



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

Spring is in the air and it's not luck that has our numbers going down. It's the hard work and dedication of all our redirected staff as well as the ongoing vaccinations taking place all over our state. The gorgeous weather is coming too and we're all eager to get out of our homes. Remember to keep practicing safe distancing and wear your masks, even if you've been vaccinated. Our communities need us to continue to model safe behaviors as everyone is ready to shed the pandemic fatigue and get outside.



In exciting vaccine news, we now have the first one-shot vaccine approved for use in California. Of the three vaccines available, only Johnson & Johnson's Janssen COVID-19 vaccine requires a single dose, and it does not need super cold storage, making it easier to distribute across the state. The vaccine was reported to be 85% effective in preventing severe disease, with complete protection against hospitalization and death developing in the month following the shot. This powerful public health tool will ease the burden of COVID-19 on Californians and on our healthcare systems.

Many people have heard that the new vaccine uses "viral vectors" and are wondering how that works. Johnson & Johnson's vaccine uses a harmless, modified virus to deliver the vaccine's active ingredient, but it will not cause you to get sick from either the delivery virus (called a vector virus) or the COVID-19 virus. Like the Moderna vaccine, the new one-shot vaccine can be given to people 18 years and older (the Pfizer vaccine is approved for people ages 16 years and older). You can visit [Understanding and Explaining Viral Vector COVID-19 Vaccines](#) for more information on this amazing technology.



I look forward to seeing everyone out enjoying themselves in a safe and healthy way. Following safe guidelines and getting vaccinated will be the fastest way for us to return to normal.

-Holly Howard

Contact Tracing Program Director

Training Updates

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



[PUB HLT 811.1 - COVID-19.3 Case Investigation for CA-VTA Contact Tracing Course Alumni](#) - For staff that have previously attended Contact Tracing training, but have never taken the Case Investigation Component.

March 29-31: VTA: Cultural Humility for Case Investigation and Contact Tracing. A 12-hour course (9am-1pm), 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>

School Specialist Training: Due to limited space, this course is available upon LHJ request only. If you are a CT supervisor and your LHJ would like staff trained to assist with school-related case investigation/contact tracing activities, please email CTTrainingDev@cdph.ca.gov for course registration information.

March 23 & 30: Mentorship Summits for Recently Deployed CIs/CTs. Get guidance and support while learning interviewing tips and tricks. For registration information, please contact - CIMentoring@cdph.ca.gov

Mentorship Summits for Recently Deployed CIs/CTs.

Each Tuesday from 2:30pm-4:00pm, the CI/CT Mentorship Team will host a summit to provide guidance and support to CIs/CTs who have recently been deployed to assist with the State's COVID-19 efforts.

The format is a facilitated, free-flowing, unscripted conversation between staff and our team of experienced disease investigators on the tips, tricks, and challenges of conducting Case Investigation and Contact Tracing activities. Summits focus entirely on disease investigation/conducting the interview and will NOT provide guidance on CalCONNECT/data systems, HR, or deployment concerns.

We strive to provide a safe space where staff feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, feelings and anxieties without fear of ridicule or repercussion. Therefore, we kindly ask that managers/supervisors/team leads NOT attend this session.

These summits are **limited to staff deployed within the last 30 days**. Additional mentorship opportunities are available for individual teams and more experienced staff.

- Please note that these sessions are optional
 - **CT Supervisor approval is required prior to registration.**
 - Registration is required.
 - Space is limited. Please *only* register if you plan to attend, and cancel if your plans change.
- For more information, please contact CIMentoring@cdph.ca.gov.

Technology Updates



Are You Using 'My Turn' to Get Your Vaccination Notification?

Use this easy website to find out if you are eligible to receive the vaccination or be notified of when it's your turn. This site isn't just for Contact Tracers, this is for all Californians so please share the link with family, friends and neighbors. <https://myturn.ca.gov/>

Get Notified Electronically if You May Have Been Exposed

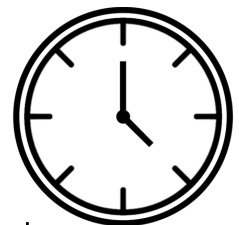
Sign up at CA Notify to receive notifications on your phone if you have been near someone infected with COVID-19. You can also report if you have tested positive with COVID-19. Quickly becoming aware of COVID-19 exposure is key to stopping the spread. It does not track your location or personal data. Use the link to learn more about how it works and sign up today. <https://canotify.ca.gov/>

CT/CI Program Timekeeping Portal

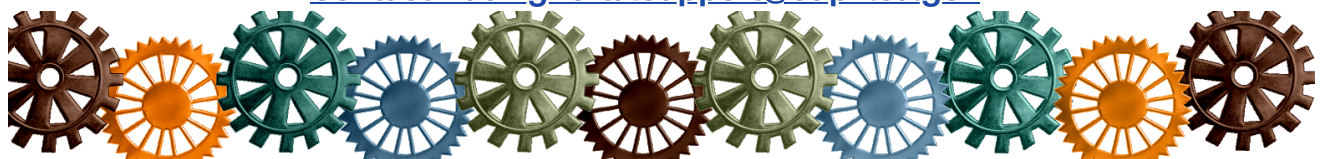
Now you can enter timesheets electronically!

