



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

As we come up on our one year mark from our first staff deployments, I wanted to take this time to reflect on how far we have come since first assigning State staff to support Imperial County on June 1, 2020. We had no system in place for smooth communication, tracking, orientation or deployment of these first staff teams—we were working so fast and furious to build the planes even as we were sending them up in the air. As redirected staff, you truly were amazing, eager to help our state, anxious about your new roles—most with no public health experience, and throwing yourselves into the wonderful trainings developed by UCSF and UCLA.



I am in awe of everyone's commitment to the roles they accepted and to their fellow human beings. Over time we were able to build up an infrastructure, improve our human resources supports and our communications with staff and LHJ's. The phenomenal work of our CDPH Workforce Expansion teams was key in making this happen. By listening to the needs of the staff and LHJ's, our teams at the State learned what was required most and worked diligently to make it happen. Adapting to a new norm was a very bumpy road in those first months especially when most of it took place virtually. The flexibility and willingness to come together and ride this bumpy road was both inspiring and heartwarming and we are so grateful you did. The LHJ's are also very thankful, they too were navigating unforeseen territory with new staff training and infrastructure changes but we came together and flew those planes right into our first case surge that summer.

The work was hard, the learning curve was steep and many calls were traumatic but your dedication showed every step of the way.



The Herculean efforts of the State staff, the CDPH Workforce Expansion teams, and the LHJ's who took them in has made this program an enormous success—a bigger success than anyone anticipated! You have truly made a difference to the individuals you've reached and have helped to keep cases lower than they would have been—undoubtedly you saved many lives by helping to interrupt community transmission. My words cannot truly express how much I appreciate the compassion with which everyone worked to keep each other and our fellow Californian's safe. Thank you!!

Warmly,

Holly Howard

Contact Tracing Program Director

Training Updates

****All Trainings and Mentorship Summits Must Be Approved By Your CT Supervisor Prior To Registering/Attendance****

NEW! Offboarding, Appreciation, and Decompression Sessions

Weekly: Fridays, 3:00pm - 4:30pm - June 11, 18 & 25 and July 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30

We take this opportunity each week to acknowledge and thank the offboarding State redirected staff, hear about their experiences as CIs, CTs, or CTS', and discuss their thoughts and feelings about returning to their home units. **You will receive a meeting request to attend this special meeting after you've received your notice of your last day**



NEW! Mentorship Real Talk: A Peer-to-Peer Sharing Session

Weekly: Tuesdays, 2:30pm - 4:00pm - June 8, 15, 22 & 29 and July 6, 13, 20 & 27

The CI/CT Mentorship Team hosts a weekly session to provide a platform for staff to discuss hot topics related to Covid-19 case investigation and contact tracing activities. At least three discussion topics are available each week. Topics rotate based on popularity, availability, and relevance.

Contact CImentoring@cdph.ca.gov for more information

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

NEW! Virtual Training Academy (VTA) Vaccine Communications for Case Investigators and Contact Tracers

is a 4-hour online course conducted through Zoom for staff that are currently performing or will be performing vaccine coordination related activities. The live webinar will focus on interactive, small group activities. In order to maximize in-class time, ~2 hours of self-study is required prior to training. This course will teach staff how to...

- Provide concise and engaging answers to frequently asked questions about the safety, efficacy, availability, and access to COVID-19 vaccines.
- Identify individual and community-level barriers and enablers of vaccination, especially among communities most impacted by the pandemic.
- Apply principles of health coaching, motivational interviewing, and cultural humility to support individuals through different stages of vaccine acceptance, readiness, and action planning.
- Schedule vaccine appointments or provide education on how to schedule vaccine appointments using "My Turn" or other appointment systems.

Upcoming Dates: **June 8, 16, 17, 21, 22**

***indicates dates available in Spanish.** Supervisors will be receiving registration links to share with staff. Please check with your supervisor if you are interested in attending this course.

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

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>

You will also receive an email to attend the **NEW! Offboarding, Appreciation, and Decompression Sessions** once you return to your home department. (See our session description above in Training Updates, Page 2.)

California Public Health Corps (CA-PHC) Training & Pathways Program

The California Public Health Corps (CA-PHC) Training and Pathways Program is a two-year, paid, training and worksite placement program for early-career public health professionals to work at Local Health Jurisdiction (LHJ) Host Sites. Trainees of the program will receive intensive training prior to starting their assignments, and will conduct communicable disease intervention, community engagement, and emergency response activities.

