



Keeping Our Families and Communities Healthy

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

A Guest Blog by April Fernandez

This month, we are doing something different by sharing our California Connected Contact Tracing Program Staff. As the lead for the Workforce Expansion Team, we coordinate all redirected staff “behind the scenes”, to ensure that staff are receiving the support they need to assist the communities throughout California. I was redirected in April 2020, to help start up the workforce team, which was a monumental endeavor, since we had very little in place. A small team of us brainstormed on ideas of how to proceed by working with redirected state staff to work as contact tracers for local health jurisdictions. Fortunately, we received support from CalHR and the Governor’s office, as well as our own Health and Human Services Agency leadership, to move forward and receive the support needed to launch a program that eventually brought us where we are today.



Our Workforce Expansion Team consists of 30 redirected staff that work tirelessly with over 100 state departments who have redirected their staff to work as contact tracers, case investigators or contact tracing supervisors, respond to any of the 58 local health departments on their requests for state staff, assign the state staff to a local health department, and address any HR issues to provide support needed to all staff in this program. Our team works closely with the other contact tracing workstreams like the Training and Development Team that coordinates with UCSF/UCLA for the Virtual Training Academy, that you all attended. We also work with the LHD Capacity and Support team that provides support on CalCONNECT for the state and local staff. Our ongoing mantra (which I’m sure you’ve heard many times!) was “we are flying a plane as we build it” and the need to understand the agile process, as we were moving rapidly at times, but had to be flexible and open to change now more than ever.



In this issue, you will meet some of the program staff who work in other workstreams, just to give you a better idea of the caliber of staff that are here to support you. I feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to work with many of you who have been redirected as CT/CI/CT supervisors and program staff and appreciate the flexibility and patience you have had throughout this difficult time. We have all been challenged this past year and through this assignment, tested on our patience and resilience. I wish you a safe, healthy and restful summer season and thank you for continuing through this journey into the fall.

*Sincerely,
April Fernandez*

Contact Tracing Workforce Expansion Lead

Training Updates

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

Offboarding, Appreciation, and Decompression Sessions

Weekly: Fridays, 3:00pm - 4:30pm - July 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 CTSS, and discuss their thoughts and feelings about returning to their home units. You will receive a Zoom link to attend this special meeting after you've received your notice of your last day. For more information, or if you have not received the link, please email CIMentoring@cdph.ca.gov.



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

Weekly: Tuesdays, 2:30pm - 4:00pm - July 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****

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: **July 28** (* 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>

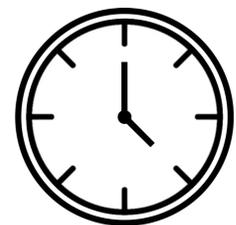
We also have some excellent resources for you through this constantly updated link for Offboarding Staff.

<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.)

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

Program Staff Spotlights

This month we reached out to staff within the California Connected Contact Tracing Program to learn a little more about them and what it's meant to be part of such an important effort.

Kemi Shamonda is a valuable support to the workforce.

I am a Program Consultant at California Department of Public Health, California Tobacco Control Program and am currently reassigned as the Local Health Department (LHD) Program Liaison Lead under LHD Support & Capacity Building Team. Currently, I manage and direct LHD Program Liaisons and Accenture contractors to support LHD's in onboarding, adoption, and use of the data management system CalConnect for contact tracing and case investigation in the state of California. I also position as the main point of contact for engaging with all LHD's and collaborating across all CA Connected teams in supporting LHD's contact tracing efforts.

What have you enjoyed during your experience as a lead on the LHD Support & Capacity Building Team?

During my experience working in CA Connected program, I have enjoyed meeting and working with many people within and outside of CDPH as well as being able to make decisions that impact California COVID response.



What has been your biggest challenge so far?

All my biggest and most humbling challenges came when I was pulled from my home department to work on COVID response. The sudden transition was one that truly tested my adaptability and critical thinking skills. My team and I not only had to be quick and efficient to curb the spread of the virus, but we also had to improvise and employ creative strategies and responses to a globally unprecedented emergency for which there was very little preparation and no clear guidelines. Though difficult and tiresome, it was and still is a very rewarding experience as I continue to see the high caliber of our collective work effort.