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



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.

Gloria Byrne is helping us interpret our way through a Pandemic

Gloria is a Staff Services Analyst with the Department of Consumer Affairs. In June 2020, she was assigned to the Los Angeles County, Department of Public Health as a Case Investigator and Contact Tracer for California Connected.



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

"I am grateful for the opportunity to assist during this pandemic and enjoy serving as a Case Investigator, Contact Tracer and Korean Interpreter. It's an asset to be able to provide educational information/resources, build trust, listen to needs, answer questions, and show genuine empathy for Cases & Contacts. I am blessed to be working with an AMAZING group of people such as my fellow teammates from Unit-5 Teams 13, 14, 18 & 19, Team Leads and Manager. We share information, support each other, and work well as a Team. I also like to acknowledge the trainers and instructors for providing us with good training and tools to succeed."

What has been your biggest challenge as a Case Investigator?

"Meeting call requirements for a heavy workload in an 8 hour period; especially, when most calls require an interpreter which takes more time."

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

"My friends and family are happy I am contributing my time and service to assist. They also appreciate and value me as a resource for them to receive updated COVID-19 information."

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

:I look forward to going to church, hanging out with family/friends, traveling, dining-in at restaurants, going to theaters AND not having to wear a mask, gloves, or be paranoid about having close public contact."

Staff Spotlights

Grande Rudolph bringing years of experience to CalCONNECT

As an Information Technology Supervisor II with the Department of Transportation, Grande managed large enterprise systems; network operations, messaging, telecommunications, software and customer service operations for the department. He is currently a CT Supervisor in Butte, Napa and Tuolumne Counties.



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

The prospect that we as teams in various counties, are helping to make a difference for California, by stopping the Covid-19 virus and schedule vaccines for as many people as possible. Furthermore, the camaraderie that I've experienced from the teams I supervise, has been incredibly rewarding for me and the work we do every day. I was voluntold to participate in this amazing program. I have met so many wonderful people and gained a wealth of knowledge about the Covid-19 virus that we all face, which has kept us confined to our homes during this turbulent time; however, because of the incredible work and vaccine scheduling we are doing the numbers of infected people are going down.

That's very encouraging because it speaks volumes for the effort to accomplish a common goal of making California healthy again. I am so proud to have been voluntold to be part of this exciting and great project, which has allowed me to mentor and be encouraged by outstanding team members. This project has opened the door of opportunities to meet new and inspiring individuals, which allowed us to become amazing families that work together to achieve the daunting task of almost impossibilities, but we are making an awesome difference. With that, I encourage everyone to see the outstanding achievements of your participation and the greatness you bring to the State of California; also know our efforts impact the world in a very positive way. "We will get back to normal soon" and enjoy the richness of our lives with our families.

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

Approving time sheets when we were using the std634, but now that we are using the new CDPH Time Sheet portal it's removed that challenge. So, now it's just making sure I'm organized to execute our work daily and keep up with the changes in CalCONNECT.

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

My friends say, I/we are doing a great work for an amazing cause; for the greater good of everyone. And, this work is very important. My family thinks I work too much; however they know and believe I am part of a very important project that needs to be done for the lives of all Californians. I love what I'm doing and would do it all over again.

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

Going to dinner again, movies, traveling to other states and countries, family gatherings, concerts all without a mask; not feeling like we are restricted to our dwellings and ordered to stay inside. All in all, I just want to visit my parents again without worrying about this virus.

Staff Spotlights

Sheilla Rivera-Flores loves her fellow Californians

"I come from a humble beginning. My Great Grandparents were immigrants from Portugal. They migrated West and owned one of the largest dairy farms in the El Centro area before retiring and moving the family to the Sacramento area. My father was military, so I had the opportunity to make the world my home until his retirement and we landed back here in California. Currently I am an analyst for the WIC Program in Sacramento, which I am proud to be part of a program that helps



families in need." Sheilla is currently deployed as a tracer/case investigator in Los Angeles County.

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

"Knowing that I am making a difference and helping even just a handful of people. At the end of the day or even the end of the week, if I can reflect and know just one person answered the phone, and I just listened to them; listened to what their concerns are and gave some validations for their fears, concerns, made them feel safe, and allow someone to feel okay again; then I know I am doing the right thing."

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

"Helping the community know we are here to help them was difficult. In the beginning, the stigmatism of Contact Trace Calls was challenging; mainly because many felt we were being intrusive, so the explanation of how we are only calling to provide services for communities, and to help prevent the possible spread of virus as quickly as possible sometimes was not as easy as I would have liked it to be. Eventually, it did get better. The management team is phenomenal and continues to provide us with everything, we need to be successful."

