



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 to the end of the contact tracing State Redirection Program, I know I speak for our whole California Connected Team and the California Department of Public Health when I say how grateful we are for each one of you and for all that you have put into this long and arduous assignment.

It's hard to believe that almost two years to the day after it was launched in a flurry, this Program is winding down. We have accomplished more than was imagined in those two years – providing desperately needed staffing support to almost every local health jurisdiction across the state. As I mentioned at our one-year mark last year, we worked so fast and so furious in

those early days to build the planes as we were sending them up in the air – we had to create training programs, communications protocols, and deployment logistics swiftly, sometimes fumbling in the speed of it all. We didn't always get it right the first time, but we quickly adjusted and revised and kept going. We were learning as we were teaching, and the lessons were constantly changing. But you were patient with us and gave us grace to work through the bumps. And some of you later joined our program team and helped smooth the bumps from the inside. Together we created and adapted to a new norm.

The commitment everyone gave and that you all continued to give even when things were at their toughest, is still awe inspiring. You were not just committed to your work, but every day you showed up and gave the best you could to your fellow human beings. I've heard so many of your amazing stories about the opportunities you took to go the extra mile to help individuals who were struggling, sick, stressed, confused – people who needed someone to listen to them, teach them, and show them how they can get further support.

Through these two years together we navigated previously uncharted territory, dealing with people at some of their most desperate and worried times while we ourselves weren't sure of what direction we were going. We collaborated with other state departments, programs, jurisdictions, and agencies to bring the very best we could to our communities and our own loved ones. Words can never truly convey what we did or the determination, compassion, persistence, or resilience that we did it with. To say that I am grateful and humbled that I went through this crazy and challenging experience with all of you as my colleagues is an understatement.



On behalf of our California Connected family and the Department of Public Health, we wish each of you well on your journey back to your home departments and assignments. We hope you can take time to decompress and reflect as you transition back. May you return with pride in what you have accomplished and the active and critical role you played in fighting this pandemic.

You are public health heroes.

Warmly, Holly Howard

Contact Tracing Program Director



A BIG Thank You...

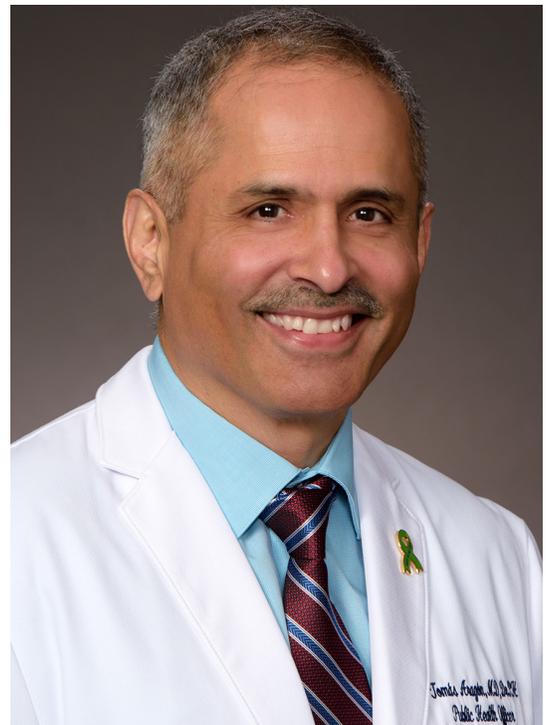


Dear COVID-19 Response Staff,

HUGE thanks and gratitude for all your hard work, dedication, and sacrifice to serve in California's COVID-19 public health response! You have contributed to saving many lives. We hope that you have grown and developed new skills, wisdom, and resilience that will serve you well when you return to your regular jobs, and even in your personal life.

The pandemic, along with other national and other global events, has caused chronic stress, trauma, or loss to us, our families, and communities.

Please remember to catch up on rest and take care of yourself. Spend quality time with your family and friends.



With tremendous gratitude,
Tomás Aragón, MD, DrPH
State Public Health Officer and Director
California Department of Public Health

With Heartfelt Gratitude.



Thank you CICT team for your commitment, determination, and most importantly, all the hard work you have done in support of our local partners. The impact you've made in Public Health is clear, as many of the jurisdictions have sent thank you's and praise for all of you as valued members of their team.

