



April 8, 2020

TO: Local Health Departments (LHDs)
FROM: New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH)

**HEALTH ADVISORY: COVID-19 UPDATE FOR
LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT (LHD) CONTACT INVESTIGATIONS**

BACKGROUND

Widespread, ongoing community transmission of COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) is occurring in some areas of New York State, while other areas have minimal to moderate levels of transmission. Aggressive containment measures in areas of minimal to moderate transmission can help minimize further spread.

CONTACT INVESTIGATION UPDATES

It is now believed that up to 25% of the spread of SARS-CoV-2 is caused by pre-symptomatic or asymptomatic transmission. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently issued revised guidance recommending that public health agencies change the beginning of the exposure risk period in COVID-19 contact investigations from “onset of symptoms” to “48 hours before symptom onset.” As a result, NYSDOH is now recommending that LHDs identify contacts to a confirmed or suspect case, who had exposure up to 48 hours prior to symptom onset.

Similarly, new data are emerging that suggests that a percentage of individuals infected with SARS-CoV-2 will remain asymptomatic. When learning of asymptomatic positive cases of COVID-19, LHDs should conduct contact investigations, with the period of exposure risk beginning at 48 hours before the specimen collection date of a positive molecular-based SARS-CoV-2 test.

In the community setting, the definition of close contact with COVID-19 cases, for purposes of contact investigations and potential movement restrictions such as quarantine, includes, but is not limited to:

- Sharing the same household;
- Direct physical contact;
- Direct contact with infectious secretions of a COVID-19 case (e.g. being coughed on, touching used paper tissues with a bare hand); or
- Being within 6 feet of a case for 10 minutes or more (e.g. room, car).
 - LHDs should consider other factors such as proximity of contact, duration of exposure (e.g. longer exposure time likely increases exposure risk), and whether the individual has symptoms (e.g. coughing likely increases exposure risk), when deciding whether an exposure resulted in close contact.

Visit NYSDOH COVID-19 webpage for more information at: <https://www.ny.gov/coronavirus>.