

Care Resource Coordination

Helping individuals with COVID-19 safely isolate and quarantine

Updated March 18, 2021

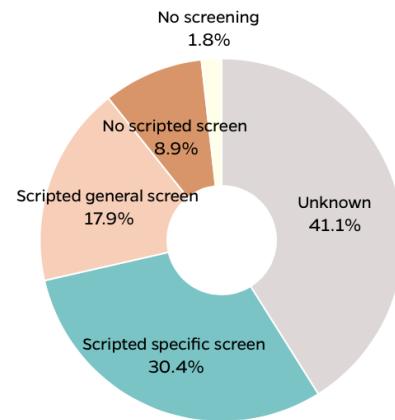
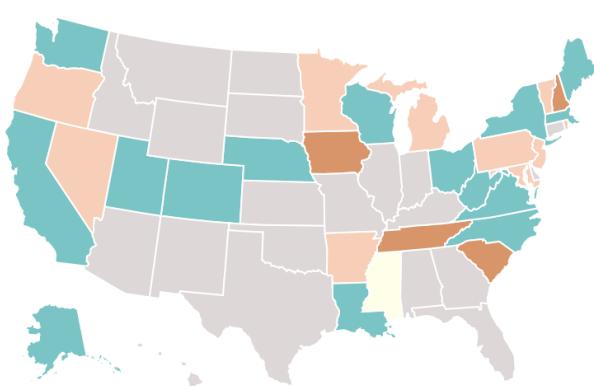
BACKGROUND

To stop the spread of COVID-19, infected and exposed individuals must isolate away from others. However, many individuals lack access to regular food, struggle to pay rent, and have limited sick leave or employment protections, making it difficult or impossible to isolate without help. Contact tracing programs must identify and help link individuals in need to critical supports to build trust in local public health systems and effectively prevent disease spread. This process is termed “care resource coordination.”

In December 2020, Partners In Health joined with the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security and NPR, to collect data on the status of care resource coordination as part of state and territorial contact tracing programs. Our December 2020 surveys on COVID-19 contact tracing included a series of questions focused on this topic. Partners In Health analyzed the survey data and presents the results here and on the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security website. Additional care resource coordination guidance and information can also be found on the Partners In Health site.

SCREENING CASES FOR SOCIAL SUPPORT NEEDS

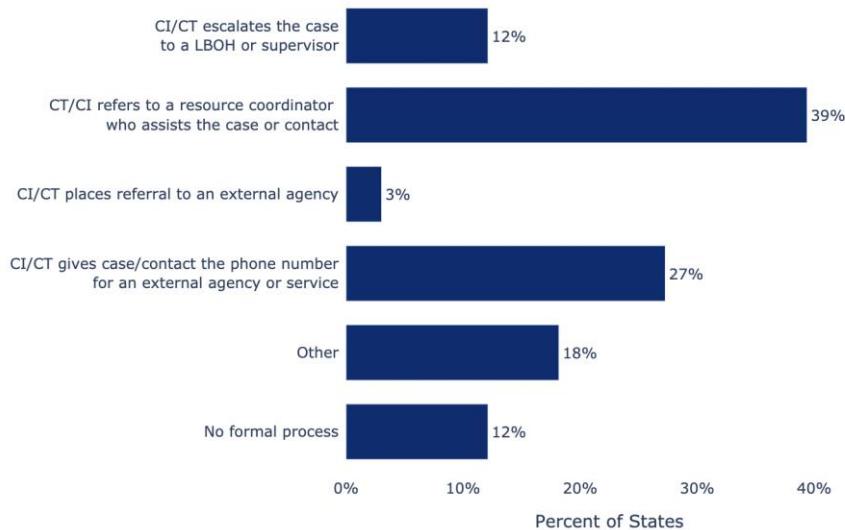
The Question: Does your contact tracing program(s) screen cases or contacts for social support needs (eg, quarantine/isolation space, connection to healthcare, provision of food, medicines, etc)? If so, how do state contact tracing programs identify cases and contacts in need of social supports to isolate or quarantine?



Though many contact tracing programs are assessing for social support needs, only 52% of programs ask questions assessing specific needs such as food, housing space to isolate in, or personal protective equipment. The initial contact tracing call can be an overwhelming time, as individuals may have just learned about their diagnosis or exposure. This makes it hard in that moment to anticipate everything they may need to isolate for the next two weeks. Adding a few standardized questions is a low-cost way to help people assess their current situation and envision barriers.

