

## WHAT IS CONTACT TRACING AND HOW CAN GROUPS PARTICIPATE WHILE MAINTAINING ANONYMITY?

- [Contact Tracing is a control measure employed by local and state health department personnel as a key strategy for preventing further spread of COVID-19.](#) Public health staff work with a patient to help them recall everyone with whom they have had close contact during the timeframe while they may have been infectious. Contact tracers already practice a version of our principle of anonymity. Medical professionals must abide by Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) laws, which means that when someone tests positive for COVID-19, contact tracers warn others of their potential exposure as rapidly and sensitively as possible, *while protecting patient privacy and identity.*
- Why should groups-- **meeting indoors or outdoors**-- be concerned with contact tracing? To ensure that our common welfare comes first, groups that meet in-person should have a contingency plan in place if a member tests positive for COVID-19. Contact tracers will be contacting the church and the group no matter what, so it's important that groups be prepared ahead of time with a way to protect everyone's health and anonymity.
  - What is the plan for contacting the church or facility where the group meets if someone gets sick?
  - What is the plan for contacting other A.A. members who were at a meeting on the same day as an infectious A.A. member who didn't realize he or she was sick at that time?
  - What is the plan for contacting the church and other A.A. members if someone is tested but is still waiting for results? What if the member's test comes back negative?
- To ensure our common welfare, one suggested contingency plan can be accomplished effectively while maintaining everyone's anonymity.
  - Groups could list attendees by first name and phone number for each meeting. That would make it easier to alert everyone about the potential for infection should someone get ill or if someone is tested. Group should later destroy each meeting list after enough time has passed.
  - If an A.A. member tests positive, he or she does not have to break anyone's anonymity when talking with contact tracers. When a contact tracer asks the infected person who he or she has been in contact with, the sick member can say, "I attended 'spiritual meetings' or 'community meetings' (or use another generic term) that meets at 'such-and-such' church. Here's the phone number of the primary contact for that meeting

who can put you in touch with everyone else that was at that spiritual/community meeting on that day."

- The contact tracer would then call the group secretary or primary contact to explain that someone from the meeting at the church has tested positive for COVID-19.
- The group secretary can give the list of first names and phone numbers to the contact tracer who would be in charge of notifying everyone. OR, the secretary could notify everyone. Either way, no one has to know the name of the person who is sick (since HIPAA would prohibit the contact tracer from naming the patient) and no one would have to say anything about being a member of A.A.
- If an A.A. member is tested and is still waiting for results, one recommendation is to inform the church or facility where the group meets as well as everyone at the meeting so those people know to self-quarantine.
  - In the event that a person's test is negative, we recommend notifying members and the church so people can be released from self-quarantine. We can do all of this in a way that assures anonymity.
- Since the workshop, one group that means daily shared that they are creating a QR code for their group to maintain a list of attendees at its meetings. Members can scan the code on their phone for each meeting as a way of adding their name to the list for that particular meeting.