

# HOT SHEET

APPROVED 3/10/2020 2:00 PM

## Contact Tracing

### **How have we switched our approach from contact tracing to community mitigation?**

At this time, COVID-19 has been identified as spreading between people in King County, and we expect the case count to double every 5-7 days. It is no longer reliable to assume that we will have awareness of every new case.

We are shifting our response focus from tracking each individual case to providing guidance to businesses, schools, and jurisdictions on proper communication, sanitation, and other steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the event of a confirmed case. We also have released guidance for anyone who becomes symptomatic on how to prevent the spread to others.

This shift allows us to focus on broad prevention strategies to reduce transmission and on managing the healthcare system to ensure that people who become ill, and especially those who are at high risk such as older and medically compromised populations, can receive care.

### **Is Public Health continuing contact tracing?**

As the number of cases continue to increase, Public Health is no longer routinely conducting case or contact investigations for all COVID-19 positive cases. Our focus will be to reduce transmission among groups who may be more likely to have severe illness such as those in hospitals and long-term facilities or those who are not able to separate themselves because they live in congregate settings such as in homeless shelters.

Our approach is assessed every day based on the best science and information about COVID-19 in our community.

## Why isn't Public Health continuing contact tracing in schools?

School populations are important and are places where large numbers of people come together. However, as the number of cases continue to increase, Public Health's resources to do contact tracing are increasingly stretched and we can no longer routinely conducting case or contact investigations for all COVID-19 positive cases.

Our focus will be to reduce transmission among groups who may be more likely to have severe illness such as those in hospitals and long-term facilities or those who are not able to separate themselves because they live in congregate settings such as in homeless shelters.

As a group, children have much milder illness if they become infected with coronavirus. Their symptoms are not as severe. With the growing number of cases, we need to focus on reducing transmission to those who are most at danger if they become sick.