VDH ANNOUNCES NEW CONTACT TRACING PRIORITIZATION AND REDUCED QUARANTINE GUIDELINES

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VDH Announces New Contact Tracing Prioritization and Reduced Quarantine Guidelines
Virginia is Following Newly-Issued CDC Guidance

(Richmond, Va.) — Today, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) announced because of substantial levels of COVID-19 community transmission, local health departments may need to prioritize contact tracing efforts for key elements of the population. During this time of significantly high case volume, traditional methods of contact tracing are less effective. This means that some local health departments, as necessary, may not be contacting everyone with COVID-19 infection or close contacts to someone with COVID-19 infection. Per new guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), VDH may prioritize follow-up of cases and tracing of close contacts for the following groups:

- People diagnosed with COVID-19 in the past six days and their household contacts
- People living or working in or visiting congregate living facilities
- People involved in known clusters or outbreaks
- People at increased risk of severe illness

"As cases of COVID-19 increase across the Commonwealth, this change will allow us to deploy resources where they will have the most impact," said **Virginia State Health Commissioner M. Norman Oliver, M.D., M.A.** "We urge residents to continue to follow public health guidance on wearing masks and physical distancing, and to notify their circle of friends and family quickly if diagnosed with COVID-19. Also, please answer the phone if a VDH Contact Tracer calls. All these things are helping us in the fight against COVID-19."

Case investigation and contact tracing are an essential and impactful part of the COVID-19 response in Virginia, and nearly 2,000 public health professionals have been hired since May 2020 in local health departments to do this work. Although not all cases and not all contacts can be called when the number of cases is high, contact tracing will continue in Virginia in accordance with these new recommendations. VDH continues to work closely with the CDC and follow federal guidance.

During times like these, everyone must be proactive in following public health recommendations that include:

- Wear a mask
- Practice social distancing
- Wash your hands on a regular basis
- Stay home whenever possible
- Avoid gatherings outside of your household
- Download COVIDWISE, the VDH exposure notification app
- Use the CDC and VDH websites for accurate, reliable, and updated information

If you test positive for COVID-19 or are diagnosed with COVID-19, you need to stay at home, away from others, and self-isolate for at least ten days. You should also help identify and notify the people that you had close contact with while you were contagious. If you have been exposed to COVID-19, you need to stay at home, away from others, self-quarantine, get tested for COVID-19 five-to-seven days after exposure, and watch for any symptoms.

VDH and CDC continue to recommend a quarantine period of 14 days. However, CDC guidance now includes two additional options for how long quarantine should last. The safest option is still to quarantine for 14 days after last exposure. Any quarantine shorter than 14 days balances reduced burden against a small possibility of spreading the virus. The two additional options for shortened quarantine are for people without symptoms to end quarantine after day 10 without testing, or after day 7 with a negative PCR or negative antigen test performed on or after day 5. It is still important to watch for symptoms of COVID-19 until 14 days after exposure and to take other prevention measures including wearing a mask, distancing, and frequent hand washing.

Today, VDH is adopting this revised quarantine guidance for everyone except healthcare workers or healthcare facilities. CDC's healthcare-associated infection prevention and control experts are currently reviewing the revised guidance; in the meantime, VDH recommends that healthcare personnel and residents and

staff in healthcare facilities continue to use a 14-day quarantine.

Always seek medical care if symptoms worsen or become severe. Severe symptoms include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face.

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