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Toronto creates new IT system to track COVID-19

April 22, 2020

TORONTO – Toronto Public Health has launched a new technology solution for COVID-19 case management and contact tracing work. The city's medical officer of health, Dr. Eileen de Villa (pictured), said the new tool, dubbed the Coronavirus Rapid Entry Case and Contact Management System, or CORES, is a web-based solution that "allows our team to quickly and easily document each individual case efficiently and share data with the provincial ministry of health."

She said the previous solution, the Public Health Information System (iPHIS), which all local public health units use to submit infectious disease information to the province, was not meeting the city's needs.

CORES will allow TPH to quickly and easily document each individual case investigation efficiently and share data with the provincial Ministry of Health. It will allow TPH to better keep up with the volume of new reports and prioritize individual cases that require urgent follow-up such as healthcare workers as the local COVID-19 evolves. Importantly, this system also allows more of our front-line staff to work remotely from home.

More information about the City of Toronto's ongoing COVID-19 response is available at toronto.ca/covid-19 (https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/).

"Contact tracing is a core feature of our ability to effectively contain and prevent transmission of infectious diseases. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Toronto Public Health and the City of Toronto designed, built, and implemented our very own new data management system," said Joe Cressy, chair of the Board of Health and a city councillor. "It's been road tested, it's now been implemented, and it will have a significant effect in our COVID-19 response."

The news of the new information system came just days after de Villa said public health staff could not provide more detailed numbers relating to COVID-19 cases at long-term care homes due to their heavy work load.

In announcing CORES, de Villa said her team is "very excited" to work with the new technology, a solution that she says will "improve and streamline" their work.

"What we did is we recognized that the circumstances and COVID-19 and the kind of response that we needed… required frankly a better system, a more modern system, and one that was more suitable to the needs of this particular situation."

"Data is core to our work in public health. It helps us to understand infectious diseases, to inform strategies to respond to complex issues, and actions to protect our health. Case and contact tracing reports provide us with some of these essential details to help us limit the spread of virus," she said.

"We are living through an unprecedented global pandemic caused by a new virus that was unknown to us just four months ago. We must actively listen and be nimble and diligent in applying our learning as we go."

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