

# District Health Department No. 4



For Immediate Release  
Date: April 24, 2020  
Media Contact Only: Cathy Goike  
Phone: 989-358-7970

---

## District Health Department No. 4 Explains Contact Tracing

With all the talk surrounding COVID-19 testing, District Health Department No. 4 (DHD4) would like to share with area residents what goes on behind the scenes once positive test results are received. There are four critical steps in preventing the spread of disease: testing, isolation, contact tracing, and quarantine; and they are all essential. If any one of these steps are missing, the virus can continue to spread. It's old-fashioned public health, but it works. It's hard work and very labor intensive.

The step of contract tracing, or tracing the contacts of people who have the virus, is not a new phenomenon. It is a tried and true method of public health and is used every day of the year all throughout the U.S for STDs, TB and other communicable disease. Simply put, contact tracing is finding everyone who came in close contact with a COVID-19 positive patient. Contacts are watched for signs of illness for 14 days from the last day they came in contact with the COVID-19 positive patient. If the contact develops COVID-19 symptoms, they are immediately isolated for up to 14 days and provided care if necessary, and the cycle starts again—all of the new case's contacts are traced and watched for 14 days, as necessary.

Why is this important? Contact tracing has the ability to stop an outbreak in its tracks. That said, even one missed contact can keep the outbreak going. To give residents an idea of the tireless work being done by the dedicated staff at DHD4, more than 500 staff hours have been spent on contact tracing since DHD4 was notified of the first case in the jurisdiction, March 29, 2020.

This time and effort have resulted 88 of 90 cases being traced back to their source of transmission. Through epidemiological investigations, we can further divulge the following disease links: 1% domestic travel, 10% in-state travel to areas of high incidence, 71% long-term care settings, 16% community settings, 2% unknown. In addition, through contact tracing, DHD4 has been able to identify 216 contacts to date. In the DHD4 jurisdiction, confirmed cases have an average of four contacts that require follow-up and monitoring with a range of 1 (minimum) – 6 (maximum) contacts for any given case, thus far. This range does not include those in long-term care facilities, where virtually everyone (residents and staff) is considered a contact.

Risk factors such as international travel, which occurred early on, and travel to areas of high disease incidence, either domestically or here in Michigan, make tracing difficult, as well as recall bias. As we learn more, this type of information can be helpful for determining unique risks in our communities, e.g. travel, crowding and certain occupations. For the latest information on COVID-19 in the DHD4 jurisdiction, visit [www.dhd4.org/covid19](http://www.dhd4.org/covid19).

###

### Alpena County

100 Woods Circle  
Suite 200  
Alpena, MI 49707  
(989) 356-4507  
Fax (989) 356-3529  
1-800-221-0294

### Cheboygan County

Doris E. Reid Center  
825 S. Huron St.  
Suite 1  
Cheboygan, MI 49721  
(231) 627-8850  
Fax (231) 627-9466

### Montmorency County

P.O Box 183  
12519 State St.  
Atlanta, MI 49709  
(989) 785-4428  
Fax (989)785-2217

### Presque Isle County

106 E. Huron St.  
Suite A  
Rogers City, MI 49779  
(989) 734-4723  
Fax (989) 734-3866

[www.dhd4.org](http://www.dhd4.org)