

Welcome back to school!

After many months of planning, the 2020-21 school year is upon us. We see and appreciate the hours of work and emotional labor you have invested that have brought us to this point. We look forward to continuing to partner as the school year progresses. Below are some updates from the Public Health—Seattle & King County (PHSKC) COVID-19 Schools and Childcare Task Force. Please forward to your colleagues as appropriate. Topics include:

1. Getting updates from PHSKC
2. PHSKC toolkit updates, training, and translations
3. Promote flu shots
4. School-based health centers are open
5. Mental health during the pandemic
6. Pandemic EBT
7. Learning pods: back to school decisions during a pandemic

1. **Getting updates from PHSKC**

The COVID-19 pandemic and related guidance are constantly evolving. You can receive updates and alerts from PHSKC straight to your inbox by signing up on our [main COVID-19 webpage](#) or visiting [this link](#). The Task Force will continue to send you specific updates related to schools and childcare via email.

2. **PHSKC toolkit updates, training, and translations**

Last week, PHSKC posted the [King County Schools COVID-19 Response Toolkit](#). This week we posted a brief 7-minute [training video](#) in English (slides available [here](#)) to support schools in navigating its guidance and tools.

Since its publication last week, the toolkit has two added resources of note:

- [Robocall scripts](#)
- [Newsletter template](#)

Further, translations for family-facing tools will be published this week in King County's 15 most common languages on [the main toolkit webpage](#).

3. **Promote flu shots**

Help your students, families, and staff protect themselves and our community against [influenza](#) **and** COVID-19! This fall and winter, getting a flu shot will be more important than ever since hospitals, clinics, and doctors' offices are likely to be busy caring for COVID-19 patients.

The prospect of flu compounding COVID this flu season is worrisome. Flu and COVID-19 share many symptoms and it will be hard to tell them apart. It's in everyone's best interest to prevent flu that may be confused with COVID-19 and result in unnecessary isolation or quarantine (and lost school/work time), and avoid preventable visits to a healthcare provider or hospital.

Flu shots are one of the best ways to protect the health of your students, families, and staff as we move into flu season. Getting a flu shot and being fully up to date on vaccinations means they—and your entire school community—are less likely to need to access healthcare services or be

hospitalized – always important benefits, but especially during a pandemic. Some districts are offering flu clinics. Flu shots are available through [all 34 King County school-based health centers](#).

Please help us spread the word and support our community to get their annual flu shot! It is more important now than ever.

4. **[School-based health centers are open](#)**

Even though most schools are starting with online learning this fall, more than 30 campuses will be open for in-person health-care services. They have school-based health centers that offer routine primary care, including vaccinations, as well as mental health counseling. Several even have dental services. Seasonal flu vaccine will also be available. Find a complete list, map, and contact information [here](#).

The health centers serve any student enrolled in the participating school districts. The centers [are independent clinics based inside schools](#) or on school campuses, staffed by health professionals. The school health centers have introduced new protocols during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as staggering appointment times and limiting the number of people who enter the facility.

5. **Mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic**

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has released their August update on [Statewide High-Level Analysis of Forecasted Behavioral Health Impacts from COVID-19](#). It is expected that behavioral health impacts of the pandemic will appear in waves, with a peak this fall. Page 4 of the update outlines some anticipated behavioral health impacts for children during the pandemic. In support of whole child wellness and acknowledging that physically and mentally healthy children learn better, we hope you will peruse and share this report and associated [COVID-19 Behavioral Health Toolbox for Families](#) to support the ongoing wellbeing of the students you serve.

6. **Pandemic EBT**

The Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) program is an important resource that may help the growing [food insecurity](#) and increased needs in King County resulting from COVID-19 economic impacts and unemployment. This program provides families with children that are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals a food benefit that allows them to buy groceries while schools are remote. It is estimated that King County has about 41,000 families that are eligible for this program. The deadline to apply is **September 11, 2020**. Here are some details:

- [What is Pandemic EBT? Article](#) (links to other languages included)
- [Online application for P-EBT](#)

7. **Learning pods: Back to school decisions during a pandemic**

You've no doubt heard about "learning pods" or "pandemic pods," solutions some families are using to support remote learning and social interaction for their children. [Our Best Starts for Kids Blog recently posted an article](#) about pods with tips and strategies to keep our children safe during the remote learning period. It includes helpful information and equity considerations as families make plans to support student learning this fall.

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Thank you again for all that you do!

*The PHSKC Schools and Childcare Task Force*