

Dear school partners and stakeholders,

Please find below key updates from the Public Health—Seattle & King County (PHSKC) Schools and Child Care Task Force. Thank you for your ongoing partnership and shared commitment to supporting the health, safety, and wellbeing of King County students, families, and school staff. We recognize that planning to reopening in this rapidly changing context is extremely challenging.

1. **The Intersection of Racism, Health, and Education:** In your work with schools you know that [racism is not only a public health crisis](#) but a long-standing crisis in our education system as well. As has been reported frequently, we know [from our data](#) that rates of COVID-19 hospitalizations and cases in King County are significantly higher for Hispanic/Latinx, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, and Blacks. We also know from a recent [New York Times report](#) that this is a nationwide issue. Latinx and Black residents of the United States have been three times as likely to become infected as their white neighbors, according to the new CDC data, which provides detailed characteristics of 640,000 infections detected in nearly 1,000 U.S. counties. And Black and Latinx people have been nearly twice as likely to die from the virus as white people. It is especially critical during this stressful time to practice self-care and to take care of mental health along with the precautions for staying safe from COVID-19. Our Public Health Insider recently shared this blog post, geared towards Black individuals, that included resources and recommendations to consider: <https://publichealthinsider.com/2020/07/02/navigating-a-pandemic-within-a-pandemic-coping-and-care-for-black-communities/>
2. **New Report on COVID-19 Transmission in Schools:** A [report from the Institute for Disease Modeling \(IDM\)](#) on COVID-19 transmission in schools was publicized by the [Washington State Department of Health \(DOH\) via news release](#) on July 15, 2020. A key takeaway from this report is that reopening schools without taking community-wide preventative measures may lead to a significant increase of COVID-19 in the population. We must work together to reduce the spread now if we are to safely reopen schools in the fall.
3. **Surge in Cases in King County Driven by Younger Residents:** The daily average number of COVID-19 cases has more than doubled in recent weeks, from an average of 40 daily cases in mid-June to 138 daily cases the week of June 28. Over half of all new cases are among people aged 20-39. Approximately 40% of cases in this age group over the past two weeks are among Seattle residents. A [recent survey](#) in King County showed approximately half of the participants between the ages of 20 and 59 reported that they always both use a face mask and adhere to physical distancing recommendations. One in seven in this group said they only sometimes or never do either. This mirrors the shift of the epidemic into younger people over time. Even if younger people are not as impacted by the disease, they can easily spread the disease to other more vulnerable people. Please continue to support your staff and students to stay healthy and prevent spreading COVID-19 even while schools are closed. This [toolkit for schools from the CDC](#) has tips and resources to promote key health and safety messages.
4. **Data on Number of Cases and Case Rates in Children:** PHSKC is sharing the attached data on COVID-19 cases and case rates in children by age band (0-4, 5-9, 10-14, and 15-19) and King County zip code. These data reflect the time period from February 28 through July 3, 2020.
 - a. We offer this data to all school districts for their information because representatives from some districts have requested this data.

- b. This data is ever-evolving and the attached report provides a high level snapshot for our County for the period stated above.
 - c. Key takeaways are that children are susceptible to COVID and while there are higher case counts among children in certain zip codes, no region is immune. Additionally, we note higher case rates in the 15-19 age range across zip codes, highlighting the importance of [supporting and communicating key messages](#) to this age group and their caregivers.
 - d. While there are clear differences in positive cases across these age bands, everyone plays a part in both spreading and mitigating the spread of this virus throughout the community.
5. **Free Face Coverings:** King County is working with the Puget Sound Educational Services District (PSESD) to develop a plan to partner with school districts, PTAs, and school foundations to provide free cloth and disposable face coverings for the upcoming school year. We anticipate having a more substantive update with next steps toward the **end of July**.
6. **Guidance and Tool Updates:**
- a. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will be releasing a school reopening template **any day now**
 - b. Additional guidance for schools from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is expected **next week**
 - c. This will inform updated guidance from OSPI and DOH which is also expected **next week**
 - d. **By the end of July**, PHSKC will release a toolkit for schools which will include templates and decision trees to support planning and decision making once schools reopen

Thank you again for your partnership and leadership in this work!

In health,

PHSKC COVID-19 Schools and Child Care Task Force



COVID
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