- Trainees receive: Two-year contracted position with competitive salary and benefits
Training + support needed to advance a career in public health
Experience in public health service delivery
Opportunities to build a network of colleagues, mentors, & friends
- Interested applicants must meet ONE of the following criteria: (A) At least six months of full-time communicable disease control experience, OR (B) At least one year of full-time health and human services experience, OR (C) A bachelor's degree

**APPLICATIONS OPEN SOON! FOR MORE INFORMATION,
VISIT THE CA-PHC [WEBPAGE](#).**

Staff Spotlights

We reached out to redirected staff to get a better idea about their experiences working with the California Connected Contact Tracing Program. Each month we'd like to highlight their responses, and share with you what it means to be part of such an important effort.

Bonnie Sutherland's Golden rescues are her lifesavers.

Bonnie is an AGPA with State Water Resources Control Board (Waterboards) and certifies all the Drinking Water Treatment operators in the State along with her other duties. In June 2020 Bonnie was initially deployed to LA County and is now a Team Lead CI/CT with San Bernardino County. Bonnie has 3 Golden rescues that she says have been her lifesavers on this Coronacoaster.



What have you enjoyed during your experience as a Contact Tracer/Case Investigator?

The opportunity for growth, learning, helping people and their communities. Making a difference in the transmission of this virus. Being part of an incredible team with an amazing supervisor, TEAM TRISHA rocks. The knowledge and support the CDPH Mentorship Team has provided us with is unmeasurable. Just being able to connect with cases and contacts and share valuable information that may save a life.

What has been your biggest challenge as a Contact Tracer/Case Investigator?

Although I don't take it personally, talking with people who don't believe the science. It feels good when I'm able to, during a conversation, motivate a non believer to at least think about it.

What have your friends and family thought about your work as a Contact Tracer/Case Investigator?

Most of my friends and family think it's pretty cool and that I'm making a difference. My family is proud of me, their love and encouragement keeps me grounded and focused. Both friends and family consider me a great resource for anything Covid related.

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

LIVE MUSIC and spending time with friends, being able to hug again. Not having to worry.

Staff Spotlights

Rosa Gomez has a passion for working in Social Services.

I am currently a Staff Services Manager II with the Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). Although I have 13 years working with DOR, I have worked in the Social Services field for over 20 years. In July 2020, I was assigned to the Los Angeles County, Department of Public Health as a Case Investigator and Contact Tracer. I was redirected in October, 2020, to serve as a Contact Tracing Supervisor for Placer and Merced counties and am currently serving as a CT Supervisor for Sonoma County. This work furthers my passion for delivering Social Services to individuals in need at critical times. I am appreciative of this opportunity to meet my fellow state employees from various departments and enjoy learning about the different roles and responsibilities we each have in serving California.



What have you enjoyed during your experience as a Contact Tracing Supervisor?

I was eager to assist individuals in our communities who were directly impacted by COVID-19. I am grateful for the opportunity to have served as a Contact Investigator (CI); performing contact tracing/investigations, sharing information about isolating and/or quarantining, and providing resources specific to their community. I believe this experience has helped me to provide support to the redirected CI's I work with. I am privileged for the opportunity to work with great teams of redirected state employees as colleagues and those I supervise.

What has been your biggest challenge as a Contact Tracing Supervisor?

In my role as a CI, I felt compassion for the individuals I spoke with who were very ill from COVID-19, who were angry that they contracted the virus and fearful for their life. Hearing them having difficulty breathing, talking, describing their pain and describing lack of energy made me feel helpless at times. As a Supervisor, it can be a challenge to keep the CI's I support focused on the project's scope of work; having to remind them that we do not have the ability or the resources to solve the numerous negative impacts on individuals' lives brought on by the pandemic.

What have your friends and family thought about your work as a Contact Tracing Supervisor?

My friends and family are proud that I am performing this work supporting the community, and they like that I am a resource when they have questions about the pandemic. They are especially grateful that I can conduct this work remotely, which allows me to be home and not out in the community and reduces my potential exposure to the virus.