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

"My dearest friends keep me motivated to continue the journey, especially when I am growing weary. They remind me that assisting others is my true passion. They emphasize the compassion and desire that I have is something that not everyone has; this is just one more way I can help others in their time of need, connect with community and engage in such a meaningful way. My friends are truly proud of me. My family of course is proud of me; their love and encouragement keep me going each day. My daughters are my constant and my son as well; the three of them are my inspiration to always do better. I do this for them, to set an example of what community wealth means, not just in words and monetary donations, but by deeds we do to help the communities of our great state of California, and globally in our everyday life. We are in this together."

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

"Honestly, seeing my father and giving him a great big hug! He lives in Puerto Vallarta and I miss him. Then maybe Disneyland, I had a trip planned with my daughter and just as the COVID began closing, our trip was cancelled, so yes, definitely Disneyland!"

We Heard It Through The Grapevine.....

Enjoy Some Great CI/CT Stories Shared From the Field



Tears of Joy

"I finally got a hold of a case AND was able to speak to her husband. He was very upset and apologetic. He mentioned having done everything possible to protect themselves from the virus, especially because his wife has cancer. They were just days away from their vaccination appointments, which had been difficult to get and were going to provide them some peace of mind. Realizing that they would need to reschedule their vaccination appointments because she was in isolation and he was in quarantine made it feel that their peace of mind had just been snatched from their fingertips. I told him I completely understood but reassured them both that we can help them get new appointments and there are so many openings right now for when they're out of isolation/quarantine. He expressed how much difficulty they had to get their first appointments and that's why he was so upset. He immediately thought it would be months before they could get a new appointment. He was in tears thanking me for my help. He made me cry. I gave them the vaccination website and told them to share it with anyone and everyone who becomes eligible so they don't have the same issues as they did to get an appointment. Those are the calls that make me feel super warm inside." -shared by a Case Investigator in an LHD

A Grateful Client

A CI/CT client was recently infected with COVID-19. He is 65 years old. I called him today, asking if he has been vaccinated, had any questions about vaccination and would he be willing to spend a few minutes and "just get him signed up with an appointment." I asked if he had transportation to something like Levi Stadium, just off 101N. I asked if he could take the time with me to set up the appointment online, there would be questions we had already covered, and I would be asking about his Kaiser membership, but that the vaccine would be 100% free to him. I got him an appointment the same day. It was noon, the appt was for 4:45, the system asked that he show up at 4:25, we talked about where he lived, traffic, and agreed that leaving by 4 would work well. The confirmation was sent to his email, and we went over the very little documentation he needed to bring to the appointment. With the same day appointment all set up, I gave him the [sccfreevax.org](https://www.sccfreevax.org) website so he could help his friends get appointments. He is going to share the [sccfreevax.org](https://www.sccfreevax.org) website with his friends and co-workers. He has become a vaccine "ambassador." Before CI/CT Client let the call end, he made a point of saying, I just want to thank you (all us CI/CT) for the calls you made to me last June when I was infected with COVID-19. You saved my life"

-shared by a CI/CT in an LHD

Do you have a touching CI/CT story to share? Email it to;

weareconnected@cdph.ca.gov

In Case You Missed It

BY THE NUMBERS AS OF 3/10/2021

Stats & Figures About
the Contact Tracing Program

2,452

REDIRECTED STAFF

2,119

DEPLOYED STAFF TO
AN LHJ

39

COUNTIES WITH
DEPLOYED STAFF

COUNTY WITH THE
MOST DEPLOYED
STAFF:

Los Angeles (944)

COUNTY WITH THE
LEAST DEPLOYED
STAFF:

Inyo (3)



Keeping Our Families and Communities Healthy



Plan Your Vacation and More.....

Current travel recommendations: Californians should remain local (not traveling more than 120 miles from their home or other place of residence) and avoid non-essential travel. Travelers from other states or countries entering into California for tourism and recreation are strongly discouraged. For more information, please visit Travel - Coronavirus COVID-19 Response (ca.gov). But when you can travel, did you know that the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can assist you with planning a vacation? The CA Connected HR Policy and Supervisor Support Team recently invited Stella Antonakis to host presentations for all redirected state staff working with LHDs as CT/CI/CTSs. Ms. Antonakis is a senior account executive with Magellan Healthcare and is fully dedicated to the State of California Employee Assistance Program. She is a licensed clinician with over 30 years of EAP and Behavioral Health experience. In her presentations, Ms. Antonakis went in-depth about the services that EAP provides. For example, EAP offers concierge services which assist with booking hotels, car rentals, and other reservations. A concierge specialist can assist with, or even handle many of your personal errands. EAP also offers counseling, manager support, financial services, legal services and identity theft support. These services plus more are available to all state employees regardless of bargaining unit or classification and eligible dependents. For more information on EAP please check out their website at: <https://soceap.magellanascend.com/>.

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](#).



*How are we doing? Let us know how we can improve this newsletter by completing our survey [here](#).
Thank you!*