



Keeping Our Families and Communities Healthy

The newsletter for Redirected State Staff working for the California Connected COVID-19 Contact Tracing Program

A Message from Holly Howard

Happy New Year to Everyone. We are well in the heart of the Omicron surge and hope to cross the peak of the surge soon if not already. So far our highest case rates ever were during the first week of January – and many are predicting that the numbers will come down within the next 1-3 weeks. While immune evasion is unfortunately more common with the Omicron variant compared to previous variants, we are still seeing that vaccination is highly successful at reducing severe disease, including hospitalization and death resulting from infection.



Additionally, completion of a full vaccination series plus booster shot restores strong immunity protection from infection in most exposure settings. We know that the massive increase in cases has led to significant strains on testing resources – including lack of access to over the counter tests and significant delays in test results from lab testing – and that this has exacerbated transmission with infectious individuals unaware of their infection and inadvertently exposing others. At this time, besides testing – if accessible -- when you have symptoms and/or if learn you have been exposed, we strongly encourage you to quarantine according to guidance ([Self Quarantine Instructions Fact Sheet \(ca.gov\)](#)) and to adhere carefully to masking recommendations. Please help us by counselling everyone to choose masks with very good fit and filtration. (See our [Updated Guidance for the Use of Face Masks](#) article on page 8 along with several helpful links)



As we continue fighting this virus and its variants, I want to say how much I appreciate everyone in our Program and our partners. I hope you were all able to spend quality time with family and friends over the holidays with some time to relax too. Someday soon I want us all to be able to look back on this experience as one of growth, education, and compassion.

Warmly,

Holly Howard

Contact Tracing Program Director

Updates and Resources



ARE YOU TRANSITIONING BACK TO YOUR HOME DEPARTMENT?

Many of you may be returning to your home departments soon or have recently done so. It's a good idea to take some time to de-stress. Give your body time to rest and your mind time to process all that you've been doing these past months or year, for many of you. Make a game plan for regular self care. We have many resources to help with this, including CalHOPE.

<https://www.calhope.org/pages/gameplan.aspx>

We also have some excellent resources for you through this constantly updated link for Offboarding Staff.

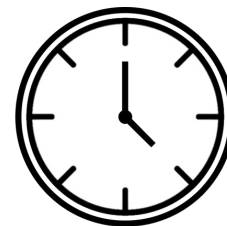
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1---Txx3bt309EyDHD13h4DA3eujT7QgfEtfHdqFynKc/edit>

CT/CI Program Timekeeping Portal

PLEASE make sure you fill out your timesheet by the end of each month or right before you leave the program!

Portal link: <https://cdphcontacttracers.powerappsportals.us/>

- Register for the portal using the registration link in your invite email
- Navigate to the Survey tab and complete all of the information requested
- Select current month and enter actual time worked for the CT program and document any time off taken
- Submit the completed CT timesheet on the last day of the pay period
- Your CT Supervisor will review and approve your time entries
- Remember to also submit a timesheet to your HD Supervisor, according to your HD procedures
- A copy of your approved CT timesheet will be sent to your HD Supervisor as a reference for approving your HD timesheet.



Portal support can be reached at the [Help and Support Page](#) or ContactTracingPortalSupport@cdph.ca.gov

Training Updates

****All Trainings or Courses Must Be Approved By Your CT Supervisor Prior To Registering/Attendance****



Information Privacy & Security Training Refresher

Required for all State Staff, DIU Teams, and CI Schools Teams: 30 minute video

Available at: www.wearecaconnected.com

COVID-19 Response Resources

- Resources for You
 - Information Privacy & Security Training

There is a completion certificate also available on the website that you must download, digitally sign, and email to CTTrainingDev@cdph.ca.gov

Cultural Humility for Case Investigation and Contact Tracing (VTA)

January 26-27 (9am-1pm) **Pre-registration required

A 12-hour course, for staff that have already completed CT or CI VTA. Learn the tenets of cultural humility and how to apply them towards respectful and effective engagement of COVID-19 cases and contacts during investigation and tracing interviews. After your CT Supervisor approves your training attendance, register here:

<https://pandemic.ucsf.edu/cultural-humility>

Virtual Training Academy (VTA) Vaccine Communications for Case Investigators and Contact Tracers : January 25th (9-1pm) **Pre-registration required

Audience/Who Should Register: Local Health Jurisdiction (LHJ) and state employees who will be working in the area of COVID-19 vaccine outreach and communication.

