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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES
Bureau for Public Health
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COVID-19
GUIDANCE REGARDING DISCLOSURE OF THE LOCATION OF
CONFIRMED OR SUSPECTED COVID-19 CASES TO EMERGENCY PERSONNEL
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The regulations promulgated under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) permit Local Health Departments (LHD) to disclose limited information about the location of persons as confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases for the protection of emergency services personnel. See 45 CFR 164.512(j). Knowledge of the location of these cases would enable emergency personnel to take informed precautions to prevent their exposure. However, there are constraints on the information that can be shared and how that information may be used, as follows:

- **Minimum Necessary:** Disclose only the minimum necessary information to achieve the purpose of the disclosure. In this case, the disclosure is to lessen the threat of exposure to and transmission of the disease to emergency personnel. The LHD could disclose a generalized location of infected or potentially infected persons to the 911 operator. Disclosing names or specific addresses, unless the only way possible to achieve the protection, may exceed the disclosure allowance.
- **Safeguard Information:** LHD disclosure only to 911 operations, and 911 may disclose only to the responding units. This information must not be communicated via public service since these 911 communications are monitored by the public. Caution must be used in light of reports of unlawful targeting of individuals thought to be infected with COVID-19.

The permissibility of the HIPAA disclosure exception is not unlimited. The disclosing entities (both LHD and 911 operations) must take steps to safeguard the information from unwarranted disclosure.