COUNTY OF HUMBOLDT
JOINT INFORMATION CENTER
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<u>FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE</u>
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Contact Tracing Branches Out

Humboldt County Public Health continues to expand contact tracing staff, an important step in being able to ease shelter-in-place restrictions.
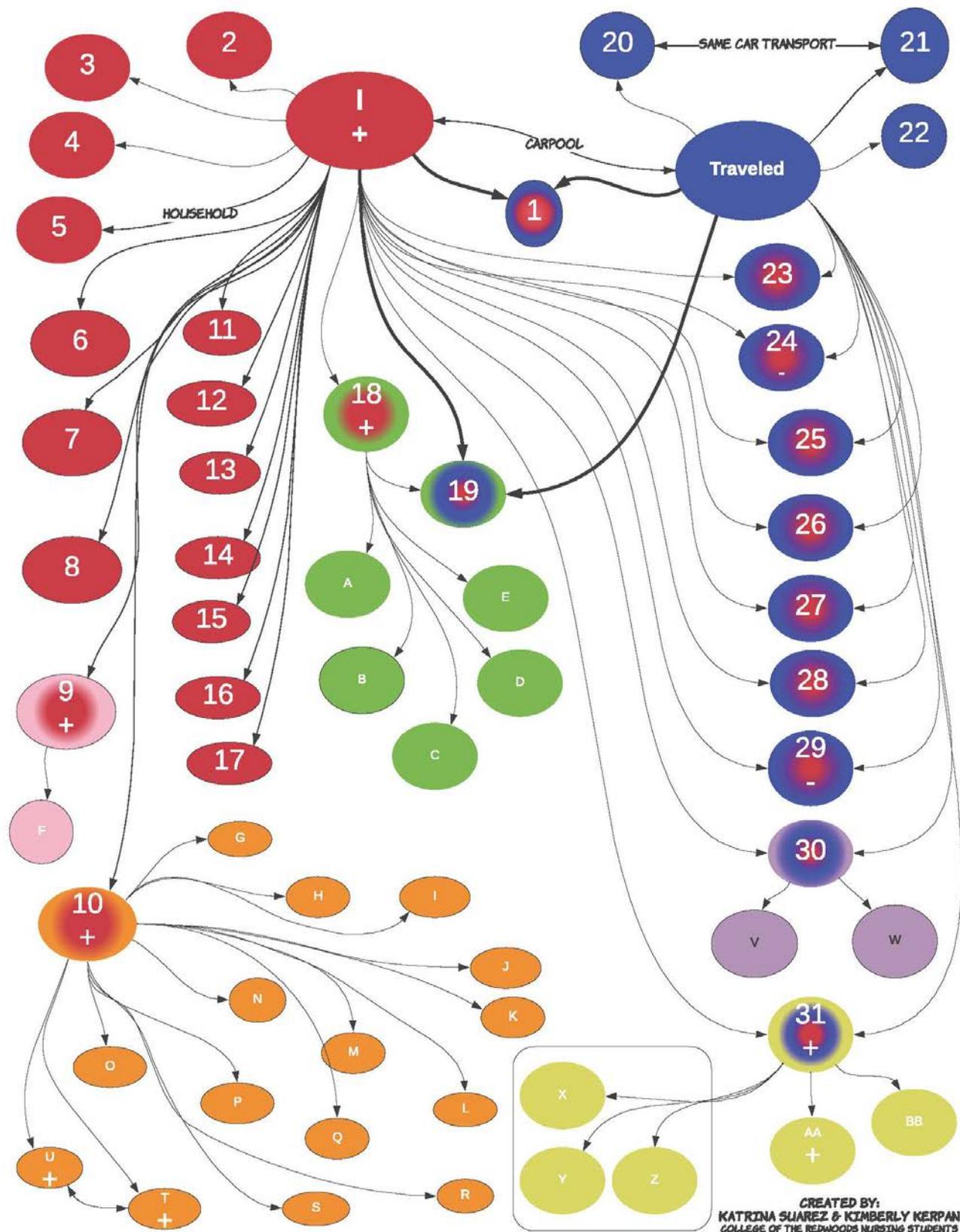
Contact tracing is a method of determining how many people may have been exposed to a person confirmed to have COVID-19. The goal is to prevent spread of the virus by identifying those with possible exposures and isolating those who are ill while quarantining those who are healthy but may develop symptoms within the next 14 days. This helps to avoid transmission of the infection to additional individuals in the community.

Public Health had three Communicable Disease staff available to conduct contact tracing when the outbreak began in late February. Now there are 30 staff trained to fill this role, and additional staff are being trained as one part of an ongoing effort to plan for an increased number of cases.

Humboldt County Health Officer Dr. Teresa Frankovich shared a graphic representing the complexity of a recent contact tracing investigation at Tuesday's meeting of the Board of Supervisors. The graphic shows how one individual with a confirmed case made contact with dozens of other people before being diagnosed, potentially spreading the virus widely in a short amount of time. By finding those with symptoms and those who had been exposed, Public Health was able to successfully prevent spread.

Adequate contact tracing is one of the steps needed before non-essential businesses can reopen, as outlined by Governor Gavin Newsom. Dr. Frankovich said, "Disease surveillance is a vital part of reopening businesses safely. Closely monitoring possible exposures will help to limit transmission of the virus and get those people care."

For the most recent COVID-19 information, visit cdc.gov or cdph.ca.gov. Local information is available at humboldtgov.org or by contacting covidinfo@co.humboldt.ca.us or calling 707-441-5000.

Graphic depicting the scope of a recent contact tracing investigation. All identifying information has been removed.

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