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

I am curious to explore what the new normal will be. Just prior to the pandemic, my family and I were making travel arrangements. We are looking forward to carrying out those vacation plans, as well as visiting with friends and family we haven't seen since the 2019 holidays. Some of the principles I live by are Patience, Flexibility and Tolerance of others. I believe all of these will be needed as our society transitions out of the pandemic.

Staff Spotlights

Valerie James wants you to know, "You are amazing!"

At the end of July 2020, I volunteered to work as Contact Tracer for Santa Clara County, and shortly after I became Case Investigator. Prior to being called to work on the Covid 19 response, I was an Enforcement Analyst, for the Board of Chiropractic Examiners (Board) and have been with the Board since May 2008. Over the past 12 plus years, I gained my experience in regulatory programs specifically in administrative, licensing and consumer protection, leading me to my current position as an Enforcement Analyst. Prior to joining BCE, I started my State Service Career in August 2007 with the Department of Motor Vehicles in Records Security Unit, where I contributed to the departmental initiative "SSN Scrub" special project.

What have you enjoyed during your experience as a Case Investigator?

To come together and make a difference in the community is such an amazing opportunity that I'm proud to be a part of. It has been a very humbling experience to be a part of the CI/CT team and one that I will never forget. Although it has been challenging at times it also has been very rewarding. It feels good knowing that I've made at least one person not feel alone, whether it be through providing very much needed resources or, easing their anxiety related to being diagnosed with Covid-19. I've even made a few clients laugh along the way. It has also been great having a



supportive CI/CT Team. The team members come from all different backgrounds, and we work collectively to brainstorm and implement new policies and procedures depending on what triage level we are in. We try our very best to have fun while helping others because we are all in this together. Please remember to practice self-love and self-compassion! To help others, we need to be good to ourselves first. Check up on loved ones and take advantage of the resources that CDPH, SCC & Heluna Health has provided us to help our mental health. Lastly, talk with family, friends, and team members about emotions, problems, or concerns you have. I'd like to close by saying if no one has told you, "You are Amazing".

What has been your biggest challenge as a Case Investigator?

One of the biggest challenges was making that first call to someone I didn't know. Ensuring I was able to provide and obtain accurate information during the interview. It was challenging to be the first person to notify someone they had tested positive with Covid-19 or letting someone know they were exposed to someone who tested positive.

What have your friends and family thought about your work as a Case Investigator?

They weren't sure I was going to be able to help Santa Clara County, since I live in Sacramento. Some thought it was great that I volunteered to help our Californians get the resources and guidance they needed.

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

I'm looking forward to seeing my family and friends without worrying about getting someone seriously ill. On a much greater scale, to see Californians thrive mentally, financially, and socially. Thank you again for this opportunity to serve Californians.

We Heard It Through The Grapevine.....

Enjoy Some Great CI/CT Stories Shared From the Field



Doing Whatever It Takes : a testimonial from a CT/CI

At the start of our new Vaccination Coordination assignments I reached out to a gentleman in his late 90s. The man's son answered the phone and let me know he was his Dad's caretaker. He immediately let me know he had been trying to secure a vaccine appointment for his Dad for several weeks now and some days spending up to three hours searching with no luck. He was so happy that someone, anyone cared enough to call and help them. He would say, wait a minute so YOU'RE calling to help ME get an appointment for my Dad?! The son let me know that he is a business owner and contractor so he was on the phone but also driving at the moment but could I still help even though he needed to get off the phone right then. I quickly shifted to triaging the most important information I needed from him, asked if distance or date/time was the higher priority and told him I would call him back with either an appointment date/time or confirmation that someone else from my team would be contacting them to help secure an appointment. I ended the call and got to work on finding an appointment that would meet their needs, the son was only available to take care of his Dad's appointments 12pm-3pm, and there were dates they would be out of town. I really didn't think I'd be able to get an appointment for them right away but I went full force on this. I was finally able to secure an appointment! I called the son back while I was finishing up the last part of the vaccine confirmation steps, I advised him that he'd be receiving a confirmation text with a code to be entered but he was still driving! So I had him read off the confirmation code, entered it on my end and we made the 5 minute window of time to complete the vaccine appointment registration!!! He was incredibly thankful and amazed that there was a team of people reaching out to help the community in this capacity.

