



CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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AVOID CORONAVIRUS SCAMS

Public Health Contact Tracers do not ask for financial information

MAYVILLE, N.Y.: - According to state and federal authorities, there is a new phone scam circulating where the callers are posing as COVID-19 contact tracers. These scammers try to obtain credit card or bank account information from their victims. Stay alert and do not offer your financial information to anyone claiming to be a contact tracer.

If you are tested for COVID-19, and your test result comes back positive, a Chautauqua County public health nurse will contact you. If during the investigation of the positive case, you are named a close contact, a NYS contact tracer will contact you. Contact tracing is an effective public health intervention, and it is crucial to stopping the spread of COVID-19.

The nurse and the contact tracer will identify themselves, tell you where they work, and how they can be reached if you have questions over the course of your quarantine/isolation period. They will ask you for identifying information (name, address, date of birth), because they don't want to discuss personal health information with anyone but you. They will not ask you for money or financial information; the service they provide is free to you. They will not ask you for your immigration status; it doesn't matter for contact tracing.

There are scammers trying to take advantage of contact tracing. A scammer might call, text, or email and say they are affiliated with the local health department and are contacting you to tell you that you have been in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19. Where the scammer's conversation differs from the legitimate contact tracing discussion is when financial or payment information is requested. A public health nurse or NYS contact tracer should never ask for payment or financial information.

Scammers might also try to sell you products to treat or prevent COVID-19 without proof that they work. At this time, there is no FDA approved prevention, home test kit, or treatment. When there is a medical breakthrough, you will hear about it through a reliable source, not from an ad or sales pitch. Washing hands, wearing a face covering in public, maintaining 6 feet of physical distance from people outside your household, and contact tracing are strategies that will slow the spread of coronavirus.

Christine Schuyler, Chautauqua County Public Health Director, wants everyone to be alert and aware. "Anytime you receive a call, text, or email asking you for personal or financial information, be concerned

about who is calling - don't provide your social security number; don't provide financial information, and be cautious of texts or emails asking you to click on a link. Public health nurses and contact tracers will not ask for that information."

If you think a scammer has contacted you, report the attempt to the Federal Trade Commission at ftc.gov/complaint.

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