

Meet the Contact Tracers

As part of our continuing series on the city's Test & Trace Corps, the Insider interviews two Contact Tracers who will soon be deployed to the Bronx and Queens to fight COVID-19.

Bringing Knowledge and Compassion to the Bronx



GORDON EDWARDS

Since his childhood days in the Bronx, Gordon Edwards has built strong ties to communities across the borough. Now, as part of the Test & Trace Corps, he's playing an integral part in protecting those neighborhoods and preventing further transmission of COVID-19.

He's among the new Community Engagement Specialists who will connect people diagnosed or exposed to COVID-19 to tracers who will provide additional resources for care. His job will take him to Pelham, Throgs Neck, Parkchester and the South Bronx. He considers the role a duty and also an honor as he meets people in their most intimate spaces - their home.

"I feel like it's powerful that I will be on the team of people going into the community to show up at someone's door and give empathy," he said. "I really believe our presence will show people that they can rely on us as we build trust and channel resources to those in need. That's massive."

Edwards is looking forward to putting his training to use in the field along with skills he developed from his past experience. Before joining the Test & Trace Corps, he was a research coordinator at Boom Health where he conducted HIV tests and counseling. He also draws on lessons learned from world-renowned health experts at the CUNY School of Public Health where he is studying to earn his Masters degree.

He supplements his education and experience with additional training offered to Corps members on topics including diversity awareness, working with individuals who are hard of hearing or deaf, intimate partner violence and LGBTQ concepts and terminology.

With fellow tracers, he also conducts role-playing scenarios where they speak with clients and provide feedback on the interaction. It's their effort to make sure that they find the best manner to communicate and show sensitivity to the people they meet.

"At the end of the day, what we do is public health - policy and community work in action to get things done," he said. "We keep the community safe."