

Dear school partners,

Happy new year! For those that were on break or taking time away from the office last week, welcome back. It is important to hold space to acknowledge and process the events that occurred in our Nation's capital yesterday and the trauma/re-traumatization it caused for so many of us. We wish you all the resources to process and respond in a way that is meaningful for you individually and/or collectively with your communities.

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. Vaccine updates
3. Schools and Childcare Task Force office hours
4. Straight talk about the new variant COVID-19 strain
5. REMINDER: Please share your COVID Coordinators' contact info with PHSKC
6. Training resources

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 **January 6, 2021**. These data are available and regularly updated on the PHSKC [COVID-19 data dashboard webpage](#).

Current King County COVID-19 Activity Level:		MODERATE
Education Modality:	Phase in in-person learning. Prioritize Elementary (pre-K - 5) if they are not already receiving in-person learning, and Middle School. If schools can demonstrate the ability to limit transmission in the school environment, add more high school students when case rates are below about 200/100K/14 days.	
Extracurricular:	Extra-curricular activities must follow K-12, applicable Safe Start protocols and Governor's proclamations on COVID-19.	
Transition:	Across all COVID-19 Activity Levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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• 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 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.
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Activity Level Key:	Low	Moderate	High
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Indicator	Target/Range		Current Status
Cases/100K/14 days ¹	High	>350 cases/100K/14 days	277 cases/100K/14 days
	Moderate	50-350 cases/100K/14 days	
	Low	<50 cases/100K/14 days	
Trend in cases and hospitalizations ²			Cases: Flat Hospitalizations: Flat/decreasing
Test positivity ³	High	>10%	11.7% ³
	Moderate	5-10%	
	Low	<5%	

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

²Total 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.

³Percent 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. Vaccine updates

The Washington State DOH released an [update to guidance for COVID-19 vaccine distribution Phase 1A](#).

This phase prioritizes:

- High-risk workers in health care settings
- High-risk first responders
- Residents and staff of nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and other community-based, congregate living settings where most individuals over 65 years of age are receiving care, supervision, or assistance

Phase 1A includes school nurses.

DOH has created [Phase Finder](#), an online self-assessment so that someone can confirm if they are eligible for vaccination. Phase Finder will also provide:

- confirmation of eligibility that can be shown at a vaccination site
- a link to a list of available sites for vaccination

Right now the list of available sites is limited, but PHSKC and DOH are working on adding more providers to the list. Phase Finder currently is being pilot tested only for those eligible for Phase 1A but will be open to other priority groups as the state moves to new phases of vaccine distribution.

King County is not moving into Phase 1B now. We are still in Phase 1A and have many more people in this phase to vaccinate. DOH determines eligibility for vaccine statewide. You can learn more about [Phase 1B eligibility here](#). Please note that DOH estimated timelines are general and do not necessarily reflect vaccine distribution in King County. It is likely that smaller counties in Washington will complete vaccine distribution phases sooner than counties with larger populations.

If you believe you are in Phase 1B, please do not call for an appointment until Phase 1B begins. Our vaccine providers are currently busy taking calls for and scheduling Phase 1A vaccinations and need to be able to focus on them at this time. We will share information on our website (www.kingcounty.gov/covid/vaccine) as soon as it is available.

3. Schools and Childcare Task Force office hours

The PHSKC Schools and Childcare Task Force will begin offering “office hours” for [School and District COVID Coordinators](#). Office hours will be held every Thursday from 3:30-4:30pm **starting January 14th**. ***Attendees are expected to review the [King County Schools COVID-19 Response Toolkit](#) and the associated [training videos](#) (scroll to the bottom of the page) **BEFORE** attending office hours.***

Come with your specific COVID-19 questions related to your K-12 school (e.g., environmental health, clarification of King County guidance). If you have questions prior to office hours, please submit them to schoolresponse@kingcounty.gov with the subject line “Office Hours.” We will do our best to answer them during the following Thursday office hours session.

[Join here](#) using password **COVID19**

4. Straight talk about the new variant COVID-19 strain

King County Health Officer Dr. Jeff Duchin, MD, recently shared some information about the new COVID-19 Strain that has garnered recent media attention and prompted [restrictions on travelers](#) from impacted countries:

“As much as I regret saying it just when so many need & deserve a break, the new variant COVID-19 strain is a serious problem. It’s likely a matter of time before it arrives here and we need to beware and prepare. (The new) variant has been found in many countries, most notably the UK, and in several US states but not in Washington state yet, although it may very well be present at low levels & undetected. Once it hits a critical threshold, it will spread rapidly unless we slow it. Most important to know at the moment is that the new strain spreads more easily (that is, faster) than other strains - it’s more contagious. This means if exposed, your risk of becoming infected is higher with the variant strain than with the previous strains. And if infected with the variant strain, you are more likely to spread your COVID-19 to others... This can increase suffering in our community & overload our healthcare system, further increasing the danger for bad outcomes from COVID-19 & from other serious medical problems if hospitals can’t provide their usual level of care.”

“This is important: THE VARIANT STRAIN SPREADS THE SAME WAY as other COVID-19 strains, IT’S JUST BETTER AT IT. For this reason, WE NEED TO GET BETTER at the same effective ways of stopping the spread until enough of us are vaccinated. That means decreasing activities & the number & duration of contacts w/others outside the home (keep it brief), always wear face masks when around non-household members indoors, avoiding crowded/poorly ventilated indoor spaces, improving ventilation

in homes & workplaces, keeping 6 feet distance (or more when possible) & paying attention to environmental cleaning & hand washing.”

5. 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!

6. Training resources

PHSKC has produced a series of brief orientation and training videos that dive into the details of the [King County Schools COVID-19 Response Toolkit](#). The videos can be found at the bottom of the [PHSKC Schools and Childcare COVID-19 website](#) under the heading “Training videos.” Before viewing these videos, please review the [main toolkit and accompanying guidance documents](#). Guidance may evolve and while the videos reflect information current at the time of filming, the main toolkit and guidance documents will include the most current guidance and recommendations. These materials should be reviewed by anyone planning to attend PHSKC’s weekly Office Hours sessions (detailed above).

In health,

The PHSKC Schools and Childcare Task Force