

Dear school partners,

Wishing you all a very safe and [happy Halloween](#) this weekend! 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. L&I consultation resources
3. Updated definition of close contact
4. Key message to share with your communities:
  - a. COVID-19 surges as fall arrives
  - b. Travel considerations during a pandemic
5. Ventilation and air quality for reducing transmission of COVID-19
6. Updates to DOH [Fall K-12 guidance](#)

**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 [Decision Tree 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 is data as of **October 28, 2020**. This data is 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>	Strongly recommend distance learning with the option for limited in-person learning in small groups, or cohorts, of students for the highest need students, such as students with disabilities, students living homeless, those farthest from educational justice, and younger learners.	
<b>Extracurricular:</b>	Strongly recommend canceling or postponing all in-person extracurricular activities, including sports, performances, clubs, events, etc.	

<b>Activity Level Key:</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>
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Indicator	Target/Range		Current Status
Cases/100K/14 days <sup>1</sup>	<b>High</b>	>75 cases/100K/14 days	<a href="#">104 cases/100K/14 days</a>
	<b>Moderate</b>	25-75 cases/100K/14 days	
	<b>Low</b>	<25 cases/100K/14 days	
Trend in cases and hospitalizations <sup>2</sup>	Flat or decreasing		Cases: <a href="#">Increasing</a> Hospitalizations: <a href="#">Flat/decreasing</a>
Test positivity <sup>3</sup>	<5%		<a href="#">2.6%</a>

<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

## 2. L&I consultation resources

The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) offers confidential, no-fee, professional [consultation and assistance](#) to Washington business. To find and fix worksite hazards and strengthen safety programs, schools and childcares can [call a local consultant](#) or [request an onsite consultation](#) for safety, health, and risk management.

## 3. Updated definition of close contact

Someone that has been in [close contact](#) with someone that has tested positive for COVID-19 should get tested themselves and stay in isolation away from others while waiting for the test results. The [CDC recently updated their definition](#) for someone to be considered in close contact. It is not a major change – the key difference is that the close contact now means being within [6 feet of someone for 15 minutes over the course of 24 hours](#). Previously, the definition was that the 15 minutes had to be consecutive. The change in guidance is a result from new scientific studies and evidence. This guidance underscores our bedrock advice to always keep six feet or more of distance from people outside your household, wear a face covering and ensure there's good ventilation and airflow in indoor spaces. For schools and childcare settings, the new definition of "close contact" reinforces the need to group children in small cohorts, and to minimize mixing outside those groups. Read more about the new definition and what it means to you in the [Public Health Insider blog post](#). PHSKC is aligning local recommendations and guidance with this new definition.

## 4. Key messages to share with your communities:

### a. COVID-19 surges as fall arrives

We know from news reports that [COVID-19 is surging across the country](#) and in many states, hospital systems are beginning to reach maximum capacity. Additionally, critical healthcare staff is stretched thin and things may get worse in the coming months. Washington and King County are not immune from this trend as we reached sobering milestones last week. Over [100,000 Washingtonians](#) have now been diagnosed with COVID-19, and [25,000 of those cases](#) were in King County. The positive cases caused untold stress to families, sometimes severe sicknesses, and unfortunately over 8,300 hospitalizations and 2,300 deaths statewide. While Washington may be doing [better than many states](#), we are still at very high risk through the winter months for further COVID-19 spread and heartache. But we know what we need to do:

- Get your flu shot.
- Mask up! Wear your cloth face covering, even with people you see regularly and in your smallest social circles. Keep your mask on in your own home or vehicle if you are with people who do not live with you.
- Keep gatherings very small and hold them outside whenever possible.
- Avoid indoor social gatherings, but if you must participate, wear a mask and keep windows and doors open to maximize ventilation.
- Check out the new [guidance and checklist for safer gatherings](#) for more tips (spoiler alert – Fewer. Shorter. Smaller. Safer.)
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer often.
- Stay home if you're sick or if you've been exposed to COVID-19.

And remember to practice compassion during this time for yourself and others. Remember, we are all in this together – six feet apart!

### b. Travel considerations during a pandemic

The Thanksgiving holidays are traditionally the busiest travel time of the year for individuals and families. But it's 2020, and we are in the midst of an increasing COVID-19 surge. Travel increases your chances of getting and spreading COVID-19, so staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others. If you decide you must travel during the fall, you should review the recently updated CDC website on [Travel during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), which includes tips on what to do before, during, and after travel.

#### **5. Ventilation and air quality for reducing transmission of COVID-19**

The Washington State Department of Health has released guidance on [ventilation and air quality for reducing transmission of COVID-19](#). This guidance offers general considerations and also links to resources specific to schools.

#### **6. Updates to DOH [Fall K-12 guidance](#)**

DOH has updated their [Fall K-12 guidance](#). The updates are largely clarifications, more detailed information on, or alignments with/linkages to other recently published State guidance/recommendations. The guidance now:

- References and links to the [Employer Health & Safety Requirements for School Scenarios](#).
  - Related to this, DOH now links directly to the CDC risk stratification in K-12 schools.
- Includes 3 example methodologies for doing daily symptom screening. Schools may use these methods, adaptations of these, or other methods.
- Allows schools to phase in physical education (PE) and extracurricular activities as they are described in or similar to those described in the [Sporting Activities guidance](#) (and similarly the extra-curricular activities in the [decision tree](#)).
  - This must be in accordance with the level of COVID-19 in the school's community, noting that it is lowest risk for PE to focus on individual skills and less strenuous activities so that students can maintain 6 feet of physical distance and wear face coverings.
- Includes the updated definition of a school outbreak.
- Links to DOH guidance on [Ventilation and Air Quality for Reducing Transmission of COVID-19](#) (see above).

*In health,*

*The PHSKC Schools and Childcare Task Force*