NC Department of Health and Human Services

SlowCOVIDNC Overview

December 2020

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SlowCOVIDNC

Overview and Additional Resources

Background on SlowCOVIDNC

What is SlowCOVIDNC?

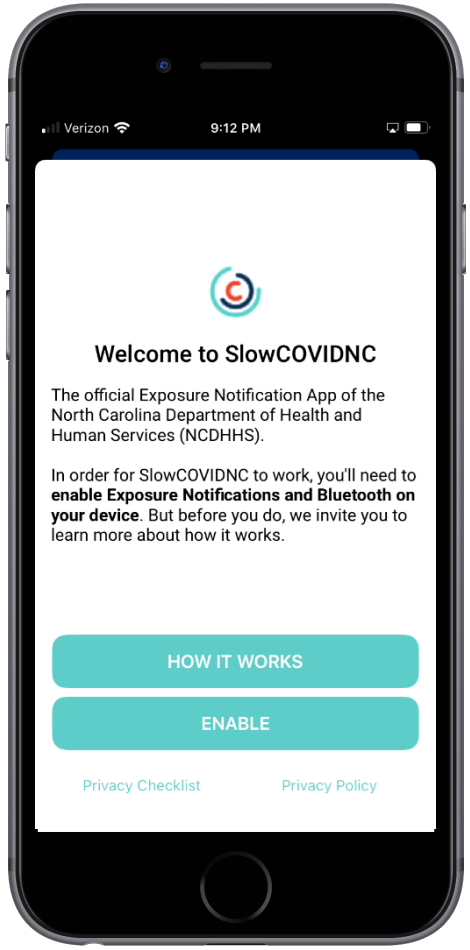
- Official, free Exposure Notification app for North Carolina
- Developed by NCDHHS to help North Carolina residents stay safe and slow the spread of the virus
- Uses smartphone technology created by Google and Apple

Why did we launch SlowCOVIDNC?

- Allows users to know if they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and quickly act to protect themselves, their loved ones and their communities
- Protects users' privacy and identities, while also slowing the spread of COVID-19
- Complements our existing contact tracing and testing activities

How many downloads are there so far?

- More than **500,000** North Carolinians have downloaded the app since the **September 22 launch**



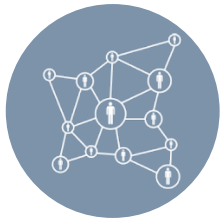
Why is SlowCOVIDNC important?

Speed

SlowCOVIDNC significantly improves and accelerates speed to notification.

Due to the highly transmissible nature of COVID-19, control of the virus is highly sensitive to speed of notification.

Proactively notifying residents about potential exposures could make the difference between control and resurgence.



Impact

Models suggest that for every two users who adopt an Exposure Notification app, one infection can be averted.*

Exposure Notification apps, like SlowCOVIDNC, can help reduce cases and deaths at any level of uptake.

SlowCOVIDNC also communicates with apps from other states that are using the Google and Apple technology platform. So, if a SlowCOVIDNC app user is in close contact with someone using another state's app (whether in NC or while traveling in another state), they will receive an Exposure Notification alert.

Security

Exposure Notifications will not reveal the identity of positive individuals to other app users, and vice versa.

SlowCOVIDNC will never store location or personally identifiable information.

The identity of app users will be protected by encryption and anonymous tokens that change every 10-20 minutes.

* https://www.research.ox.ac.uk/Article/2020-04-16-digital-contact-tracing-can-slow-or-even-stop-coronavirus-transmission-and-ease-us-out-of-lockdown

How does SlowCOVIDNC work?

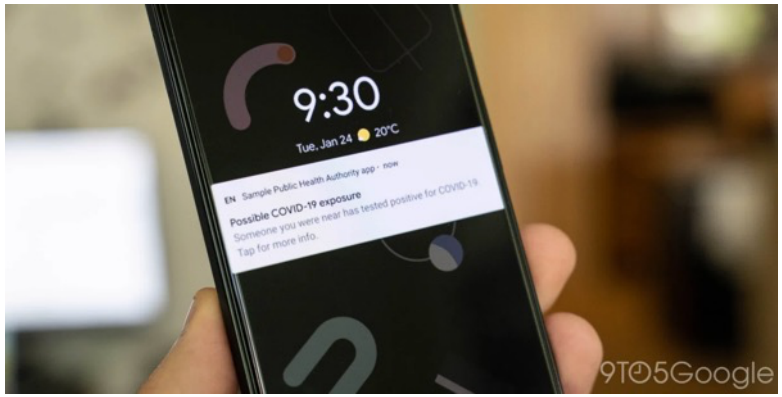
1. Download the free SlowCOVIDNC app from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store and **enable Bluetooth and Exposure Notifications**.
2. Opt-in to receive notifications, and the app will **generate an anonymous token** for your device that changes every 10-20 minutes.
3. Through Bluetooth, your phone and the phones around you with the SlowCOVIDNC app **work in the background** to **exchange these anonymous tokens every few minutes**. Phones record estimated duration and distance between SlowCOVIDNC app users.
4. If **you test positive for COVID-19**, you may **obtain a unique PIN** to submit in the app. This voluntary and anonymous reporting mechanism notifies others who have downloaded the app that they may have been in close contact with someone in the last 14 days who has tested positive.