With Gratitude,
Susan Fanelli
Deputy Director, Policy and Programs
California Department of Public Health

To our incredible CA State Staff redirected for COVID-19 response,

I would like to send my heartfelt appreciation and a thundering round of applause to each and every one of you for stepping up and serving above and beyond to help keep all Californians safe and healthy! We know this has been a huge lift for all of you and that this has been one of the biggest professional challenges in our lifetime amidst a very stressful period, and we thank you profusely for your contributions. We hope that many of you will sign up to join our Public Health Reserve Corps so we may call on you in the future to serve again, as we are proud of all of you and together we can continue to move forward as 40 million strong! Thank you for your hard work and dedication,



Erica Pan, MD, MPH, FAAP
California State Epidemiologist
Deputy Director, Center for Infectious Diseases
California Department of Public Health

Transitioning Resources



WE WANT TO HELP YOU TRANSITION BACK TO YOUR HOME DEPARTMENT

Most of you will be returning to your home departments soon or have recently done so. Give your body time to rest and your mind time to process all that you've been doing these past months, year or more for many of you. Even though the work was extremely rewarding, it was also very demanding and you may face unexpected feelings and memories going forward. Emotions can creep up on you over time, and not everyone responds to stress, grief, etc. on the same timeline. It can be days, weeks or even months. Make a game plan for regular self care.

- It's a good idea to take some time off to de-stress.
- Talk with friends, family, and co-workers about what you've experienced. Perhaps even post your thoughts here: <https://www.kudoboard.com/boards/zQuwvkOs>, or encourage your loved ones to read the stories of others.
- Try and establish a trusting relationship with a supervisor who can provide support if things get rough.

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---](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1---Txx3bt309EyDHD13h4DA3eujT7QgfEtfHdqFynKc/edit)

[Txx3bt309EyDHD13h4DA3eujT7QgfEtfHdqFynKc/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1---Txx3bt309EyDHD13h4DA3eujT7QgfEtfHdqFynKc/edit)

Program Staff Spotlights

This month we are spotlighting staff from the California Connected Contact Tracing Program and CT/CI's 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.

Jae Egan reminds us there is always hope.

After working in public health for over 12 years, I joined the California Connected Contact Tracing Program as the Case Investigation Training & Mentorship Program Coordinator for the Workforce Training & Development workstream.



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

I am so fortunate to work alongside so many amazing people. From my direct supervisor (Anne Cass), to our external partners with the UCSF/UCLA Virtual Training Academy (VTA), to the former members of the Mentorship Team, to all my colleagues within CA Connected's Workforce Training & Development workstream, I am surrounded by daily inspiration, intelligence, creativity, compassion, dedication and perseverance. I start each day knowing that everyone I come in contact with has the same goal - to make things better.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

With priorities, guidance, and caseloads continually changing, it is a constant struggle to make sure we are providing the workforce with the training, tools, education, and resources they need to do their job well.

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

I'm not sure they've ever emphasized the importance of my work, but most of them have used me as an ongoing informational resource for current guidelines. Some members have been resistant to most of public health's messaging on COVID-19, and that continues to be challenging for me.

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

LOL. I'm not sure what "normal" is anymore. In my local community, most restrictions have been lifted, at least for now. I don't think it's likely we'll need to return to a total lockdown, but I do hope that people eventually come to the realization that we are all in this together, and that their actions can affect the health and lives of others whom they may never meet. There's always hope, right?

Program Staff Spotlights

Elizabeth Hernandez has enjoyed the opportunity for growth.

I received my degree from CSU Fresno in Public Health in 2014. Throughout my journey post college, I have held various roles in health services and health education for both non-profit and government organizations. All the roles I have previously held helped me develop my professional and personal goals of preserving human health, improving health conditions, and addressing disparities within the community.

My current role as a Communicable Disease Investigator Lead within the Disease Investigation Unit allows me to further develop those goals and gain new skills as well. The DIU's mission is to deploy highly skilled CDIs that serve LHJs by providing front-line support in case investigations, contact tracing, outbreak management, and other programmatic services in response to COVID-19. I lead a



team of CDIs who have been working alongside me, some since 2020, to fulfill this mission in various LHJs throughout the state of California.

What have you enjoyed during your experience working as a DI?

I have enjoyed collaborating with likeminded professionals and being able to learn new skills from them. I have also enjoyed the opportunity for growth and being a small part of the successful onboarding of the CalConnect platform among many LHJs in California. I look forward to seeing how the platform expands to other communicable diseases and being a part of that implementation as well.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

I would say the biggest challenge so far has been helping my team get through COVID fatigue. Patients are tired of hearing about COVID and often take it out on my CDIs. I try to tell them to not take it personal, but sometimes that can be difficult when you have multiple calls a day of angry people. That is why I encourage my CDIs to step away for a moment and take care of themselves when needed.

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

My family and friends find the work that I do interesting, and a lot of our conversations for the past two years have been COVID related. They tend to use me as resource to find out what the latest guidance is and keep them up to date with any new information. I like being able to be that resource for them because it helps them make important health decisions.

