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Clark County remains in Phase 2 of Safe Start Reopening Plan

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Public Health modifying COVID-19 response due to surge in cases

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Body

In the last month, COVID-19 case numbers in Clark County have increased 50%, with more than 2,000 new cases reported in four weeks. In the last week, Clark County has averaged more than 100 cases per day. Today, Clark County announced 277 new cases.

The dramatic surge in cases has strained Clark County Public Health's ability to quickly reach people who have tested positive for COVID-19. And that has impacted Public Health's ability to identify and notify close contacts in a timely manner, which reduces the effectiveness of the contact tracing process.

As a result, Clark County Public Health is modifying its COVID-19 response. Public Health is shifting staff resources to prioritize interviewing cases and identifying priority locations where exposures may have occurred. Public Health will no longer identify, notify and monitor individual close contacts of confirmed cases.

"We believe these changes will allow us to more quickly interview cases, ensure they are isolated while contagious, and identify priority locations that may need our help to prevent or mitigate an outbreak," said Dr. Alan Melnick, Public Health director and county health officer.

Public Health will continue to interview everyone who tests positive for COVID-19 to determine whether there are any potential exposures at priority locations, which include schools, long-term care facilities, the jail and food processing facilities.

Cases will be provided with [instructions on how to isolate](#) until they are no longer contagious and will receive daily text messages during their isolation period through a secure system called Sara Alert. Through case interviews, Public Health will identify priority locations where someone who tested positive may have been while contagious. If an exposure occurred at a priority location, Public Health will work with the facility to identify close contacts and provide guidance on quarantine and testing.

Cases will also be provided a [handout about quarantine](#) and will be asked to notify their close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19.

"In many instances cases are already notifying their close contacts and doing so more quickly than we're able to," Melnick said. "With the help of the community, we can continue to identify and notify close contacts who need to quarantine."

Guidance for cases, close contacts

Everyone who tests positive for COVID-19 will be instructed to isolate at home until they are no longer contagious. Those who test positive and have symptoms of COVID-19 can end isolation when:

- they've been fever-free for at least 24 hours without using fever-reducing medicine AND
- other symptoms are improving AND
- at least 10 days have passed since symptoms began.

Those who test positive but do not have symptoms can end isolation when at least 10 days have passed since the date of their first positive test.

Cases will be asked to notify their close contacts that they may have been exposed to COVID-19. Cases will need to notify anyone they were in close contact with from the two days before their symptoms began until they started isolation. Close contacts include everyone who:

- was within 6 feet of the sick person for more than 15 minutes
- was near the sick person's coughs or sneezes
- lives in the same home as the sick person
- cared for the sick person

Close contacts should [quarantine at home for 14 days](#) from the last day they were in close contact with the sick person. They should not go to work, school, child care or church, or participate in other social or community activities during quarantine.

Additional guidance and resources are available on the [Public Health website](#).

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