Length of Course: 3 hours of online self-study and 4 hours (one half day) of live webinars and skill development activities. The online self-study must be completed before coming to the live training.

Learning Objectives:

- Provide accurate and non-judgmental answers to frequently asked questions about the safety, benefits, and availability of COVID-19 vaccines.
- Describe barriers to vaccination and facilitators of vaccination, especially among communities most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Apply principles of health coaching, motivational interviewing, and cultural humility to support people with their decision-making around if, when, and how to get vaccinated.

Language Offerings: The course is offered in both English and Spanish.

Records of Completion: Learners must complete and pass the knowledge assessment with a minimum score of 70% to receive a record of completion.

For more information or to register: <https://pandemic.ucsf.edu/vaccine-communications>

****LHJ and CT Sup Approval Required for Enrollment****

Program Staff Spotlights

This month we are spotlighting staff from the California Connected Contact Tracing Program and CT/CIs who are working with an Local Health Jurisdiction (LHJ) to learn a little more about them and what it's meant to be part of such an important effort.

Derick Pitman enjoys his connection with people.

Derick Pitman is an SSA with the Bureau of Household Goods and Services. He has nearly 25 years in case investigations. He was originally deployed to LA County and in December he was transferred to Sacramento County where he resides with his partner of 30 years.



What have you enjoyed while working as a CI/CT??

I would say its the connection with people. Helping them and providing services or information they need. I can be very conversational and this seems to put a lot of folks at ease, I make them laugh and let them know they will be okay.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

Personally, it has been the loss of my youngest brother to Covid in October. It was a challenge mentally to continue to do the interviews and listen to negative people say the pandemic isn't real. Luckily, those people are few and far in between. I'm doing much better now.

What have your family and friends thought of your work with the Program?

Everyone has been really supportive and they see the real value in what I am doing.

What are you looking forward to when things get back to normal?

I really look forward to bringing the skills and knowledge back to my home office. The redirected staff has been really supportive and caring. In a way, I have looked at this as a little vacation to improve on my skills as an investigator. I look forward to bringing all I have learned here and help improve my home office.

Program Staff Spotlights

Maurissa Ray's passion inspires family and friends.

I am the Coordination Support Lead for the Workforce Training & Development Team. Initially, I was redirected from my role as Licensing Analyst from the California Department of Public Health's Licensing and Certification Program in July 2020. I was officially hired into my role by California Connected in November 2021 - exactly sixteen months to the day of my initial redirection! While I have always been on the same workstream, the duties have evolved from screening and interviewing for the initial deployments of case investigators to helping launch and implement the California Public Health Corps (CA-PHC) Training & Pathways Program. In addition to Pathways, I provide high-level support for the Virtual Training Academy (VTA+), Mentorship Team, and other workforce development activities and special projects as needed.



What have you enjoyed while working with the California Connected Contact Tracing Program?

California Connected has allowed me to explore the field of public health in a new way and gain invaluable firsthand work experience. I now have a passion for program planning and hope to continue in this type of work (hopefully under different circumstances) for years to come! I am on an incredible team that supports, mentors, and gives me every opportunity they can to help me grow as a professional. We work well together and have built close bonds despite only interacting via Zoom. The weekly 34 Strong coaching sessions have also been a huge support in my growth during this time. I am grateful every single day that this is my job and that I enjoy what I do so much while also contributing to California's COVID-19 response efforts.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

My biggest challenge has been finding work-life integration. I've learned that balance is just not the right word for me in the remote realm. My living room has become my office and my fur babies are my coworkers. Sometimes those boundaries get blurry and I have to remember to completely shut down at the end of the day. (And literally put the computer out of sight on my days off.)

