

# New analysis examines risks, rewards of 'Test and Trace' as states begin relaxing lockdown

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Credit: Pixabay

As states like Massachusetts prepare to gradually re-open their economy and restart social life, the Center for State Policy Analysis (cSPA) at Tufts University's Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life uses recent research and case studies of other countries to understand the prospects,

risks, and trade-offs of a "test and trace" approach.

#### Key findings:

- Testing capacity in Massachusetts likely needs to increase from the current mark of 5,000-8,000 tests per day to 10,500-17,000 per day.
- Even modestly successful contact-tracing programs in other countries often involve invasive government activity that may not be compatible with U.S. law, the established norms of American life, or modern partisanship.
- The fact that asymptomatic people can spread COVID-19 complicates the work of contact tracing—and puts a premium on speed. Utilizing cell-phone data may help quicken the process, but that raises serious concerns about privacy and surveillance.
- Coordination could be a challenge in Massachusetts, as centralized efforts are still being expanded and contact tracing is typically handled by the 351 cities and towns and centralized efforts are.
- Massachusetts also needs to prepare for potential failure, which means specifying triggers for when to return to lockdown if necessary.

"For the foreseeable future, the health of the Commonwealth and its residents will depend on our ability to control COVID-19," said Evan Horowitz, executive director of cSPA. "We hope that today's policy brief will provide lawmakers with more information about what works, what remains unknown, and the difficult choices ahead."

In synthesizing this material and thinking about the shape of a potential "Test-and-Trace" program in Massachusetts, cSPA was aided by a number of public health and other experts, including Alice Tang and Ramnath Subbaraman, professors at Tufts University School of

Medicine.

In the coming months, cSPA plans to release:

An analysis of the Transportation Climate Initiative, which would establish a regional cap-and-trade system covering emissions from cars and trucks

Research on the projected impact of the fall 2020 ballot questions, potentially including right to repair, nursing home reimbursement rates, expanded sales of beer and wine in food stores and ranked-choice voting.

**More information:** The report is available online:  
[tischcollege.tufts.edu/sites/d ... t and Trace 2020.pdf](https://tischcollege.tufts.edu/sites/default/files/2020-04/Trace%20and%20Test%20and%20Trace%202020.pdf)

Provided by Tufts University

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