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NCDHHS

NCDHHS Launches Testing and Contact Tracing Resources to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19 in North Carolina

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Today, the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) launches new initiatives to expand COVID-19 testing and contact tracing across the state and help North Carolinians protect their families and neighbors. Testing and tracing are core public health measures and key components of North Carolina's strategy to responsibly ease restrictions, while continuing to slow the spread of the virus.

North Carolinians can now access new online tools to determine if they should consider being tested for COVID-19 and find a nearby testing place. The tool will also help individuals monitor their symptoms if they have tested positive for or been exposed to COVID-19. In addition, NCDHHS launched a new platform to integrate contact tracing efforts across the state under the COVID-19 Community Team. More than 900 local health department staff and other Community Team members have been trained on the software and many have begun using it in their ongoing contact tracing work.

“These new COVID-19 testing tools and resources help North Carolinians have the support and information they need to take care of themselves and their loved ones,” said NCDHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen, M.D. “When more people get tested, and we all work alongside the COVID-19 Community Team to do our part with contact tracing, we can protect our loved ones and slow the spread of the virus.”

“These tools are one way we can help break down barriers to access, particularly for our historically marginalized populations, who are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19,” said Dr. Cardra Burns, Senior Deputy Director, NCDHHS Division of Public Health. "They are part of a larger effort to make sure that testing is available in trusted and accessible places for communities of color."

North Carolina contact tracing is being conducted by experienced and trained local health department staff and other COVID-19 Community Team members. Last week, the Community Team met its initial goal to hire and train 250 additional contact tracers who collectively are reflective of the racial, ethnic and linguistic diversity of North Carolina.

New Online Tools to Increase Access to Testing

Having more than tripled the amount of testing completed just a month ago, North Carolina continues to ramp up testing. The new online tools are intended to help people know if they may need a test, how to get a test and how to monitor their own symptoms if advised to do so by a contact tracer. These tools include:

- **Check My Symptoms** (www.ncdhhs.gov/symptoms (https://ncdhhs-covid19-dtra.powerappsportals.us/)), a public website that allows people to enter their symptoms to determine if they should consider getting tested for COVID-19. If a test is recommended, they will receive a link to a list of nearby testing sites via email or text.
- **Find My Testing Place** (www.ncdhhs.gov/TestingPlace (https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/about-covid-19/testing/covid-19-testing-locations)), a public website that allows people to enter their county or ZIP code and access a list of nearby testing site locations online.
- **COVID-19 Community Team Outreach (CCTO) Tool**, a password-protected online software that helps people track their own symptoms if they have been advised to do so by the COVID-19 Community Team. The tool is also a platform that helps streamline and integrate contact tracing work across the state.

Expanded Contact Tracing through the COVID-19 Community Team

Through contact tracing, local health department staff and other COVID-19 Community Team members reach out to people who may have recently come into close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19 and connect them with the information and support needed to

protect themselves and their loved ones.

It is important that people answer the call when the Community Team reaches out. Individuals being contacted will get an initial text from the number 45394 or email from NC-ARIAS-NoReply @ dhhs.nc.gov with follow-up phone calls from their local health department or NC OUTREACH (844-628-7223). **The Community Team will never ask for anyone's Social Security Number, bank or credit card numbers, or any other financial information at any time. Any information shared during the call is a private health record and is strictly confidential.**

Continued Prevention Measures
All North Carolinians should continue practicing their 3 Ws when they leave home: Wear. Wait. Wash.

- **Wear** a cloth face covering if you will be with other people.
- **Wait** 6 feet apart. Avoid close contact.
- **Wash** your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer.

"If we all do our part, we can protect our family and neighbors and get back to enjoying things like family gatherings, pastimes and community events outside of our homes," said Secretary Cohen. "By working together, we will slow the spread of this virus."

For more information on testing and contact tracing, please see the Frequently Asked Questions about Testing (covid19.ncdhhs.gov/Testing (https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/about-covid-19/testing)) and Frequently Asked Questions about Contact Tracing (covid19.ncdhhs.gov/ContactTracing (https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/about-covid-19/contact-tracing)).

For the latest information on COVID-19, visit nc.gov/covid19 (https://www.nc.gov/covid19) . For more data and information about North Carolina's testing strategy, visit the North Carolina COVID-19 Dashboard: covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard (https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/dashboard).

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