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Wolf Administration Launches COVID Alert PA App, Encourage PA to Unite to Stop the Spread

Philadelphia, PA – Governor Tom Wolf and Secretary of the Department of Health Dr. Rachel Levine today launched the COVID-19 exposure notification mobile app, COVID Alert PA, to help fight the spread of the virus.

Available now free to smartphone users as a download from the Apple App store or Google Play store, COVID Alert PA is available in English and Spanish.

“The last seven months have shown that we are most successful when we unite against COVID-19 and work together for the common good, and I am proud to be here with Dr. Levine to announce an important new technology that will allow us to do just that,” Gov. Wolf said. “Today, we are launching the COVID Alert PA mobile app. This app is a simple tool you can use to help fight COVID-19 every day, everywhere you go. I encourage you to visit your app store and download it for free today.”

“We all play a part in stopping the spread of COVID-19, which is why I am encouraging every Pennsylvanian to add their phone to the fight and download COVID Alert PA today,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “By utilizing this technology, we can quickly notify more people who have been exposed to COVID-19. This innovative solution will enhance our COVID-19 response and give residents another tool to stay calm, stay alert and stay safe all in the palm of their hands.”

COVID Alert PA uses [Exposure Notification System](#) technology developed by Apple and Google. The app can detect if you have been in close contact with another user who later tested positive for COVID-19 and will send a notification to your phone called a “COVID-19 Exposure Alert”. If you tap on the notification, you will be given public health guidance on what to do next.

In addition, the app will provide users with the latest information on COVID-19 in Pennsylvania from the department’s COVID-19 [data dashboard](#).

The app does not enable any location services or tracks anyone and is designed to be completely anonymous. The Exposure Notification System works by using Bluetooth Low Energy, which allows phones with the app to recognize when it is close to another phone. Proximity is the only thing measured between phones, not location.

“We are very committed to and conscious of protecting the privacy and security of all Pennsylvanians,” Dr. Levine said. “COVID Alert PA will not track your location or collect any personal information from you—it is simply an exposure notification tool. The app uses Bluetooth technology to send a notification if someone has been in close contact with an individual who later tested positive for COVID-19. This is the same technology that your smartphone uses to connect to your wireless Bluetooth headphones, or your car. The app will never ask you to turn on your location.”

Gov. Wolf and Dr. Levine were joined at the announcement in Franklin Square by Philadelphia Health Commissioner Dr. Thomas Farley and Governor Wolf’s Advisory Commission for Latino Affairs Executive Director Luz Colon.

“Philadelphia has made great progress against COVID-19, but the pandemic isn’t over yet,” said Dr. Farley. “We need every tool available to control it. COVID Alert PA can help fill in the gaps in our investigations, but it only works to the extent that people use it. So, download it and activate it and help protect you and your family.”

“The biggest challenge since the pandemic has been keeping every resident of the commonwealth safe and informed,” said Colon. “That’s why we’re proud that this app is available in Spanish, so that we can extend our reach to the Latino communities through the robust translations service it provides. I strongly encourage the Latino Community to download this app and take an active role in helping protect you and your loved one during this pandemic.”

Pennsylvania has used contact tracing as a tool to stop the spread of infectious diseases for decades. COVID Alert PA app helps support traditional contact tracing processes. When the health department contacts the COVID-19 positive individual to discuss their diagnosis, learn how they are feeling and understand who may have been exposed to them, the public health representative will provide with a unique six-digit validation code to the individual to enter into the app. Once this step is completed, the app will be able to alert other app users who have been in close contact with the COVID-19 positive individual. This Exposure Alert does not reveal the identity of the COVID-19 positive individual or their whereabouts.

It is important to remember that the Department of Health also does not know the identity of app users who receive alerts—the department will only see the number of exposure notifications generated on any given date.

You can find the COVID Alert PA app in the Google Play store or Apple App store for free. COVID Alert PA is available in English and Spanish. This app is voluntary, but the

more Pennsylvanians age 18 and older who adopt the app, the more successful efforts can be.

COVID Alert PA is a partnership between Pennsylvania and Delaware, along with NearForm, University of Pennsylvania's Center for Health Incentives and Behavioral Economics and Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Lincoln Laboratory, Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory and Internet Privacy Research Institute.