What have your friends and family thought about your work with Program?

My friends and family have been incredibly supportive and proud of my contributions to this program. Many of them come to me for updates and to answer their questions about the current guidance. Some have even said they're inspired by my passion for Public Health and hope to apply for the next Pathways cohort!

What are you looking forward to when things get back to normal?

I really look forward to bringing the skills and knowledge back to my home office. The redirected staff has been really supportive and caring. In a way, I have looked at this as a little vacation to improve on my skills as an investigator. I look forward to bringing all I have learned here and help improve my home office.

Staff Spotlights

Payam Narvand is looking to a future with hope, unity and healing.

Payam Narvand, MBA, JD is a management and business law professor. He has been developing and implementing clean energy programs for the California Energy Commission for 15 years, managing technical teams of engineers and scientists. Since August 2020, he has served as a Covid State Supervisor for the California Connected Contact Tracing Program, managing a team of case investigators assigned to San Bernardino county.



What have you enjoyed during your experience working as a CI/CT Supervisor?

As a CICT state redirect supervisor, I have enjoyed how I was able to impact and inspire others through a winning leadership style, one with an acronym of C.A.R.E. (Communication, Accountability, Relationship building, Empathy). I enjoyed being able to get results through positive collaborative relationships and teamwork. I enjoyed being able to serve the people of CA, overcoming daunting challenges and growing myself and my team in the process to be more agile, more resilient, thereby impacting more meaningful and positively those in distress and need who became positive or were exposed as a contact. While I enjoyed building Covid related operational activities, I enjoyed more building people, growing, inspiring, enriching, empowering them. I enjoyed how much we collectively achieved and became relentless. I enjoyed not taking a day off, unlike Covid, who never took a day off. I enjoyed how I took an active and impactful role in one of the most consequential and transformative changes in the history of mankind.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

The biggest challenge has been to navigate through a myriad of challenges, all happening at once: 1) diving myself and my team into a subject matter and discipline- public health- with no academic background, training, or experience; 2) leading virtual teams with challenges such as building trust, relationships, and performance remotely; 3) leading through a disaster like world, with evolving science and controversies; 4) leading programs and people with many unknown or uncertain or rapidly changing Covid protocols, processes and policies; 4) Supporting the well-being and "mojo" of the people I am leading.

What have your friends and family thought about your important work during this time?

My family and friends have cultivated an attitude of gratitude. They have been appreciative and grateful about my service and contributions to "fight the good fight" and make impactful differences in people and communities. They are proud that I was one of the many lights lightening the darkness of individuals and communities, reminding me of Amanda Gorman's powerful and inspiring poem: "For there is always light, if only we are brave enough to see the light, if only we are brave enough to be the light".

What are you looking forward to when things get back to normal?

I am looking to a better future, one of hope, unity, and healing. I am looking forward to a sense of peace, trust, respect, and tranquility, conducive to building more bridges, empathy and compassion amongst people from different walks of life, both at the workplace and in society at large. Organizations must figure out how to sustain and grow the right leadership and performance, whether in a period of disruption or not, without damaging the health of employees. We need to pay attention to neglected issues such as self-care, wellness programs, work/live balance, the value of finding one's meaningful purpose, value and talent. We need to be more people focused, for the greatest asset of any organization or society is not its buildings, balance sheets, assets, or IP, but its people.

We Heard It Through The Grapevine.....

Enjoy Some Great CI/CT Stories Shared From the Field



Sometimes It's for the Love of Country.....

A veteran who tested positive was very skeptical about vaccination when receiving a call from a case investigator in San Bernardino county. The case investigator then relayed to him that he once interviewed another veteran who tested positive, and who said on the call: "I hate vaccines...but I love my country more than I hate vaccines....so I took my vaccines". This was a game changer that inspired and changed the perspectives of the skeptical veteran, and he inquired thereafter about testing sites so he can take his vaccine shots."

Do You Love Helping Your Community?

