**Contact Tracing: Protecting Personal Health Information Letter**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

This letter is to inform you of the importance of protecting personal health information.

It is important to ensure that the communication, storage, and transmission of patient health information is secure.

Special circumstances, like a pandemic, require agencies or entities to report new health information. Disclosing of sensitive personal health information without the individual’s consent or knowledge is a violation of confidentiality. Properly reporting a disease is a serious matter of protecting personal information and is a requirement of the Arizona Department of Health Services’ Emergency Measure 2020-03.

**What is Contact Tracing?**

A COVID-19 case refers to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. When an individual tests positive for COVID-19, a Contact Tracer will contact the individual to compile a list of people the infected individual had contact with in the past several days. Close contact is defined as being within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. The Contact Tracer will call the individuals who had contact with the infected individual so those potentially exposed to the virus can self-quarantine. Schools are responsible for contacting the health department to notify of positive COVID-19 cases within the school.

*Ensuring Privacy*

**Communicating Health Information:**

* All new COVID-19 cases must be reported to the health department within 24 hours. Case notification and documents should be uploaded to the secure link folder through the health department or should be faxed. Do not email.
* Schools and the health department should confirm that health information is received
* Exchanging protected health information inappropriately is a violation of privacy and could result in fees for the reporting agency and the local Public Health agency

**Health Information Confidentiality:**

COVID-19 patient name and Date of Birth should remain confidential except for any of the following circumstances:

* A confirmed exposure to a positive case for contact tracing purposes
* A report of a confirmed test result for epidemiological investigation through the local health department
* A suspected case awaiting test results to confirm COVID-19 status when part of an ongoing outbreak investigation

Please note that an entity may disclose protected health information for the purpose of notifying an individual that (s)he has been exposed to a communicable disease only if the covered entity is legally authorized to do so to prevent or control the spread of the disease. The entity or school reports the names and contact information of those exposed to COVID-19 to the health department and ADHS for contact tracing follow-up.

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