendations are being followed and check the status of the contacts. DIDHD is also recommending that people with known exposure avoid anyone in a vulnerable population who is at a higher risk of infection.

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If there were to be any uncertainty regarding contact tracing or questionable contacts, DIDHD would release a list of businesses that were visited by the identified positive case to increase the awareness of potential contacts. “We have not needed to release a list of businesses within our counties yet. We have had a couple of locations that were disclosed by fellow health departments that were visited by a case or two. We have had cases that have been good historians. Individual contacts have been identified through tracing and has allowed for us to reach out to those individuals we consider to be at risk,” adds Manier.

DIDHD would like to remind the community that it is important if you are being contacted by the Health Department, to answer the call or return the message. DIDHD may be reaching out to you to let you know that you were identified as a known contact.

Please check our website at [www.didhd.org](http://www.didhd.org) for more information related to COVID-19. Other reliable sources include; [www.michigan.gov/coronavirus](http://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus) and [www.cdc.gov/COVID19](http://www.cdc.gov/COVID19).

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