

Dear school partners,

This last week before Winter Break has been full of updates! The first COVID-19 vaccine is being administered and the State has updated critical guidance documents for K-12 schools. Read on for additional information on these changes and other related resources. For those heading into some time away from work and email, we wish you a peaceful resolution to 2020 and best wishes in the new year.

This week's Public Health—Seattle & King County (PHSKC) Schools and Childcare Task Force sector email includes the following topics:

1. Key indicators of COVID-19 activity
2. Updates to the DOH "decision tree"
3. K-12 school testing guidance
4. Quarantine updates
5. COVID-19 vaccine plan for schools and childcare
6. Upcoming and recorded trainings available
7. New testing site in Bellevue
8. Mental health resources
9. Why you should be cautious when you're taking a break at work
10. REMINDER: Please share your COVID Coordinators' contact info with PHSKC

### 1. Key indicators of COVID-19 activity

The following chart includes King County data aligned with key indicators of COVID-19 activity outlined in the document titled [Tools to Prepare for Provision of In-Person Learning among K-12 Students at Public and Private Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) released by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH). The following are data as of **December 16, 2020**. These data are available and regularly updated on the PHSKC [COVID-19 data dashboard webpage](#).

| <b>Current King County COVID-19 Activity Level:</b> |   | <b>HIGH</b> |
|---|---|-------------|
| <b>Education Modality:</b>                          | <b>Phase in in-person learning in groups of 15 or fewer students for pre-K through grade 5 and those with highest needs.</b><br><br>Prioritize Pre-K through grade 3, and students in any grade with disabilities, students living homeless, or those farthest from educational justice.<br><br>If schools can demonstrate the ability to limit transmission in the school environment, add grades 4-5.   |             |
| <b>Extracurricular:</b>                             | Cancel or postpone most in-person extra-curricular activities except those allowed under Safe Start and Governor's proclamations on COVID-19.   |             |
| <b>Transition:</b>                                  | <b>Across all COVID-19 Activity Levels:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When trends in cases and hospitalizations are flat or decreasing, and the school can demonstrate the ability to limit transmission in the school environment, expand access to in-person learning</li><li>• When trends are increasing, pause expansion of additional in-person learning and maintain access to in-person learning for those who have it. Schools are not required to reduce in-person learning or revert to remote learning based on metrics if the school can</li></ul> |             |

demonstrate the ability to limit transmission in the school environment.

- Consider other health and education risks and benefits to children and their families At any COVID-19 level, transition temporarily to full distance learning for 14 days when school meets criteria in DOH’s K-12 Health and Safety Guidance (p 16) or on recommendation of the local health officer.

|                            |            |                 |             |
|----------------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| <b>Activity Level Key:</b> | <b>Low</b> | <b>Moderate</b> | <b>High</b> |
|----------------------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|

| Indicator  | Target/Range    |                           | Current Status  |
|--|-----------------|---------------------------|---|
| Cases/100K/14 days <sup>1</sup>                  | <b>High</b>     | >350 cases/100K/14 days   | <a href="#">420 cases/100K/14 days</a>  |
|  | <b>Moderate</b> | 50-350 cases/100K/14 days |   |
|  | <b>Low</b>      | <50 cases/100K/14 days    |   |
| Trend in cases and hospitalizations <sup>2</sup> |                 |                           | Cases: <a href="#">Increasing</a><br>Hospitalizations: <a href="#">Increasing</a> |
| Test positivity <sup>3</sup>                     | <b>High</b>     | >10%                      | <a href="#">9.3%</a> <sup>3</sup>   |
|  | <b>Moderate</b> | 5-10%                     |   |
|  | <b>Low</b>      | <5%                       |   |

<sup>1</sup>Total number of cases for the last 14 days per 100,000 residents.

<sup>2</sup>Total number of cases for the last 14 days per 100,000 residents **AND** Rate hospitalization per 100,000 residents in the past 14 days compared to the prior 14 days.

<sup>3</sup>Percent of COVID-19 tests with positive results over the past 14 days—**WA State Department of Health has resumed reporting on negative laboratory results. There remains a large backlog of negative lab results that have not been processed (about 100,000 negative lab results). The count of people tested and all test results is underestimated as WA DOH processes this backlog. As a result, the test positivity reported on this dashboard are overestimated, especially in the most recent week.**

## 2. Updates to the DOH “decision tree”

Yesterday, the DOH updated its [COVID-19 guidance for K-12 schools](#) to encourage in-person learning for younger learners. Emerging research and data from multiple sources show that schools can successfully limit the transmission of COVID-19 when they follow strong health and safety protocols. There is no place with zero COVID-19 transmission risk, but health and safety measures diminish the risk enough to make it possible for educators and kids to get back into the classroom while protecting students and educators.

