

OHA launches website, hotline for COVID-positive people

News Release Date

01-12-2022

POSTED: Jan. 12, 2022

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From OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY

PORTLAND, Ore. — Oregon Health Authority is moving to an opt-in model for investigating COVID-19 cases, launching a new website and hotline as a way for people who test positive for the virus to report results from an at-home test kit or testing provider.

People using the new [Positive COVID Test](#) website and *COVID-19 Case Support Hotline*, 866-917-8881, can complete an online survey linked from the web portal to report their positive case, or get help completing the survey through the hotline. They can also get information on isolation and other ways to keep themselves and those around them safe while they recover.

The launch of the services follows an OHA decision to revise its guidelines for investigating COVID-19 cases to focus less on interviewing individual cases and conducting contact tracing, and more on outbreaks in high-risk settings, such as those in congregate care, health care, K-12 education and food chain industries.

“The current and rapidly growing surge of COVID-19 cases driven by the Omicron variant has outpaced the capacity of Oregon’s public health system to effectively conduct active case investigation and contact tracing, which cannot effectively slow the spread of the disease in the context of widespread community transmission,” said Dean Sidelinger, M.D., M.S.Ed., health officer and state epidemiologist at Oregon Health Authority.

“As a result, given the burdens to the entire public health infrastructure and the need to pivot resources to higher priority public health measures, we are adjusting case investigation and outreach efforts. OHA will move away from individual investigation and contact tracing calls to focus on investigating outbreaks in high-risk settings,” he said.

OHA is adopting an “opt-in” approach to case investigation, with a focus on ensuring people who test positive for COVID-19 or who are exposed to the virus can quickly access information and resources to safely isolate and quarantine. The first offering is the website,

Oregon.gov/positivecovidtest, which contains a link to a mobile-friendly Case Investigation Survey. The survey, soon available in 12 languages – it’s now accessible in English, Spanish and Russian – can be used by anyone who tests positive to provide additional information to public

health.

OHA does not require individuals to report their at-home test results, but it highly recommends people do so, and let their close contacts know they may have been exposed so they can take steps to limit exposure to others. Hospitals, health care providers, laboratories and local public health authorities are required to report test results.

The COVID-19 Case Support Hotline, 866-917-8881, will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Support staff will be available to provide general health information; answers to questions about isolation and quarantine; answers to questions about how to tell close contacts they may have been exposed to COVID-19; information about resources to help them during isolation; and help filling out the online Case Investigation Survey so callers' positive tests can be reported. Staff will provide support in English and Spanish, with interpreter services available for additional languages.

Sidelinger said those staffing the COVID-19 Case Support Hotline include members case investigation and contact tracing team from OHA's COVID Response and Recovery Unit (CRRU), so they are well qualified to answer questions about isolation, quarantine and available resources. Availability of the hotline also will allow local public health authorities to reduce or eliminate phone-based case investigation, "allowing them to redeploy those resources to higher-value mitigation efforts."

Hotline staff will also be able to triage calls that might normally go to local public health authorities, forwarding them only if they require local follow-up.