COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions

The National Association of County and City Health Officials’ (NACCHO’s) mission is to improve the health of communities by strengthening and advocating for local health departments (LHDs).

This FAQ provides various resources and guidance for questions that NACCHO frequently receives. For the most up-to-date information for your local area, visit your LHD’s website. If you do not know your LHD, please visit our LHD Directory to find it.

How is NACCHO responding to COVID-19?

- NACCHO is responding to COVID-19 by:
  - Maintaining situational awareness at the federal, national, state, and local levels
  - Supporting LHDs through ongoing, timely sharing of information to help protect the public
  - Facilitating information-sharing between the federal government and local jurisdictions
  - Advocating for federal policies and funding to support the current COVID-19 response and strengthen future public health infrastructure and capacity ([Learn more](#))
  - Generating and reviewing evidence, and collecting and analyzing data to create a better understanding of the needs of LHDs
  - Understanding and being responsive to LHD needs and requests; and
  - Promoting and highlighting the critical role of LHDs to the media, policy makers, and the general public during ongoing outbreaks. ([Learn more](#))

For more information, please visit NACCHO’s [Response Efforts Around COVID-19](#) webpage.

Collaborating with NACCHO

Does NACCHO have or collect COVID-19 or LHD related data? If so, how do I request access to that data?

- NACCHO and its partners have data related to LHDs and the circumstances that impact their response. Datasets vary from national samples of all LHDs to smaller tailored studies that cover a variety of specialized topic areas.
- NACCHO conducts its National Profile of Local Health Departments study once every three years. This is a census study of LHD infrastructure, finance, workforce, and activities. Data is self-reported and available upon request. Please visit our website,
www.nacchoprofilestudy.org, for access to Profile reports, publications, and instructions for data requests.

- In the years where the Profile study is not fielded, NACCHO conducts the Forces of Change Survey. The Forces study assesses the impact of a variety of trends affecting change in local health departments, including health reform, economic factors, and accreditation. Please visit http://nacchoprofilestudy.org/forces-of-change/ for the most recent Forces of Change report and information on how to request the data. In 2020, NACCHO will be fielding the next Forces of Change survey, which will be targeted on the LHD response to COVID-19.
- Every two years, NACCHO also conducts the Preparedness Profile Assessment to provide an evidentiary foundation for future public health preparedness initiatives. This assessment gathers information about preparedness trends and emerging issues at LHDs to inform priorities at the local, state, and national levels. Please visit click here for the most recent report.

I am a researcher working on a COVID-19 related project and I would like to collaborate with NACCHO and/or LHDs. Who should I contact about this opportunity?

- If you are interested in collaborating with NACCHO on COVID-19 research, please contact Aaron Alford (aalford@naccho.org) with a detailed summary of your work and your request.

My company has a product or resource that we would like to market to or share with LHDs who are responding to COVID-19. What is the best way to let LHDs know about our product or resource?

- While we thank you for your offer of support or offer to share a resource, LHDs are inundated with resources, information, and guidance from multiple sources. As the association representing LHDs across the country, our obligation is to help reduce information overload to our members while also recognizing that there are many organizations that may have excellent products or services that could assist our public health system. Therefore, to share information with our members, NACCHO is compiling a Resource Guide which will be shared with all LHDs on a weekly basis. Please note that being included in this resource guide is not and should not be considered an endorsement by NACCHO.
  - If you wish to be featured in this Resource Guide, please email preparedness@naccho.org with the following information:
    - Name of Organization
    - Contact information (name, e-mail, phone number)
A maximum of two sentences describing your service/resource offering and its value to local health departments
- Please note that no ancillary information (e.g., fact sheets, flyers, diagrams, lengthy descriptions) is being accepted at this time.

I am reporter and I would like to include information about LHDs’ and/or interview a NACCHO expert about COVID-19 in one of my articles. Who should I contact about this request?

- If you are interested in including information about LHDs’ and/or interviewing one of NACCHO’s experts, please email Andrea Grenadier (agrenadier@naccho.org), NACCHO’s COVID-19 Deputy PIO, and Cc: Theresa Spinner (tspinner@naccho.org), NACCHO’s Director of Media Relations. Please use subject line: COVID-19 Interview/Information Request.
- To view current media engagement, visit the NACCHO Newsroom

I am a writer and I am interested in contributing to one of NACCHO’s publications or website. Is this something NACCHO would be interested in and who would I contact?