With the current level of transmission in the high range (> 350 cases/100,000K/14 days) in King County, the [updated guidance](#) recommends phased in in-person learning for younger learners and those with the highest needs. Schools should prioritize pre-K through grade 3. Students in pre-K through grade 5 can return to in-person learning in groups of 15 or fewer, provided schools can meet all health and safety protocols.

The [updated guidance](#) also revises the measures school communities should use to make decisions about in-person learning and the risk of transmission in the school environment. School administrators are ultimately responsible for deciding whether to resume in-person learning, as long as they can implement the [health and safety measures that are required by law](#). PHSKC has a number of [tools and](#)

[resources](#) available to support schools as they prepare for in-person learning, and a point of contact from Labor and Industries will also be named to support schools. In addition to the new recommendations, Governor Inslee announced \$3M in CARES Act funds for OSPI to support schools in their health and safety work.

### **3. K-12 school testing guidance**

DOH has released [K-12 school testing guidance](#), which compliments their [Fall K-12 guidance](#). This guidance will help K-12 public and private schools who are considering COVID-19 testing strategies to determine what options are available to them.

### **4. Quarantine updates**

As mentioned in previous communication, the CDC has [updated options for quarantine](#) for asymptomatic people who had close contact with a positive COVID-19 case. In response, DOH has updated [their K-12 guidance](#) and PHSKC is in the process of updating our [King County Schools COVID-19 Response Toolkit and related materials](#) to align with DOH and CDC. These updates will be available on [our website](#) in the near future. Also included in the PHSKC updates will be translations in Tigrinya for family- and staff-facing communication tools.

### **5. COVID-19 Vaccine Plan for Schools and Childcare**

Last Friday, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted an emergency use authorization to the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for persons 16 years and older, which was followed by approval of the Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup. Washington state began receiving and distributing the vaccine this past Monday and began administering the vaccine on Tuesday. You can read more about the vaccine distribution and phasing plans, along with FAQs, at the DOH [COVID-19 Vaccine Site](#) and [King County's site](#).

While vaccines are in short supply, the DOH will prioritize the COVID-19 vaccine distribution based on expert medical guidance about who is at highest risk for exposure and serious illness. The first supplies of vaccine are limited and offered to high-risk workers in healthcare settings and people in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities. In the first shipments of vaccine to King County, there will not be nearly enough vaccine to vaccinate everyone who is eligible in phase 1a. It will take many weeks to vaccinate everyone who falls into these groups.

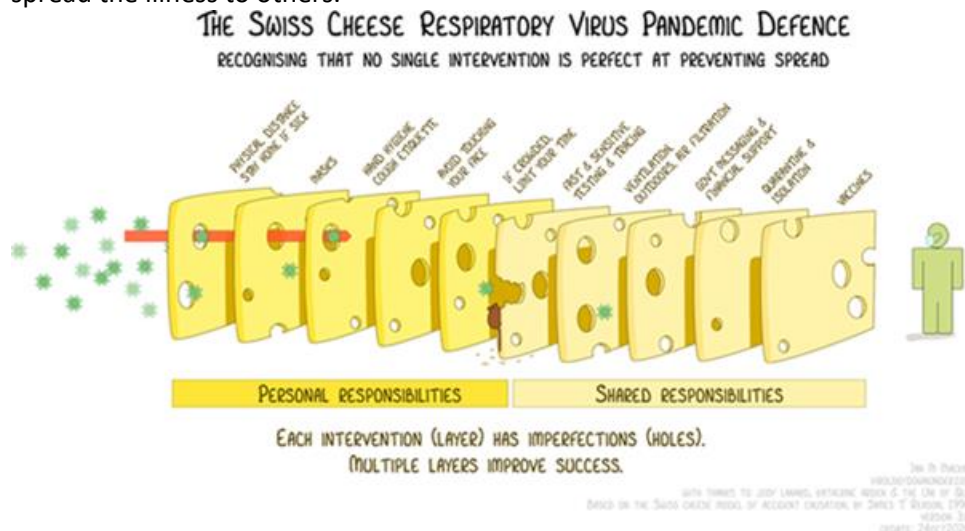
As more doses of the vaccine are made available, the priority groups will expand. K-12 and child care employees are in phase 2 of the state distribution plan. Vaccine trials for children are just beginning; there are no COVID-19 vaccines approved for children at this time.

