Social Determinants, Culture and Contact Tracing

When developing approaches to contact tracing, consider the following.

What?

How?

Education, isolation, transportation, access to care, housing, income and job, food security, mental health, environment and safety.

Social determinants

- Acknowledge social and cultural variations between contact tracers and contacts
- Develop creative solutions for quarantine and isolation that respect culture and protect individuals and others in the community
- Consider the values and important relationships within populations
- Be alert to overt racism in testing and treatment
- Recognise the importance of cultural understanding of disease, illness, prevention and containment

Shared meanings, values, beliefs and practices, language, ethnicity, history, religion, cultural construction of illness and disease.

Cultural determinants

Risk communication is used to transmit health messaging on many different topics, including the importance of childhood immunizations, risks associated with sexual behaviour and risks associated with infectious diseases.

Risk communication

- Consider the social, religious, cultural, political and economic factors associated with the situation
- Risk communication should be a two-way dialogue, developed with communities
- Work with community representatives to develop risk communication messaging to ensure messaging is culturally appropriate and accessible to the community

Community engagement is the act of working collaboratively with communities to identify risks and find acceptable strategies to reduce these risks.

Community engagement

- Engage communities at the earlier stage of response to inform contact tracing design and implementation
- Inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower the community
- Five principles of community engagement:: affirming dignity, pursuing justice, acting with humility, building connections and developing understanding

Barriers: Education differences, gender differences, cultural differences, language differences, living/housing arrangements, daily activities and routines, past (adverse) experience with government and/or health organisations, rumours about the disease, Social stigma associated with being tested positive, unwilling to be isolated from families.

Barriers and enablers

Enablers:
- Gain a quick sketch/map/pulse of a person's social and cultural circumstances/context
- Apply local Explanatory Models of illness
- Cultural humility/cultural competency/cultural sensitivity
- Best practice risk communication strategies – involve local participation, accessible and situation-specific language and visuals, non-threatening, accounts for local concerns

Addressing these elements will lead to effective and culturally safe contact tracing activities.