- While we thank you for your interest in contributing to NACCHO’s publications and digital platforms, we are currently unable to accept external content for publication.

Role of Local Health Departments

What is the role of my local health department and why do they continue to be important during the COVID-19 response?

- Local health departments are on the front lines responding to COVID-19, working closely with local governments, state health departments, healthcare and hospital facilities, first responders, and other partners to protect the health and safety of their communities.
- Local health department roles include, but are not limited, to:
  - Communicating up to date COVID-19 information to their community and answering questions. LHDs also translate relevant information into the languages spoken in their community.
  - The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Vermont Department of Health have translated their COVID-19 resources into 12 languages.
Working with their state health department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support COVID-19 testing efforts.

- Monitoring people with COVID-19 and identifying their close contacts to ensure the health of the community (contact tracing).
- Keeping track of COVID-19 cases and outcomes in their community.
- Working with hospitals and other healthcare facilities to relay community needs to state and federal partners.
- Advising local officials, schools, and businesses on COVID-19 containment and mitigation strategies.
- Actively working to combat stigma in the community.

**Background on COVID-19**

What is a novel coronavirus? What is COVID-19?


What are the symptoms of COVID-19?


Who is at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19?


How is COVID-19 spread? What is community spread?

- Visit the [CDC’s How It Spreads page](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/transmission.html).

**Information for Your Local Area**

- For the most up-to-date information for your local area, visit your local health department’s (LHD) website. If you do not know your LHD, please visit our [LHD Directory](https://naccho.org/lhd-directory) to find it.

**Protecting Yourself and Others**

*As the situation with COVID-19 continuously evolves, NACCHO recommends that you follow the most current guidance provided by your local and state governments.*

How can I protect myself and my family?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after you have coughed or sneezed.
• Wear a cloth face covering when in public and unable to maintain social distancing (i.e. grocery stores and pharmacies), making sure both your mouth and nose are fully covered.
• Alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used if hand soap is not available.
• Do not touch your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
• Avoid close contact with others. The CDC recommends keeping at least six feet between yourself and other people when in a public space.
• Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
• Clean and disinfect frequently used surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, countertops, phones, handles, and faucets. Visit CDC’s Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Home for more information.
• For more information, visit the CDC’s Prevent Getting Sick page.

What is social distancing?

• Social distancing means avoiding crowded public places, mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (at least six feet) from other people when possible.
• Examples of social distancing include:
  o Working from home instead of in the office
  o Using an electronic device to visit with friends and family members
  o Only leaving your home to exercise alone or with someone in your home, or for essential trips such as going to the grocery store or medical care.

If You or a Family Member are Sick

What should I do if I get sick?

• If you think you may have COVID-19, we encourage you to first call your primary-care physician. If you do not have a primary care physician, call your LHD for advice on where to be seen. If you do not have your LHD contact information, please visit our LHD Directory.
• Stay home, except to get medical care. Make sure to first call your doctor to discuss your symptoms before visiting your doctor’s office, as this will limit potential COVID-19 exposure to both yourself and others in the doctor’s office.
• For more information, visit the CDC’s If You Are Sick page.

What should I do if someone in my household gets sick?

• For information on how to care for someone who’s sick and prevent further transmission within your household, see the CDC’s Guidance to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Homes.
How can I prevent the spread of COVID-19 if I am sick?

- If you (or a family member) are sick with COVID-19 or think you may have COVID-19, follow the steps below to care for yourself and protect those around you:
  - Stay home if possible.
  - Practice home isolation by separating yourself from others in your home. Wear a facemask if you are around other people (for example, when you go to a healthcare provider’s office).
  - Wash your hands often.
  - Monitor your symptoms.
  - Call your doctor if your symptoms get worse.
- For more information, contact your primary care-physician or visit the [CDC’s If You Are Sick](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/sick-at-home.html) page.

Testing for COVID-19

I think I may have been exposed to COVID-19. Where can I get tested?

- If you think you may have been exposed to COVID-19, we encourage you to first contact your primary-care physician and then, if necessary, your [local health department](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/community-based-testing.html) to determine if you should be tested.
- Visit the [CDC’s Testing for COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/community-based-testing.html) page for more information about testing.

