COVID-19 Release of Protected Health Information to Ohio’s First Responders

Protecting Against COVID-19

Ohio Department of Health Director Amy Acton, M.D., MPH, signed an order on April 14, 2020 to release protected health information on individuals who test positive for COVID-19, when necessary, to Ohio’s first responders. Protection of our first responders is a top priority.

What does this order do, and what does this order not do?

• This order requires local health departments to provide the names and addresses of those individuals living within their jurisdiction who test positive for COVID-19 to the jurisdiction’s dispatch agency or agencies.
  
  o This does not include the release of any other information other than name and address.
  
  o This information will not be shared about individuals with suspected COVID-19, or anyone not having COVID-19.

• This information will only be released to first responders, who are responding, or may be called upon to respond.
  
  o This information will not be used for any purpose other than to control, mitigate, or prevent the spread of COVID-19 during interactions with first responders.
  
  o First responder agencies and dispatch centers may not use, disclose, or access this information for any other reason. Any such use will be subject to criminal liabilities.

• Name and addresses of individuals who test positive for COVID-19 are being provided to first responders so they know what to expect when they answer a call and can be wearing appropriate personal protection equipment.
  
  o Dispatch agencies are required to keep this information confidential.

• First responders must continue to use the recommended standard precautions for all emergency
calls. They should assume that any individual they come into contact with has been exposed to and may have COVID-19.

- Once a person has recovered from COVID-19 the information will be removed from the dispatch agency’s system.
  - The names and addresses of individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 will not stay in the dispatch system after the COVID-19 emergency no longer exists.

- Many local health departments have already provided their local police/EMS dispatch agency with the addresses of COVID-19 positive residents in their jurisdiction. This will ensure consistency across the state, and formalize guidance previously issued to local health departments on March 24, 2020.
  - Individual local health departments will not be making the decision independently to release or not release the names and addresses of those who have tested positive for COVID-19.

For additional information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available. Call the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 (1-800-846-8517 TTY); connect with a trained counselor through the Ohio Crisis Text Line by texting the keyword “4HOPE” to 741 741; or call the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services help line at 1-877-275-6364 to find resources in your community.
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 Ohio Department of Health

PREVENTION

Protect yourself and others from COVID-19 by taking these precautions.

For additional information call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH or visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

- STAY HOME
- PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING
- GET ADEQUATE SLEEP AND EAT WELL-BALANCED MEALS
- WASH HANDS OFTEN WITH WATER AND SOAP (20 SECONDS OR LONGER)
- DRY HANDS WITH A CLEAN TOWEL OR AIR DRY YOUR HANDS
- COVER YOUR MOUTH WITH A TISSUE OR SLEEVE WHEN COUGHING OR SNEEZING
- AVOID TOUCHING YOUR EYES, NOSE, OR MOUTH WITH UNWASHED HANDS OR AFTER TOUCHING SURFACES
- CLEAN AND DISINFECT "HIGH-TOUCH" SURFACES OFTEN
- CALL BEFORE VISITING YOUR DOCTOR
- PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE HABITS

For more information, visit: coronavirus.ohio.gov