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Grand Traverse County Health Department launches digital COVID-19 survey

Over the last five weeks, the cumulative COVID-19 case count in Grand Traverse County has risen from 786 to 2,183 as of December 8, 2020. With the large surge, the resources used both internally at the Grand Traverse County Health Department and externally through the state contact tracing resources to complete case investigations on positive COVID-19 cases were and continue to be severely stressed. On November 19, we announced the [prioritization of case investigations](#) consistent with state recommendations, and now we are additionally adopting an online survey system to assist our team with case investigations to reduce transmission and further spread.

In order to both gather and share important information as quickly as possible, we have adopted a new survey tool to conduct case investigations with individuals that receive positive COVID-19 test results. Gathering this information from those who test positive helps us to identify those who may spread the virus to others. This is also important in order to initiate isolation and quarantine as soon as possible because any delay to this process can result in unnecessary spread.

The Grand Traverse County Health Department has partnered with Michigan software developer CoherentRX to implement a tool called Patient Education Genius (PEG) for collecting information from individuals who test positive for COVID-19 through a digital survey sent via text message or e-mail. While we began using this tool on a limited basis this week, the tool will be utilized on a larger scale in response to the recent increase in cases and to increase response rates for case investigations with those who prefer to use technology.

When our health department receives notification of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, we will utilize the PEG system to issue a text message and/or e-mail to the individual. The survey only asks for information that is allowable under the Public Health Code and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPAA) Privacy Act, such as demographics, symptoms, occupation, attendance at public events or gatherings, and people with whom they may have been in close contact. The survey *does not* gather any private information like social security numbers, personal passwords, or banking details.

Individuals aged 18-65 years will receive an electronic message asking them to fill out this confidential survey. People under age 18 and older than 65 will continue to receive a phone call from the health department to complete a case investigation. We will continue to prioritize case investigations and encourage anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 to [self-isolate and notify anyone who may have been in close contact with you](#).

Using the link received in a text or email, the patient will also be able to view and locate other information regarding isolation and quarantine, as well as the local resources available to assist with meeting basic needs while doing so.

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