Note: To receive your PIN you can i) use the PIN Portal, ii) contact the Community Care of North Carolina (CCNC) call center, or iii) contact your local health department (LHD)

What is a token?
A string of random letters and numbers used to represent a phone for a short period of time

Where are Exposure Notification apps being deployed?

- **20+ States** and territories, including **NC, WA, ND, SD, AL, and VA,** are currently developing or have already developed Exposure Notification apps or are leveraging Exposure Notification Express (ENX).
- **North Carolina has designed a fully functioning iOS (Apple) and Android (Google) app** leveraging the code base from Virginia.
- **North Carolina is partnering with institutions of higher education, businesses, and event spaces** to promote SlowCOVIDNC and drive awareness and adoption of app.



How does the app respect your privacy and keep you in control?

- Built on **Apple and Google** technology that protects user privacy and security
- **Does not collect or share** any personally identifiable or location information
- **Only public health authorities are authorized** to develop and deploy this Exposure Notification application under the strict privacy and security protocols

Bluetooth Technology
Allows anonymous token transfer

No Location Tracking
No location data collected

Privacy Protected
No personally identifiable information collected

Optional
100% voluntary and based on opt-in

Full Control
Turn Exposure Notifications on and off at any time

Test Data Protected
Individuals who test positive are not identified

Limited Access
Only public health authorities can use this system

Transparent
Apple/Google will turn off Exposure Notification API once no longer needed by public health

Contact Tracing vs. Exposure Notification

While traditional contact tracing and Exposure Notification complement one another, there are some **key differences**:

Contact Tracing

1. Conducted manually by experts at local public health departments through phone calls
2. COVID-19 positive individuals provide contacts and locations from memory, and may forget certain contacts
3. Contact tracers manually contact anyone the COVID-19 positive individual has recently been near or in close contact with to inquire about symptoms and notify of potential exposure
4. Contact tracers notify all provided close contacts of potential COVID-19 exposure

Exposure Notification

1. Conducted automatically via an app on a smartphone
2. Smartphone exchanges tokens with nearby app users and records if users have been in close contact (within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more) including people that app users do not know or remember interacting with
3. Exposure Notifications are anonymously and automatically shared to potentially exposed users once a positive test result is submitted into the app
4. App sends Exposure Notification to app users only, though other close contacts may exist

Key similarities of both contact tracing and Exposure Notification methods are:

- The COVID-19 positive individual's privacy is protected through HIPAA and identity is never shared with contacts
- Testing and self-quarantine guidance will be shared with individuals who have potentially been exposed to COVID-19
- Traditional contact tracing and Exposure Notification are both critical to slow the spread of COVID-19 in North Carolina and effectiveness is dependent on resident participation and adoption
- People who receive a notification may also receive a phone call from their local health department because they have been identified through traditional contact tracing

Exposure Notification (EN) Express overview

What is Exposure Notification (EN) Express?

- EN Express offers a **potential Exposure Notification solution** mainly targeted to **states that have not developed their own mobile application** or are having challenges with app development
- Public health authorities will only have the opportunity for **limited customization and a standardized solution** but can get to deployment faster
- The solution will be **automatically embedded as a capability** in Apple's latest update; and will exist in Google's operating system as a standalone app

Key differences

Extended customization

SlowCOVIDNC offers more opportunities for customization of the app to improve user experience

Improved future functionality

SlowCOVIDNC can iterate its product based off user feedback received post-launch and add future functionality to its roadmap

Will help increase user adoption

Apps like EN Express are expected to bolster adoption of SlowCOVIDNC, specifically for Apple users that don't download SlowCOVIDNC

Both EN Express and state-led apps, like SlowCOVIDNC, will be overseen and led by public health authorities

Links to Additional Resources

NCHealthIT@dhhs.nc.gov

Find more resources for SlowCOVIDNC at the links below

Landing Page

Landing page for NCDHHS' SlowCOVIDNC app

Higher Education

Resources specifically targeted towards higher education (school lists and contact information)

Privacy Policy

Document outlining privacy information related to the SlowCOVIDNC app

Press Releases

Access to upcoming press briefings/announcements and archive of previous press releases

FAQs

Comprehensive bank of information to address app-related questions and concerns

Comms. Toolkit

Marketing collateral (flyers, digital ads, social media assets and post copy)

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