

WORKING WITH PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Case Investigators and Contact Tracers will collect important information that will help health departments track COVID-19 cases and contacts, monitor how common the disease is, and evaluate the effectiveness of case investigation and contact tracing programs. The personal information collected during interviews with people with COVID-19 and their contacts is considered private and confidential, and that should be communicated during the interview. Below are some descriptions of private and confidential data and considerations for working with this information. Public health departments will have additional data security, privacy, and confidentiality guidelines.

Privacy and Confidentiality

- **Privacy** refers to the right to keep personal information personal. Examples of private personal information may include places visited in the past few days and social or household contacts.
- **Confidentiality** refers to the fact that a person's medical information cannot be shared with others unless the person agrees to share it. Confidential medical information may include test results and health conditions.

Principles for Working with Private and Confidential Information

1. Private and confidential information should be collected, used, shared, and stored for public health purposes *only*.
2. Policies for collecting and using private and confidential information should reflect respect for the rights of individuals and community groups and minimize unnecessary inconvenience.
3. Private and confidential information should be kept in a secure environment and transmitted through secure methods.
4. Health departments and other entities should minimize the number of people who have access to private and confidential information.

Tips for Working with Confidential Information

- Review and follow your health department's instructions to maintain privacy and confidentiality, including:
 - Never store private/confidential information on personal devices or on hard drives unless you have specific approval.
 - Keep all paper documents in a secure area when not in use.
 - Be aware of others in or near your workspace, complete all interviews in a secure or private area, and make sure your computer screen cannot be read by others.
- Think through how you will carry out these instructions in your own workspace. If you have any questions or identify challenges, talk to your supervisor for more guidance.

Adapted from CDC's National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention report "[Data Security and Confidentiality Guidelines](#)" and "[The CDC Field Epidemiology Manual: Collecting Data](#)."