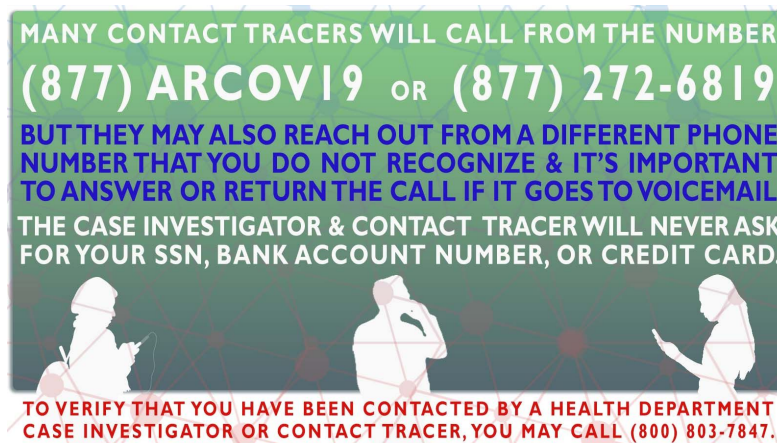




Arkansas House Newsletter

July 31, 2020

Improving Contact Tracing



Contact tracing is one of the most important public health strategies currently available to help us reduce the spread and transmission of COVID-19.

The idea behind contact tracing is to see who is a close contact of an individual who has tested positive for the virus, identify who has been exposed, provide them with information about testing and how to quarantine. Contact tracers help notify people who may not know they have been exposed and helps close the loop.

This week, the Arkansas Legislative Council (ALC) voted to direct \$16 million of federal funds to the Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) to expand contact tracing. The extra funding requested is meant to fund an equivalent 350 contract tracers and 20 nurses.

ALC also approved the use of \$7 million in federal CARES Act funds for COVID-19 relief in Northwest Arkansas. The money will be used to track a spike in cases in the Marshallese and Latinx communities. A large portion of COVID-19 deaths in Northwest Arkansas has come from these communities.

To help with contact tracing, ADH has contracted with two firms, General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT) and Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care (AFMC). These two contractors are on track to have a combined 700 contract tracers by the end of the year.

Many contact tracers will call from the number (877) ARCOV19 or (877) 272-6819, but a contact investigator may also reach out from a different phone number.

It's possible you won't recognize the number, but it's important to answer or return the call if it goes to voicemail.

The case investigator and contact tracer will never ask for your Social Security number, bank account number, or credit card. If the caller ever discusses money, that's a sign that it is not a legitimate Department of Health investigator. If you want to verify that you have been contacted by a Health Department case investigator or contact tracer, you may call (800) 803-7847.