The CDPH Reserve Corp Wants You!!

Love what you do and want to continue helping in the future? Know another state employee who might be interested in volunteering to help? We encourage everyone to check out the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Reserve Corps. With this new program, CDPH is seeking state employee volunteers to serve on trained strike teams that will provide emergency response support in the case of a state of emergency in the State of California that poses a risk to the public health. Visit our website at:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/HRB/Pages/Public-Health-Reserve-Corps.aspx> to read about the details and apply today.

If you are currently working with us as a part of the CAConnected Contact Tracing Program, you can still apply and it won't impact your current deployment. Feel free to share this information with others and enjoy this informative video developed to showcase why being a part of the Reserve Corps is such important work:

<https://youtu.be/2gQOrYiXsXw>



Have a question or concern about your contact tracing/case investigation work? Do not hesitate to reach out to CTSupervisors@cdph.ca.gov for confidential concerns

In Case You Missed It

BY THE NUMBERS AS OF 01/19/2022

Stats & Figures About
the Contact Tracing Program

274 REDIRECTED STAFF

245 DEPLOYED STAFF
TO AN LHJ

27 COUNTIES WITH
DEPLOYED STAFF

COUNTY WITH THE
MOST DEPLOYED
STAFF:

Los Angeles (63)

COUNTY WITH THE
LEAST DEPLOYED
STAFF:

Plumas (3)



Keeping Our Families and Communities Healthy

Tools & Resources

California Connected is dedicated to outfitting redirected staff with the tools they need and the training to use those tools effectively. Some examples include:

[Release Update](#) - Review this video to learn about the latest updates to the CalCONNECT platform, including feature enhancements, new entry fields, and permissions updates. Find more great information and tutorials on the [CDPH CalCONNECT Learning YouTube playlist here](#).

CDPH COVID-19 Webpage

Here's everything you'd ever want to know about COVID-19 in California:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/CovidDataAndTools.aspx>

Updated Guidance for the Use of Face Masks

It's time to upgrade your mask: To ensure that we collectively protect the health and well-being of all Californians; keep schools open for in-person instruction; and allow California's economy to remain open and thrive, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) is requiring masks to be worn in all indoor public settings, irrespective of vaccine status, until February 15, 2022. This requirement will be updated as CDPH continues to assess conditions on an ongoing basis. Masks should have a good fit and filtration and continue to be the best way to get the most out of your mask. The best masks for preventing COVID-19 include the N95, KN95 and KF94. If you don't have access to one of these masks, wear a surgical mask or a surgical mask with a cloth mask on top. If you choose a fabric mask, opt for one with three or more cloth layers. No matter what kind of mask you wear, check the fit by avoiding gaps above the nose or on the sides. **Beware of Counterfeits!**

Signs that an N95 respirator may be counterfeit:

- No markings at all on the filtering facepiece respirator
- No approval (TC) number on filtering facepiece respirator or headband
- No NIOSH markings (KN95 masks will not have the NIOSH certification)
- NIOSH spelled incorrectly
- Presence of decorative fabric or other decorative add-ons (e.g., sequins)
- Claims for the approval for children (NIOSH does not approve any type of respiratory protection for children)
- Filtering facepiece respirator has ear loops instead of headbands

For non-NIOSH approved masks (KN95, KF94):

The CDC provides a list of commercially available face coverings that meet minimum filtration and breathability requirements (ASTM F3502-21).

- If purchasing a mask that conforms with American Society for Testing and Materials standards, choose a mask rated as "Level 2" which will provide better filtration than a Level 1 mask. A Level 1 mask has a filtration efficiency of at least 20% while a Level 2 mask has a filtration efficiency of at least 50%.
- The optional leakage ratio test provides additional information on the likelihood the mask will fit to provide an adequate seal to the wearer's face. Lower leakage ratios indicate a better fit.

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx>

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Get-the-Most-out-of-Masking.aspx>

<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/npptl/usernotices/counterfeitResp.html>

<https://wwwn.cdc.gov/PPEInfo/RG/FaceCoverings>