

# NEWS BRIEF

Provided by: Hausmann-Johnson Insurance & The Benefit Services Group, Inc.

## New COVID-19 Strain Spreading Across United States

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a new variant of COVID-19 has [been reported](#) in the United States. Referred to as B.1.1.7, this strain of the coronavirus was identified in the United Kingdom before it was detected in the United States. As of this writing, B.1.1.7 cases have been confirmed in California, Florida, New York, Georgia, Colorado, Connecticut, Texas and Pennsylvania.

Thus far, knowledge of this new COVID-19 strain is minimal, though health experts believe that the new strain of COVID-19 may be up to 50% more contagious than the more common strain. However, according to the CDC, there is not yet evidence that this variant causes more severe illness or an increased risk of death than the standard COVID-19 strain.



*In addition to the B.1.1.7 variant, health officials are monitoring other strains of COVID-19.*



Health experts believe the COVID-19 vaccine should have similar efficacy on B.1.1.7 as the common COVID-19 strain, though there is limited knowledge on the topic.

### Ongoing CDC Monitoring

In response to B.1.1.7 and other COVID-19 strains, the CDC has launched “National SARS-CoV-2 Strain Surveillance (NS3),” a program to increase the

number and representativeness of viruses undergoing characterization. This program collects samples biweekly from states for sequencing and further characterization. Data from these efforts will continue to be analyzed at the CDC, which will communicate new information as it becomes available.

### What This Means

As additional states report cases of this new COVID-19 variant, we do not yet know enough information as to how this might impact the pandemic or the distribution of vaccines. As employers create return-to-work plans, they should continue to monitor developments related to this and any other new strain.

For more information on the COVID-19 pandemic, contact Hausmann-Johnson Insurance & The Benefit Services Group, Inc. today.

