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PRESS RELEASE

New guidance documents released to support public health agencies' contact tracing efforts

ATLANTA (July 2020) – Local and national public health organizations have partnered to address the current state of digital contact tracing tools available to support tracking COVID-19 exposures. Funded by the CDC Foundation (CDCF), this group of experts recently released key guidance documents that will support public health contact tracing efforts.

Steps for Public Health to Plan for the Use of the Apple|Google Exposure Notification Framework is a white paper that provides background on the contact tracing technology co-developed by Apple and Google and things public health should consider during adoption. The *Digital Tools for Contact Tracing Tool Assessment Report* evaluates a subset of current tools and aids public health authorities in selecting the appropriate one.

"These guidance documents are starting points to support public health professionals in conversations on how to best merge their traditional contact tracing workflows with some of the new technology being developed. However, these technologies can never replace the important role that public health workers play in ensuring that those exposed to COVID-19 are assessed, informed, and supported," said Vivian Singletary, director of the Public Health Informatics Institute (PHII).

Contact tracing is a technique public health agencies use to identify, interview and monitor people who may have come into contact with an infectious person. Notifying those exposed to infected persons is critically important to stop further spread of COVID-19. Technology vendors have developed digital tools to enhance traditional contact tracing practices; however, there has been no national-level opportunity for local and state health officials to collaboratively assess these tools and consider how they might best support contact tracing efforts.

"It's important for public health professionals to have a seat at the table in discussions with technology vendors who are developing these tools to ensure they meet public health technical and functional requirements," Singletary said. "This forum has been a critical link to ensuring all these perspectives are heard, shared and captured."

The Digital Tools for Contact Tracing project convened local and state public health officials and technology vendors to provide a platform for critical discussions that bridged knowledge gaps among both groups. The goal of this project was two-fold: to develop guidance that assists public health professionals' understanding of the marketplace of digital contact tracing tools, and to ensure technology vendors understand public health privacy needs and standards as they build these tools.

Key partners involved in this project include the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), along with representatives from the Boston Public Health Commission, the Idaho Division of Public Health, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, the North Dakota Department of Health and the Washington State Department of Health.

The white paper and assessment report are available at www.phii.org/contact-tracing.