NCDHHS Developing SlowCOVIDNC Exposure Notification App; Expected to Launch Statewide in September

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The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) is developing a COVID-19 Exposure Notification app called 'SlowCOVIDNC' that will launch across the state in September 2020. The app will help North Carolinians slow the spread of the virus by alerting them when they may have been exposed to someone who has tested positive for COVID-19.

SlowCOVIDNC, which leverages Google and Apple's Exposure Notification System (ENS), will alert users that have the app if they have been in close contact with an individual who later tests positive for COVID-19. The app is completely anonymous and does not collect, store or share personal information or location data. SlowCOVIDNC is voluntary to download and use and designed to enhance the state's existing contact tracing efforts. The app, which is currently in Beta testing, will be free of charge and available to download through the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.

"The SlowCOVIDNC app builds on our ongoing efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19 across the state. By proactively notifying app users of potential exposure to the virus, people can act quickly to protect themselves, their loved ones and their communities," said Sam Gibbs, NCDHHS Deputy Secretary of Technology and Operations.

Here's how SlowCOVIDNC will work:

1. Download the free SlowCOVIDNC Exposure Notification app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store and enable Bluetooth and Exposure Notifications. Bluetooth must be on for the app to work.
2. After opting-in to receive notifications, the app will generate an anonymous token for the device. A token is a string of random letters which changes every 10-20 minutes

and is never linked to identity or location. This protects app user privacy and security.

3. Through Bluetooth, phones with the SlowCOVIDNC app work in the background (minimizing battery) to exchange these anonymous tokens every few minutes. Phones record how long they are near each other and the Bluetooth signal strength of their exchanges in order to estimate distance.

4. If an app user tests positive for COVID-19, the individual may obtain a unique PIN to submit in the app. This voluntary and anonymous reporting notifies others who have downloaded the app that they may have been in close contact with someone in the last 14 days who has tested positive.

5. PINs will be provided to app users who receive a positive COVID-19 test result by contacting the Community Care of North Carolina (CCNC) call center, through a web-based portal, or by contacting their Local Health Department (LHD).

6. SlowCOVIDNC periodically downloads tokens from the server from the devices of users who have anonymously reported a positive test. Phones then use records of the signal strength and duration of exposures with those tokens to calculate risk and determine if an app user has met a threshold to receive an Exposure Notification

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