COVID-19 vaccine will not be widely available until 2021. It will be months before large numbers of people can get the vaccine. When vaccine is available, we anticipate that people can get vaccinated at their doctor's offices or clinics, at pharmacies, and at vaccination events that Public Health will hold. Eventually everyone who wants a vaccine will be able to get one.

Public Health is preparing for the possibility of hosting vaccination events with our community partners. Over the coming weeks and months, Public Health will continue to expand engagement with interested partners and stakeholders that will be a critical part of planning and delivery efforts.

"This doesn't mean we are out of the woods yet," Gov. Inslee said. "We can't let up on masking, physical distancing and restrictions on indoor activities. We need to continue to slow the rate of infection as we

work to get Washingtonians vaccinated. We must keep up the fight a little longer and I know we will get through this, together.” PHSKC Director Patty Hayes shared the image below to illustrate that no single intervention is perfect. “But used in tandem,” Hayes says, “we can go a very long way to stopping the virus from infecting anyone. The more of these behaviors you do the fewer chances you'll get sick or spread the illness to others.”



## 6. Upcoming and recorded trainings available

The following training videos are now available on the [King County Schools & Childcare COVID-19 website](#) to support K-12 schools in implementing health and safety guidance:

- [COVID-19 Disinfection & Ventilation/Filtration Guidance for K-12 Schools](#)  
 Question-and-answer session with Nancy Bernard, MPH, REHS, CPSI, manager of DOH’s Indoor Air Quality and School Environmental Health and Safety Programs.
- [COVID-19 Response Toolkit Orientation and Training Video 1: Roles and Responsibilities](#)  
 Part one of a five part series providing an orientation and training to the [King County Schools COVID-19 Response Toolkit: Guidance for K-12 Schools](#).
- [COVID-19 Response Toolkit Orientation and Training Video 2: Symptom Screening](#)  
 Part two of a five part series providing an orientation and training to the [King County Schools COVID-19 Response Toolkit: Guidance for K-12 Schools](#).

Additional trainings of note include:

- **Recording:** [Indoor Air Quality in K-12 Schools: Addressing the Concept of Layered Risk Amidst COVID-19](#) from the Environmental Protection Agency
- **Upcoming Webinar:** [Implementing a Respiratory Protection Program in Schools](#) from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (January 12 from 10am-noon, [register here](#))

## 7. New testing site in Bellevue

There is a new option for convenient, free COVID-19 testing on the Eastside. A new site at Bellevue College opened on Tuesday, expanding efforts to control the spread of COVID-19 in east King County and along the I-90 corridor. This will be the first free, high-capacity COVID-19 test site on the Eastside. This site will be free and open to anyone, regardless of insurance or immigration status. Here are the details:

- **Location:** Bellevue College, 2645 145th Ave SE, Bellevue, WA 98007
- **Entrance:** 148th Ave SE. Drive-thru and limited walk-up testing is available

- **Transit:** The test site is available via the 221, 226, 228, 245, and 271 bus lines
- **Hours:** Monday through Saturday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
- **Pre-registration:** People are strongly encouraged, but not required, to pre-register for a testing appointment. Visit <http://www.ichs.com/free-covid-19-testing> for scheduling and registration.

#### **8. Mental health resources**

The DOH has been hosting a “[Coping with COVID](#)” podcast series, and this week’s episode is on strategies families may use to help manage the stress of this pandemic. The feelings of mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion affects both children and adults as we continue this lengthy era of living through a pandemic. The brain eventually gets tired and overworked from long periods of stress, which makes it harder to pause and respond logically to things that set us off. Children and teens may exhibit behaviors of moodiness, sleep troubles, drops in school performance, and anger amongst others. These are normal responses to an abnormal situation, but that doesn’t make it easy. Parents are likewise feeling stressed about all of their roles while trying to manage their own feelings through this time. You can read more and learn some possible strategies to [help your family cope here](#)

#### **9. Why you should be cautious when you’re taking a break at work**

There’s no respite from the fight against COVID-19 – not even in the workplace breakroom. In fact, the place workers go to relax on the job can be a high-risk location for transmission of the coronavirus. People remove masks while they eat and drink. They mill about the room, moving from the refrigerator to the microwave to the table. They sometimes let their guard down. [Read our newest blog](#) for tips on how to make break time safer for your staff.

#### **10. REMINDER: Please share your COVID Coordinators’ contact info with PHSKC**

To ensure that we are reaching staff critical to your schools’ COVID response efforts, [please respond to this survey](#) to provide their names and contact information. This will be helpful in our ongoing efforts to keep you and your staff informed and updated during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also facilitate easier follow-up and collaboration when cases are reported in your buildings. Thank you for taking the time to respond!

*In health,  
The PHSKC Schools and Childcare Task Force*