I do not feel well and think I may have COVID-19. Should I get tested?

- If you think you may have COVID-19, we encourage you to contact your primary-care physician to determine if you should be tested. If you do not have a primary care physician, call your LHD for advice on if or where you should be tested.
- Visit the [CDC’s Testing for COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/community-based-testing.html) page for more information about testing.

I went to my local healthcare facility to get tested and was turned away. Why is this happening?

- Not all healthcare facilities have COVID-19 testing capabilities. The best way to get information on where you can get tested, or if you should get tested, is from your primary-care physician or [local health department](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/testing/community-based-testing.html).
I have heard that someone in my building tested positive for COVID-19. How do I get more information about this positive case and how do I keep my family and myself safe?

- Laws regarding privacy and landlord/tenant issues vary depending on the state and local jurisdictions in which you live. As a result, NACCHO is unable to provide specific guidance on each unique situation and encourages you to seek assistance from your state and local governments.
- However, the standard methods for protecting yourself and your family against novel coronavirus remain important:
  - Avoid contact with those who are sick.
  - Wash hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds; use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if hand soap is not available.
  - Practice social distancing.
  - Wear a cloth face covering when in public and unable to maintain social distancing, making sure both your mouth and nose are fully covered.
  - Do not touch your eyes, mouth, and nose with unwashed hands.
  - Frequently disinfect objects and surfaces.
- For more information, contact your local health department.

**Reporting COVID-19 Cases**

Someone at my school or work tested positive for COVID-19. Should I report this somewhere?

- If you know someone has tested positive, this means that the local and national authorities are already aware of this case, and therefore there is no need for you to report it.
- For more information related to reporting COVID-19 cases, visit your state or local health department’s website.

I think someone might be sick with COVID-19. What should I do?

- For the general population: Encourage the person to self-isolate and contact their primary-care physician. For information related to reporting a potential COVID-19 case, contact your state or local health department.
- For Healthcare Professionals: The [CDC Information for Health Departments on Reporting Cases of COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/reporting-cases.html) page has useful guidance on protocols for reporting.
Who do I contact if I get sick?

- If you have, or think you have COVID-19, we encourage you to contact your primary-care physician.

What is the COVID-19 Hotline for my city or county?

- For information related to a COVID-19 Hotline for your city or county, visit your local health department’s website.

Getting Involved

I am not a healthcare professional but would like to volunteer my services. Who should I contact?

- Ready.gov has a variety of ways you can volunteer your time during the COVID-19 pandemic, including joining your local Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) and National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (NVOAD).
- Non-medical professionals can also volunteer their time at their local Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). The MRC is a national network of volunteers, organized locally to help strengthen public health, reduce vulnerability, build resilience, and improve preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities during times of need. The MRC network comprises around 175,000 volunteers in approximately 850 community-based units located throughout the U.S. and its territories.

I would like to obtain employment as a COVID-19 contact tracer. Who should I contact?

- At this point, health departments at the local and state level are at different stages of planning and hiring additional contact tracers. We encourage you to check your Local and State Health Departments’ websites for hiring opportunities.
- NACCHO recognizes the need for at least 100,000 contact tracers and is working to advocate for support for this expanded workforce. NACCHO’s full position statement can be found here.
Resources for Health Professionals

I am a medical professional. How do I get the personal protective equipment (PPE) and other materials I need to treat COVID-19?

- For information on where you can get PPE and other materials to treat COVID-19, contact your state or local health department.
- Additionally, visit Seattle-King County Local Health Department’s PPE Conservation and Alternatives page and the CDC Strategies to Optimize PPE & Equipment page for useful guidance related to using your current supply.

I am a physician and have patients with suspected COVID-19. Who do I contact to get COVID-19 test kits?

- For information related to where you can get COVID-19 test kits, contact your state or local health department.

I am a clinical medical professional and would like to volunteer my services. Who should I contact?

- Contact your local Medical Reserve Corps (MRC). The MRC is a national network of volunteers, organized locally to help strengthen public health, reduce vulnerability, build resilience, and improve preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities during times of need. The MRC network comprises around 175,000 volunteers in approximately 850 community-based units located throughout the U.S. and its territories.