A Contact Tracing Program Built to Succeed

Building a well-trained pandemic response team is a community wide benefit

Who We Are

The Public Health Institute (PHI) and the Oregon Public Health Institute (OPHI) created the Tracing Health program in the spring of 2020 to meet the needs of the COVID-19 pandemic and to mitigate the exacerbation of health inequities in California and the Pacific Northwest. Tracing Health combines best practices and an equity driven approach to provide a suite of COVID-19 support services to health departments and school systems who are navigating COVID-19 response and recovery.

Contact tracing, at its core, is about creating trust. It involves trusted messengers passing credible information to help people make informed decisions about their health. Black and Brown communities, immigrants, and non-English speakers, however, have both present and historical reasons to feel mistrustful of health systems and providers.

Tracing Health was envisioned as a way to create a more effective contact tracing model in order to confront issues which negatively impact health care delivery in high-need communities. A primary aim was to ensure that people exposed to COVID-19 are able to get information directly from health workers who represent their community and who communicate in a language they are most comfortable speaking.

To achieve this, Tracing Health focused their contact tracer recruiting on communities disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. By offering full-time employment with competitive wages and benefits, they have attracted dedicated, motivated and caring applicants ready to address the trust-deficit head on.

Tracing Health has been able to rapidly onboard, train, and mobilize over 600 culturally reflective contact tracers, resource coordinators, supervisors and managers.

All employees onboarding into Tracing Health receive over 100 hours of targeted training, including 11+ relevant certifications as well as continuing education and professional development opportunities. All of which ensures not only their success as a contact tracer but also as a future public health professional beyond their tenure at Tracing Health.

Tracing Health’s model includes wraparound services; rapidly responding to cases with comprehensive assistance.

When a Tracing Health contact tracer or resource coordinator connects with someone who has recently tested positive for COVID-19, they are able to offer trustworthy information and tailored wraparound support services. By taking the time to connect people with resources to buy groceries, fill prescriptions, and support rent and car payments, Tracing Health offers much needed support to people in isolation while helping to stop the spread of COVID-19.

Wraparound services such as these can improve the health and wellness of individuals, making it more likely that people will successfully self-quarantine, keeping themselves, their families, and their communities safe.

By addressing systemic barriers to healthcare delivery, this partnership has improved community health and created a more holistic culture of care. Tracing Health has thoughtfully and quickly improved upon existing models for contact tracing.