



April 7, 2020

TO: Local Health Departments (LHDs)  
FROM: New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH)

**HEALTH ADVISORY: COVID-19 UPDATE FOR  
LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT RESPONSE ACTIVITIES**

**SUMMARY**

Widespread, ongoing community transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) is occurring in some areas of New York State, while other areas have minimal to moderate levels of transmission. This advisory provides updated information for Local Health Departments (LHDs) to help prioritize their response activities by the level of transmission in their community and their available resources. Aggressive containment measures, in areas of minimal to moderate transmission, can help minimize further spread. The goals for prioritizing these functions are to protect individuals at increased risk for severe illness, including older adults and persons of any age with underlying health conditions, as well as healthcare and essential services workers. For the updates on the State response to COVID-19, visit <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>.

**MITIGATION STRATEGIES FOR LHD FUNCTIONS**

**Levels of SARS-CoV-2 Community Transmission**

CDC has identified 4 different levels of community transmission of SARS-CoV-2. These are:

- **No Known Transmission**: No identified test-positive cases, or isolated cases without risk of onward spread (e.g., no contacts).
- **Minimal**: Evidence of isolated cases or limited community transmission (e.g., only among close contacts), case investigations underway, no evidence of exposure in communal settings (e.g., healthcare facility, school, large gathering).
- **Moderate**: Widespread and/or sustained community transmission with high-likelihood or confirmed exposure within communal settings (e.g., healthcare facilities, schools, large gatherings) with potential for a rapid increase in suspected cases.
- **Substantial**: Large scale community transmission, healthcare staffing significantly impacted, multiple cases within communal settings like healthcare facilities, schools, mass gatherings etc.

The following table highlights activities that should be prioritized, depending upon transmission level.

<b>LHD RESPONSE ACTIVITIES BY LEVEL OF SARS-COV-2 COMMUNITY TRANSMISSION</b>	
No Known Transmission to Minimal Transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test patients with signs and symptoms compatible with COVID-19.</li> <li>• When finding positive cases, conduct vigorous contact tracing and issue isolation and quarantine orders.</li> <li>• After initial interview with contacts to cases, utilize NYSDOH’s Monitoring and Messaging System (MMS) to assist in monitoring.</li> <li>• Isolation of confirmed COVID-19 cases until discontinuation is appropriate, as described below.</li> <li>• Complete daily LHD survey on number of individuals under mandatory and precautionary quarantine.</li> </ul>
Minimal to Moderate Transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue contact tracing as feasible, prioritizing those in high-risk settings (e.g., healthcare professionals, settings serving vulnerable populations, or essential services workforce). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Issue isolation and quarantine orders.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continue COVID-19 testing of symptomatic persons, prioritize testing of persons at higher risk of severe disease or associated with high-risk settings.</li> <li>• Continue contact with those in quarantine, utilizing NYSDOH MMS monitoring system.</li> <li>• Isolation of confirmed COVID-19 cases until discontinuation is appropriate, as described below.</li> <li>• Complete daily LHD survey on number of individuals under mandatory and precautionary quarantine.</li> </ul>
Substantial Transmission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize contact tracing as resources dictate to those in high-risk settings (e.g., healthcare professionals, settings serving vulnerable populations, or essential services workforce). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Continue to issue isolation and quarantine orders.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Continue COVID-19 testing of symptomatic persons, prioritize testing of persons at higher risk of severe disease or associated with high-risk settings, as indicated.</li> <li>• Isolation of confirmed COVID-19 cases until discontinuation is appropriate, as described below.</li> </ul>

