

ADVANCING THE EFFECTIVE TRACKING OF CONTACTS ON THE ISLAND ^[1]

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Puerto Rico Public Health Trust Leads Crucial Initiative With Municipalities To Identify COVID-19 Behavior On Island

May 7, 2020; San Juan, Puerto Rico - Given the urgency of implementing effective contact tracing to counteract COVID-19 on the island, the Puerto Rico Science, Technology and Research Trust (PRSTRT) and its Puerto Rico Public Health Trust (PRPHT) program announced its alliance with several municipalities with the creation of the Municipal Contact Tracing and Assistance System, which will allow the identification of areas of contagion and the behavior of the virus in patients.

"The importance of contact tracing in this pandemic is a vital approach to activate effective protocols and execute accurate actions," said Lucy Crespo, CEO of the Puerto Rico Science, Technology, and Research Trust. "From the PRPHT we have activated our alliances with multiple sectors with the scientific and technological knowledge of our resources to take a leading role in contact tracking in the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic," explained Crespo.

The Municipal Contact Tracking and Assistance System is a partnership with municipal epidemiologists to implement epidemiological and social research, applied to clinical research and the development of information analysis methodology. This project will lead to the development of surveillance systems, data analysis for subsequent public health recommendations to reduce the factors of contagion. The participating municipalities are Villalba, Yauco, Orocovis, and Guayanilla. More municipalities will soon be joining the project in order to impact more communities at risk.

Dr. José F. Rodríguez Orengo, executive director of the PRPHT said: "The data system is now ready to be implemented in the municipalities. We have found an incredibly positive response from both the mayors and the epidemiologists for the benefit of the citizens of their respective towns. This has allowed us to move quickly to begin identifying lines of contact to have visibility of the behavior of the virus".

The epidemiologists who have led the first phase of this project are Andrés Julia (Yauco), Fabiola Cruz (Villalba), Yaritza Martoral (Guayanilla) and Eva Gordian (Orocovis).

It is expected that PRPHT will continue to expand contact tracking efforts including a project based on "bluetooth" technology to expand its reach to more towns on the island. For more information on the services and collaborations, you can access the website www.paralasaludpublica.org [2] or write to info@prpht.org [3]

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