CONNECTING CASES TO SOCIAL SUPPORT RESOURCES

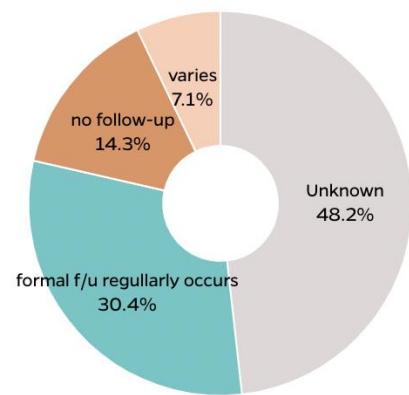
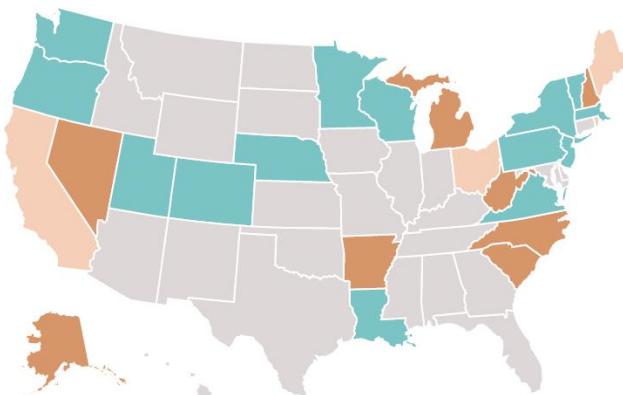
The Question: If social support needs are identified during contact tracing, is there a formal process to connect individuals to resources to help them isolate or quarantine? How do state contact tracing programs connect cases and contacts in need to social supports?



Only 39% of all programs reported having staff dedicated to helping connect individuals to social supports. 1 in 5 programs (18%) only provide a number for the person to call, such as 211 or a specific agency. The social support infrastructure in the U.S. is fragmented and difficult to navigate. Since people who need help the most often have the least agency to seek it, it is likely that people fall through the cracks when given a phone number alone. Barriers to contacting external agencies are only magnified for non-English speakers or those afraid to ask for help for any reason, including their immigration status. Having a workforce to help connect patients to the right supports makes successful isolation possible.

FOLLOWING UP WITH CASES IN NEED OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

The Question: Do state contact tracing programs follow-up to make sure that individuals' social support needs are successfully met?

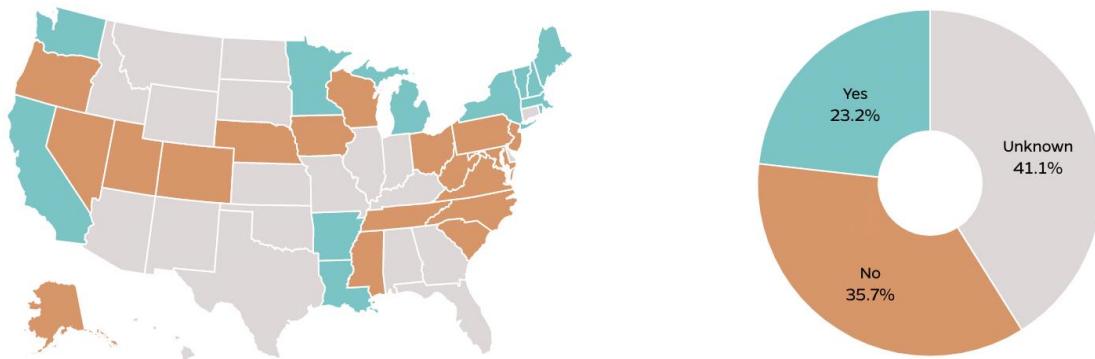


Screening for social support needs and connecting individuals to services is critical but follow up is needed to ensure needs are successfully met. Individuals referred to social services may face eligibility requirements, wait-lists for services, or overburdened social service agencies /organizations who lack the resources to meet

the demand. Care resource coordination programs must follow-up with the cases and contacts they serve to understand if a referral was successfully completed. Of the states who report having a formal process to connect patients to services, 28% reported that they do not have a formal follow-up mechanism in place.

TRACKING REQUESTS FOR SOCIAL SUPPORT RESOURCES

The Question: Do state contact tracing programs follow-up to make sure that individuals' social support needs are successfully met?



Only 39% of states currently track the percent of cases or contacts who needed social supports to safely isolate or quarantine. Understanding how often and what types of social supports are needed is key to advocating for, funding, and designing systems that can meet the needs of patients and communities.