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

My family and friends have been very proud and thankful for the work I am doing to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Their love and support continues to motivate and inspire me.

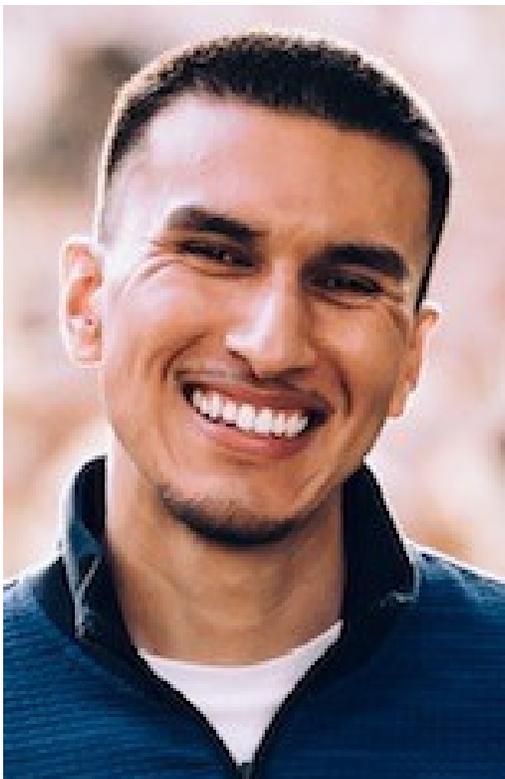
What are you looking forward to when things get back to normal?

When I return to my home department, I am looking forward to reconnecting with my coworkers, settling back into being a Program Consultant and once again making life just a little bit harder for Big Tobacco.

Program Staff Spotlights

Damien DaRosa, helping us stay on budget and run smoothly.

I have been working with the California Department of Public Health since 2015 after I graduated from California State University, Sacramento. I started as an Office Technician within the Food and Drug Branch (FDB). I continued through the ranks at FDB and am currently a Staff Services Manager I that oversees the Tobacco Program Support Unit. I volunteered to be redirected in July 2020 to oversee the Administration Operations Unit. At the time it was two separate Units, Financial Management and Internal Human Resources. We are responsible for tracking and monitoring CA Connected's budget of over \$200+ million that consists of over 60 contracts, grants and purchase orders. We are also responsible for any HR related activities for the program such as hiring, onboarding, offboarding, etc.



What have you enjoyed during your experience working with the California Connected Contact Tracing Program?

Being able to experience new challenges and be exposed to a variety of tasks that are different from my home program. I have been lucky to work with many great people in our program as well as with our numerous internal and external partners.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

The biggest challenge by far was getting accustomed to the high demanding nature of the program and its fast pace. It often feels like you're cramming for a final that happens every day.

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

They are proud of the work am I doing and often joke that I will need a long vacation once my redirection is over.

What are you looking forward to when you return to your home department?

The return of a normal work pace and being able to share the knowledge I have been able to learn during my redirection.

Staff Spotlights

Mandi Lee is helping guide our staff through this pandemic.

Before being deployed to the Contact Tracing Program, I worked In the Criminal Background Section at CDPH. I am now deployed as the Team Coordinator for Los Angeles County under the direction of the HR Policy and Supervisor Support Team Leads and serve as a member of the Contact Tracing Workforce Expansion Team. This team provides guidance, information, resources, mentoring, and support to Contact Tracing Supervisors on a daily basis. In addition, we also provide administrative support to the HR Team Leads, as necessary to ensure effective communication and support to Contact Tracing Supervisors.



What have you enjoyed during your experience working with the California Connected Contact Tracing Program?

During my experience on the California Connected Contact Tracing program, I have enjoyed working on the State HR Policy and Supervisor Support Team. Before this experience, I did not have much experience in HR, but since November I have been able to gain HR experience and provide support to Contact Tracing Supervisors.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

My biggest challenge was being able to learn new information and assisting in developing in policies in the midst of a surge.

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

My family and friends have been very supportive and believe the work I am doing is very impactful.

What are you looking forward to when you return to your home department?

