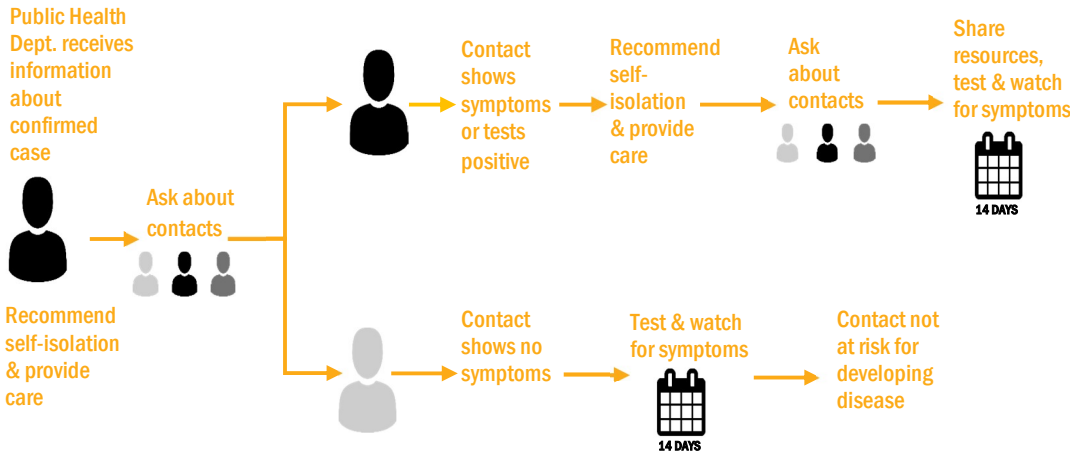# CONTACT TRACING – EXPLAINED

In Illinois, the government is actively considering new tools to help decrease the spread of COVID-19. One of those tools is known as contact tracing. While you've likely seen this term pop up on the news or on your social media timeline, it may not be clear how this process works. Here's a brief explainer:

HOW DOES CONTACT TRACING WORK?

Public Health Dept. receives information about confirmed case

Ask about contacts

Recommend self-isolation & provide care

Contact shows symptoms or tests positive → Recommend self-isolation & provide care → Ask about contacts → Share resources, test & watch for symptoms — 14 DAYS

Contact shows no symptoms → Test & watch for symptoms — 14 DAYS → Contact not at risk for developing disease

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT WAYS TO DO CONTACT TRACING?

Manual Contact Tracing: Relies on contact tracers - a trained person - to call people who have tested positive and help them remember where they have been in order to identify others who may have been exposed. The contact tracer then calls those identified to share resources and answer questions.

Tech-Assisted Contact Tracing (TACT): Instead of relying on human callers, this approach uses technology, such as location-based tracking (e.g. cell signals, WIFI or GPS) or proximity-based tracking (e.g. Bluetooth) to track where people go and identify who may have been exposed.

✓ **PRO:** Proven public health approach that's worked in the past.

✓ **PRO:** Connects people directly with testing and treatment resources.

✓ **PRO:** Privacy-protective because it does not create a new system of surveillance.

✗ **CON:** No guaranteed compliance and only works if there is trust between the public and government.

✓ **PRO:** Ability to track and notify more people more quickly.

✗ **CON:** Location-tracking is not very precise or privacy protective.

✗ **CON:** Ineffective, unless testing is widely available and people have the resources to isolate.

✗ **CON:** Creates a new government surveillance system that runs the risk of lasting after the pandemic.

WHY DOES PRIVACY MATTER WHEN IT COMES TO CONTACT TRACING?

Your information is private information. This means that any time the government wants your information, it deserves to be collected in the least invasive and most protective way possible.

Contact tracing is no exception – especially when there are simple things the government can do to make sure your information stays safe:

- Keeping the process voluntary
- Minimizing the information that is collected
- Limiting access to the data
- Creating secure measures to collect and store the data
- Deleting data on a rolling basis
- Never using the process or the data it collects for enforcement or punishment
- Regularly evaluating the efficacy of the contact tracing program – and stopping its use once it is no longer needed.

When done well, contact tracing can help slow down the spread of COVID-19 and share important resources with the public. But it is an evolving process that can only be effective after testing is widely available, people have access to the healthcare they need and are able to self-isolate. As such, the government must continue to respond to the concerns raised by the public health crisis, while building public trust.

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