

The Role of NYC Health Department Staff in Disease Intervention

The NYC Health Department employs disease intervention specialists, also known as public health advisors or contact tracers, who are trained to prevent and respond to specific infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, measles, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including syphilis and HIV.

These staff work to understand transmission patterns of infectious diseases and limit their spread. Their extensive training is designed to ensure that people receive the services they need to keep communities healthy. Core responsibilities of disease intervention staff include:

- Gathering important information about people who have tested positive for a communicable disease, including symptoms, demographic details, travel history, potential contacts or partners, and treatment and testing histories
- Connecting people to facilities and providing additional resources as needed
- Confidentially notifying contacts of their possible exposure and providing them with prevention counseling, testing, and treatment resources
- Identifying factors associated with transmission within the community, characterizing the underlying risk network, and using this information to guide intervention efforts to improve health outcomes, prevent additional infections, and control the outbreak

Why NYC Health Department staff may contact health care providers



The NYC Health Code requires both laboratories and health care providers to report information to the NYC Health Department about diagnoses of nearly 100 infectious diseases, including many STIs, HIV, tuberculosis, and measles. NYC Health Department staff rely on this information to begin intervention work for select conditions.

Health care providers can assist in these efforts by informing people that trained NYC Health Department staff may contact them to ensure that they and their partners or contacts get the care or treatment they need to prevent further disease transmission.

How we protect patient privacy



Patient information shared with the NYC Health Department is confidential. NYC Health Department staff will never disclose names or clinical information to a patient's close contacts or partners. NYC Health Department staff cannot disclose the reason they are contacting a person until they have confirmed the person's identity. This practice is to ensure that patients' identities and personal information is protected, which is the top priority of disease intervention staff.

Action items for health care providers



- Submit electronic disease reports of reportable diseases, including STIs, via PRISM at nyc.gov/health/prism. For a complete list of reportable conditions and diseases in NYC, please visit nyc.gov/health/diseasereporting. For HIV, providers are strongly encouraged to use the electronic Provider Report Form (ePRF) and submit the report via the New York State Health Commerce System at commerce.health.state.ny.us. The more complete and timely reports are, the less likely Health Department staff are to follow up with providers to request additional information.
- Inform patients that NYC Health Department staff may confidentially reach out to them regarding their diagnosis, to prevent further disease transmission and connect them and their partners or other contacts to resources they may need, including care and treatment. Inform them that their identity will not be shared with contacts.



nyc.gov/health/diseasereporting