I am looking forward to sharing my experience with working on the California Connected Contact Tracing Program.

We Heard It Through The Grapevine.....

Enjoy Some Great CI/CT Stories Shared From the Field



Preventing a Superstore Super Spread-Shared by a CI/CT

"I received 10+ contacts one day in December 2020, during the surge. As I was calling each contact, I reached a young man who was on his way to work at a superstore. he was part of a workplace exposure, I explained to him that he had been exposed to COVID-19 and needed go quarantine. I told him that i would be happy to speak to his supervisor and explain the need to quarantine. He told me he would call work and then call me back to complete the interview. As I waited for him to call me back, I called another contact that was part of the same exposure. This young man turned out to be at work at the superstore. I explained to him that he needed to go home and quarantine right away. He hesitated and I offered to talk to his supervisor, who got on the phone. I explained to the supervisor that the worker had been exposed and needed to quarantine immediately. The supervisor hesitated so I asked if the worker was within 6 feet of customers for more than 15 minutes. She said yes and said she would send him home right away. I confirmed with the contact that he was being sent home and that he would call me to complete his interview once he arrived home. Both young men did call me back, and I was able to provide the necessary information and guidance so they could safely quarantine. Thankfully, we were able to contain this exposure at the superstore and prevent more customers from being exposed to COVID."

Helping a Family of Six-Shared by a CI/CT

Over multiple monitoring and support calls, we discussed the vaccine, but the client and their family members were hesitant: "He said that his mother was scared of the safety; his sister wanted to wait for 3 months after her infection, before getting the shot; and, he was nervous himself about the safety and loss of income if he would need to take days off work due to side effects." I talked about the safety of the vaccine, how the County recommends getting vaccinated as soon as you are out of isolation/quarantine, California's COVID-19 paid leave policy, among other points.

I reflected, "after a few good talks with me, he was able to talk to his sister and mother and convinced them to get the vaccine asap...Eventually the entire household of 6 got their appointments in April. I think this was a success story for this family because I was able to have a good rapport with the client, speak the same language as him, came from the same culture as his, explain and answer his questions about the vaccine and other issues in a way that was comfortable and trusting for him."

In Case You Missed It

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>

BY THE NUMBERS AS OF 7/14/2021

Stats & Figures About
the Contact Tracing Program

788

REDIRECTED STAFF

754

DEPLOYED STAFF
TO AN LHJ

22

COUNTIES WITH
DEPLOYED STAFF

COUNTY WITH THE
MOST DEPLOYED
STAFF:

Los Angeles (438)

COUNTY WITH THE
LEAST DEPLOYED
STAFF:

Napa (4)

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

Offboarding Checklist

For those of you who will be ending your service on the Contact Tracing Program, here is a reminder checklist of things to do before and after you return to your home department:

- 1. Certificate of Acknowledgement:** You will receive a certificate of acknowledgement for your work in the CT Program after your return to your home department. This will be sent to your work email.
2. Reach out to your **home department supervisor**, to let them know you will be returning to your home department.
3. You can receive a **performance appraisal** from your CT Supervisor at your request only, and should be made within one month after your departure from the CT Program.
4. If you were approved to receive **bilingual or out-of-class pay**, and still have not received it, please contact CTSupervisors@cdph.ca.gov. This special pay only applies to your time worked on the CT Program between July 1, 2020 and your end date.
- 5. Timekeeping: Very important!** Make sure you submit all of your timesheets to your supervisor before you leave. It helps your CT Supervisor and timekeeping staff immensely!
- 6. Wellness & Mental Health Resources: Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** – As a State of California Employee, staff and their eligible dependents have access to an EAP.
 - Website: <https://soceap.magellanascend.com/>
 - Toll-free Number: 866-327-4762 (TDD 800-424-6117)
 - CalHOPE** – Delivers crisis support for communities impacted by a national disaster.
 - Website: <https://www.calhope.org/>
 - Live Chat: <https://www.calhopeconnect.org/>
 - Warm Line: 833-317-HOPE (4673)
- 7. Additional Resources for Offboarded Staff:**
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1---Txx3bt309EyDHD13h4DA3eujT7QgfEtfHdqFynKc/>



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