## **ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE: UPDATED CRITERIA**

### **Mandatory Quarantine**

1. Persons who, while not displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19, have been in close contact with someone who was infected with SARS-CoV-2, in the past 14 days.
2. Persons who, in the past 14 days, have traveled to a country for which the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) has issued a Level 2 or Level 3 Health Notice](#), or who were on a cruise ship (including river cruises), and are not displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
3. LHDs who identify healthcare workers, whether direct care providers or other facility staff, who meet criteria in described in either (1) or (2) above, may be allowed to work under the conditions set forth in NYSDOH's [Health Advisory: Updated Protocols for Personnel in Healthcare and Other Direct Care Settings to Return to Work Following COVID-19 Exposure or Infection](#). While the advisory was initially targeted to Hospitals, Nursing Homes and Adult Care Facilities, this advisory expands eligibility for healthcare workers to return to work in other healthcare settings, provided the conditions in the linked advisory are met. These individuals must, when not working, remain quarantined.
4. LHDs who identify individuals employed as essential personnel, as described in the Department's [Health Advisory: Protocols for Essential Personnel to Return to Work Following COVID-19 Exposure or Infection](#), and who meet criteria described in either (1) or (2) above, may be allowed to work under the conditions described in the advisory. These individuals must, when not working, remain quarantined.

### **Mandatory Isolation**

1. Persons who have tested positive for SARS-CoV-2, regardless of whether or not they are displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
2. Persons who have traveled to a country for which [CDC has issued a Level 2 or Level 3 Health Notice](#), or who were on a cruise ship (including river cruises), and are displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
3. LHDs who identify healthcare workers, who meet either of the above criteria, may be allowed to work under the conditions set forth in the Department's [Health Advisory: Updated Protocols for Personnel in Healthcare and Other Direct Care Settings to Return to Work Following COVID-19 Exposure or Infection](#). While the advisory was initially targeted to Hospitals, Nursing Homes and Adult Care Facilities, this advisory expands eligibility for healthcare workers to return to work in other healthcare settings, provided the conditions in the linked advisory are met. These individuals must, when not working, remain isolated.

### **Precautionary Quarantine**

1. Persons whose contact to someone infected with SARS-CoV-2 is known to be proximate,

not close, and are not displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19.

2. LHDs who identify healthcare workers, whether direct care providers or other facility staff, who meet criteria in described above, may be allowed to work under the conditions set forth in NYSDOH's [Health Advisory: Updated Protocols for Personnel in Healthcare and Other Direct Care Settings to Return to Work Following COVID-19 Exposure or Infection](#). While the advisory was initially targeted to Hospitals, Nursing Homes and Adult Care Facilities, this advisory expands eligibility for healthcare workers to return to work in other healthcare settings, provided the conditions in the linked advisory are met. These individuals must, when not working, remain quarantined.
3. LHDs who identify individuals employed as essential personnel, as described in NYSDOH's [Health Advisory: Protocols for Essential Personnel to Return to Work Following COVID-19 Exposure or Infection](#), and who meet criteria described in (1) above, may be allowed to work under the conditions described in the advisory. These individuals must, when not working, remain quarantined.
4. Any person the LHD believes should be quarantined for precautionary reasons.

#### Required monitoring of individuals under legal orders

LHDs must perform a direct observation of any individual under legal orders, at least once per day. At least one additional communication must be made each day. In counties with substantial transmission, observation can be done remotely (e.g. FaceTime, Skype, or similar form of video/audio communication).

#### Required monitoring of individuals not under legal orders

Direct observation of individuals not under legal orders is not required. However, at least one communication must be made, each day, at random intervals.

#### NYSDOH COVID-19 Monitoring and Messaging System (MMS)

When appropriate, LHDs can utilize MMS to help reduce the required resources needed to monitor individuals under quarantine. Additionally, it can be helpful in identifying unmet personnel needs.

#### Release of Individuals from Mandatory Isolation

For persons with COVID-19 under mandatory home isolation, NYSDOH has issued revised [Health Advisory: COVID-19 Release from Home Isolation](#).

#### Release of Individuals from Mandatory Quarantine and Precautionary Quarantine

Persons exposed to SARS-CoV-2 under mandatory or precautionary quarantine can be released once the LHD has verified that the individual has remained asymptomatic throughout their quarantine period, and that they have not had another exposure to someone infected with SARS-CoV-2 (in which case the 14-day quarantine period would reset from the date of last exposure).