Music Can Connect Us: a testimonial from a CI

Like any day, I picked up a case during the county's surge protocol. You never know who is going to pick up the phone, where they are, how they're doing, if they've lost anyone to the virus. . .but you do your best to be present, actively listen and empower them in devising a plan of action with them while they ride their illness out. As time went on during the surge, I found myself feeling deeply fulfilled in doing this work, connecting with complete strangers during a time of which felt hopeless and isolating, an odd choice of words ['isolating'] but it encompasses the distance we all felt from one another and the lack of human connection. Every day, I felt as though I made a few new friends and connections that felt meaningful and unforgettable. As I anxiously called the case, they initially didn't answer and I simply left a voicemail and moved on to another case. Within a few minutes, the case I called, called me back. A jovial and excitable individual chuckled at the end of the phone saying, "Hey, you guys are doing great historic work, thank you for calling me!" Open and more than willing to share their experience with me, I knew instantly, I was making another friend. After discussing their experience being infected with the virus, I learned they were a retired artist, photographer and had a brimming love for music of all genres. We bonded and spoke for some time about some of our favorite artists and musicians. They lived alone with no family and for some time, I often called them to check in and chat for a bit. I still think of them and hope they're well and listening to their favorite records.

In Case You Missed It

Summer Driving Safety

BY THE NUMBERS AS OF 6/7/2021

Stats & Figures About
the Contact Tracing Program

1,614

REDIRECTED STAFF

1,583

DEPLOYED STAFF
TO AN LHJ

36

COUNTIES WITH
DEPLOYED STAFF

COUNTY WITH THE
MOST DEPLOYED
STAFF:

Los Angeles (760)

COUNTY WITH THE
LEAST DEPLOYED
STAFF:

3 each: Monterey,
Riverside, Trinity,
Tuolumne



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

[SPOT for Outbreak Investigators](#) - Learn about key functionality available to Outbreak Investigators when working with the School/Shared Portal for Outbreak Tracking (SPOT). Find more great information and tutorials on the [CDPH CalCONNECT Learning YouTube playlist here](#).

While Vaccination is rolling out successfully and states are opening, people want to go out to enjoy the summer that they missed last year. Many believe winter to be the most dangerous time to be driving, Summer is the most dangerous time to be on the road. You will see more construction, tire blowouts, motorcycles, and teens and vacationers who are unfamiliar with the road. The period between May through October is the deadliest time of the year for crashes with October having 3,368 deaths in 2018. Read below for more information on the hazards you may encounter, preparations you can take, and the tips and tricks to stay safe while summer driving.

1. Get Your Car Serviced

Regular maintenance such as tune-ups, oil changes, battery checks, and tire rotations go a long way toward preventing breakdowns. If your vehicle has been serviced according to the manufacturer's recommendations, it should be in good condition to travel. If your vehicle has not been serviced—schedule a preventive maintenance checkup with your mechanic right away.

2. Air Pressure, Tread Wear, Spare

Check your vehicle's tire inflation pressure at least once a month and when your tires are cold (when the car has not been driven for three hours or more)—and do not forget to check your spare, if your vehicle is equipped with one. The correct pressure for your tires is listed on a label on the driver's door pillar or doorframe or in the vehicle owner's manual. Use the "penny test" to determine when it is time to replace your tires. Place a penny in the tread with Lincoln's head upside down. If you can see the top of Lincoln's head, your vehicle needs new tires. For more information on tire safety, visit NHTSA.gov/Tires.

3. Pack an Emergency Roadside Kit

Even a well-maintained vehicle can break down, so it is good to put together an emergency roadside kit to carry with you. Suggested emergency roadside kit contents:

- Cell phone and charger
- Tire pressure gauge
- First aid kit & A Map
- Jack (and ground mat) for changing a tire
- Flashlight
- Basic repair tools
- Flares and a white flag
- Jumper cables
- Nonperishable food, drinking water, and medicines
- Emergency blankets, towels and coats

4. Share the Road

Warmer weather attracts many types of road users, including motorcyclists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. While they have the same rights, privileges, and responsibilities as every driver, these road users are more vulnerable because they do not have the protection of a car or truck.

Things to remember as a driver:

Leave more distance between you and a motorcycle—three- or four-seconds worth. Keep your eyes open for distracted pedestrians. Do not pass if there is any doubt. Be especially attentive around schools and in neighborhoods where children are active.

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