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

I am looking forward to seeing what the new normal will be and how I will raise a child in this new normal. I miss being able to travel freely, without restrictions or worries of potentially getting ill or spreading it to someone who is at a higher risk. I hope to one day be able to take my child on travel adventures without the fear of putting anyone at risk.

Staff Spotlights

Jasmine Barbara is honored to be part of this program.

I have been redirected since June of 2020. My home department is the Department of Housing and Community Development, where I worked as an Administration Manager in the Division of Financial Assistance. I started off as a CTS for Kings County and then also supervised in Sonoma, San Joaquin and Tehama Counties. A year ago, I moved over to HRSST in the Workforce Expansion Team. More recently I have been working as the Team Lead/Supervisor for HRSST. I assist the CTSs with all personnel related matters.



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

The people. There have been some incredibly dedicated, intelligent and kind folks in this program. It has been an honor to be a part of the Contact Tracing Program.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

Balancing work and home life.

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

Honestly, nothing much.

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

I am looking forward to not having to worry that I or my family will be exposed to COVID while out and about doing normal things.

We would like to thank all of our Redirected staff. You don't need to be on the pages of the newsletter to know we consider you a Hero. You are all Heroes in our eyes, every single day. Thank you!!!

Hero

[he-ro] *noun*

Someone admired for their courage, achievements, noble sacrifices, & ability to stare adversity in the face without a single blink.

We Heard It Through The Grapevine.....

Enjoy Some Great CI/CT Stories Shared From the Field



Healthy in time for a birthday call.....

As I conducted Surge follow-up calls, I was able to reach a case that came up when the county was overwhelmed with cases back in January and we wanted to still reach out to see how he was doing. He confirmed he was in bed but fully recovered. Suddenly, I hear family members walk in (I was on speaker phone) - he told them who I was to them. Then one said "Welp, sing Happy Birthday with us!" I sang happy birthday with them and wished him well. He was thankful for the call and said "Now I will enjoy my good health with family," and hung up. Made me feel great to be part of that moment and knowing he was doing well. ☒



Keeping Our Families and Communities Healthy



We are grateful you shared your warm, touching stories from the field with us. They were funny, sad, hopeful, empowering, happy, uplifting, heart-string tugging and memorable to say the least. You made us feel like we were there with you and helped us understand the daily struggles you faced, and wonderful accomplishments you achieved. We could not have done this without you being an integral part of our success. We hope you take everything you've learned back to your home departments, families and communities. Thank you so much for your dedication to our Program, our communities and our State. You truly made a difference.

Training Updates

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



California Connected Professional Development Opportunity Series - June 2022 Sessions

- Meet the Experts! Featuring a Panel of Disease Intervention Specialists (DIS)
 - Thursday, June 23, 9:00-10:00am
 - [Registration Link](#)
- Perfect Your Resume! Resume Building Workshop for State Redirected Staff
 - Wednesday, June 29, 12:00-1:00pm
 - [Registration Link](#)
- Journal Club with Priscilla Bennett
 - Thursday, June 30, 9:00-9:30am
 - [Registration Link](#)
- We are looking for Brown Bag Session Hosts! If you have a skill/experience to share or if you have recently attended a training you want to recap for your colleagues, please email us: CTTrainingDev@cdph.ca.gov.

Join the New Public Health Reserve Corps

Do you like helping your community? Then 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>



In Case You Missed It...

BY THE NUMBERS AS OF 06/14/2022

Stats & Figures About
the Contact Tracing Program

85 REDIRECTED STAFF

126 TOTAL CDC STAFF

183 DEPLOYED STAFF
TO AN LHJ

20 COUNTIES WITH
DEPLOYED STAFF

COUNTY WITH THE
MOST DEPLOYED STAFF:

San Bernardino (27)



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.](#)

Resume Building Workshop for State Redirects

We know the time you've spent working on this program has inspired many of you to start looking for jobs in public health, especially in disease investigation and surveillance.

We also know many of you need assistance figuring out how to explain the work you've done in the program on a resume. Have no fear, we're here to help!

Bring your questions and a copy of your resume and join us at an upcoming Brown Bag session full of tips and advice for getting your resume ready to go!

When: **June 29, 2022 at 12pm - 1pm**

Register in advance for this meeting:

[Registration Link](#)

Have a question about the session? Email

CTTrainingDev@cdph.ca.gov.

Get ready for the workshop by starting on your resume using these tried and true resume tips:

- Be short and direct
- Be consistent with your formatting
- Tailor your job descriptions to the job you are applying for
- Avoid repeating action words
- Bullets are easier to follow than paragraphs
- Demonstrate results with numbers and metrics
- Use the right language to stand out e.g. improved, achieved, and designed
- Check for errors- this may be the most important one- have another set of eyes review it for you.

Good luck!!!

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>

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