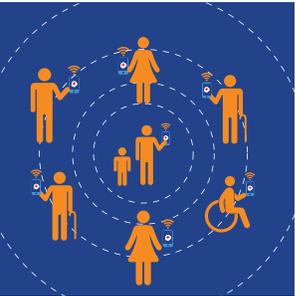


Meet the Contact Tracers



Tracing, also called contact tracing, involves finding people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19 and asking them to safely separate from others until they can no longer spread the virus. Tracing is a critical part of New York City’s plan to contain COVID-19 and open the city safely.

Contact Tracers will call individuals who are diagnosed or exposed to COVID-19 to check on their symptoms and ask if they need resources to stay healthy and avoid spreading COVID-19, including offering them access to an NYC Health + Hospitals managed hotel free of charge. For positive cases, Contact Tracers will ask questions to identify anyone else they had close contact with while they could have spread the virus. While most contact tracing can be done by phone, when someone cannot be reached a Contact Tracer will go into the community to check on the person.

So far, some 1,700 Contact Tracers have been deployed from neighborhoods across the city, with particular emphasis on those hardest hit by the virus, to manage, track, and recall contacts of confirmed COVID-positive cases.

To learn more about them and the dedication to fighting COVID-19, here are profiles of five Contact Tracers.

Creating a New Sense of Community

KIMBERLY JOCELYN, MPH, MSSW

Contact Tracing Supervisor



New Jersey born and Brooklyn raised, Kimberly Jocelyn comes to the Test & Trace Corps from the frontlines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where she served as a Public Health Analyst for the Quarantine and Border Health Services Branch, working with federal, state and local departments to prevent the spread of contagious diseases in the United States.

A recent graduate of Columbia University with master’s degrees in public health and social work, her prior experience includes work as a research assistant and in human resources at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center; technology consultation for the United Nations Development Program; and social work research and advocacy abroad in Chile, Scotland, and the Dominican Republic. She is a daughter of Haitian immigrants and speaks Haitian-Creole and basic French.

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“Contact tracing requires an individual to meet contacts where they are and exercise compassion, patience, respect, equality, as well as being understanding, flexible and accommodating,” she says. “It is extremely difficult to inform someone that they have been exposed to COVID-19 or tested positive, but we are creating a new sense of community within this pandemic, to let people know that we care and there is always support, especially if they live alone.”

Fighting the Invisible Enemy

ISAAC TWUM

Community Engagement Supervisor

Nearly 20-years-ago, Isaac Twum left his native home in Kumasi, Ghana and settled in the Bronx in search of new opportunities. He earned a master’s degree in Public Health and started a family.

But the COVID-19 pandemic threatened the life he built as more people throughout the city he came to love became ill. Fear spread among his neighbors, friends and family. He knew he had to do something to help.

“We are battling an infectious disease that can affect my children or even me,” he said. “For all people, this virus is a common enemy that we cannot see. We must work together to stop the spread.”

He found his opportunity working as a Community Engagement Supervisor with the Test and Trace Corps, where he will supervise a team that contact and visit New Yorkers who test positive for COVID-19. Together, they will speak with patients in their home to help NYC Health + Hospitals continue monitoring their health and social needs.

In his position, he’ll draw on knowledge from past experiences as a project assistant at New York City’s Department of Health and working with NGOs in Ghana. He also received training from the health system and public health experts around the nation. It’s a great help, Twum said, as he and his team will work together to build trust and rapport with the patients they meet.

The program and position are new, he said, so he’s open to seeing how his role may evolve to help the health system and community defeat the virus.

“It’s my passion, and sometimes it requires a lot of sacrifice but it’s so rewarding to see the impact I have on community,” he said. “You have to do something to improve where you live. Think about it - when your community is healthy, you are healthy.”