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# King County Public Health FAQs

## General Information

<https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/disease-control/novel-coronavirus/FAQ.aspx>

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus>

- **What is COVID-19?**

Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a new virus strain spreading from person-to-person. It is currently in the United States and many other countries, after originating in China. Health experts are concerned because this new virus has the potential to cause severe illness and pneumonia in some people — especially people over age 60 or who have weakened immune systems.

- **How does COVID-19 spread?**

Health experts are still learning more about the spread. Currently it is thought to spread:

- through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes
- between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- by touching a surface or object with the virus and then touching the mouth, nose, or eyes

- **How severe is COVID-19?**

Most coronavirus illnesses are mild with fever and cough. The vast majority of people with novel coronavirus infection do not require hospital care. A much smaller percentage of people get severely ill with lung and breathing problems like pneumonia. Elderly people and people with underlying medical conditions are at highest risk.

- **What are the symptoms?**

People who have been diagnosed with novel coronavirus have reported symptoms that may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure to the virus:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing

- **When do I seek medical evaluation and advice?**

- If you have symptoms like cough, fever, or other respiratory problems, contact your regular doctor first. **Do not go to the emergency room.** Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs. If you have difficulty breathing, it doesn't mean you have novel coronavirus, but you should call 911.
- If you're over 60 and you have underlying conditions like diabetes, heart disease, and lung disease, come up with a plan with your doctor to identify your health risks for coronavirus and how to manage symptoms. Contact your doctor right away if you do have symptoms.
- If you have symptoms and you were exposed to someone confirmed to have the virus, call both your health care provider and our King County Novel Coronavirus Call Center at 206-477-3977.

- **How can I protect myself from COVID-19?**

It's important that everyone take steps to reduce the spread of novel coronavirus, especially to protect those who are more vulnerable. Steps you can take to prevent spread of flu and the common cold will also help prevent coronavirus:

- wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer.
- avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- avoid contact with people who are sick
- stay home while you are sick and avoid close contact with others
- cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing

If you are traveling overseas, check for the latest COVID-19 Travel Alerts and follow the [CDC's Travelers' Health guidance](#). Currently, there are no vaccines available to prevent COVID-19 infections.

- **How is COVID-19 treated?**

There are no medications specifically approved for COVID-19. Most people with mild COVID-19 illness will recover on their own by drinking plenty of fluids, resting, and taking pain and fever medications. However, some cases develop pneumonia and require medical care or hospitalization.

- **Should I wear a face mask in public?**

Public Health does not currently recommend that people wear masks when they are in public. Scientists are not sure whether wearing a mask in public actually keeps healthy people from getting sick. However, people who are sick should wear a mask in a healthcare setting (such as a waiting room) to avoid exposing other people when they cough or sneeze.

- **Why do I see other people wearing face masks?**

People wear masks for a variety of reasons, including to avoid pollen and air pollution, as a courtesy to others when they have the common cold, and for other cultural and even social reasons. This is an acceptable use of face masks.

If we see our friends, neighbors or other community members wearing a mask, we should not assume that they have been exposed to coronavirus or any other illness. We should avoid making assumptions about why someone is wearing a mask and make sure not to stigmatize or discriminate against people who choose to wear masks.

## Testing for COVID-19

There are a number of viral respiratory germs circulating right now. We understand the desire of people who are currently sick to be tested for COVID-19, along with those who fear they may be infected with COVID-19 but are currently asymptomatic.

Public Health – Seattle & King County does not typically conduct testing. Testing is typically conducted by taking a swab at a health care provider's office.

- **Who should get tested?**

Not everybody who feels ill needs to be tested, particularly if you have mild illness. Healthcare providers determine who should be tested. While testing is becoming more available, there are still limitations in the ability to quickly collect and process tests.

If you are sick with fever, cough or shortness of breath and are in a high risk group, call your healthcare provider to discuss whether you should be tested for COVID-19. People at high risk for complications from COVID-19 are:

- People older than 60 years
- People with chronic medical conditions
- People with weakened immune systems
- People who are pregnant

Other people with mild illness who are concerned about their health can call their healthcare provider to discuss COVID-19 testing and other possible reasons for their illness.

- **What has changed about testing availability?**

While testing is becoming more available, there are limitations in providers' capacity to obtain samples and process lab results rapidly. When the test was first released, it was only approved for emergency use. This has recently changed as more testing capacity is becoming more available. Now, if you have symptoms and are high risk, we encourage you to call your health care provider and have a conversation with them about whether it makes sense for you to get tested for COVID-19. Your provider will determine whether testing is recommended.

- **Where can I get tested?**

Testing is typically conducted by taking a swab at a health care provider's office. Call ahead before visiting your healthcare provider.

## Federal, state, and local Public Health response to COVID-19

- **How does Public Health track potential cases in King County?**

Public Health provides instruction to people who meet the criteria for COVID-19 testing to take precautionary measures until test results are known. Precautionary measures include isolating themselves from others, typically by staying at home, monitoring themselves for symptoms, and by taking their temperature twice daily. We contact them each day to talk about their health status. This allows us to rapidly detect any potential signs of infection and get the person evaluated quickly if needed, minimizing the risk of spread.

We also ask anyone who is a [close contact](#) of someone who meets the criteria for testing to monitor their health and let us know immediately if they develop any illness. They can stop monitoring for symptoms when the person tests negative for coronavirus infection. Should the person test positive, the close contacts would stay separated from others and we would check in with them daily to watch for symptoms.

- **What quarantine measures has the federal government put into place?**

On January 31, 2020, the U.S. federal government announced that the COVID-19 situation was a Public Health Emergency.

Since then, the federal government has announced a number of quarantine measures, including suspending entry of foreign nationals who have been in China ([effective 2/2/20](#)) and Iran ([effective 2/29/20](#)) within the past 14 days.

In addition, U.S. citizens, residents and their immediate family members who traveled to China are being given a health screening upon entry at eleven designated airports. They are allowed to continue on to their final destination if they do not have any symptoms of illness and will undergo up to 14 days of self-quarantine to ensure they have not contracted the virus.

The federal government is frequently updating its [Travel Alerts](#) and may add travelers returning from other countries to the list of who should be monitored.

- **Are travelers being screened for COVID-19 at the airport?**

Passengers returning to the United States who have been in mainland China within the previous 14 days will have a health screening by the CDC at eleven designated airports.

The airports to which all flights carrying passengers from China will be funneled are:

- SeaTac International Airport (SEA)
- John F. Kennedy (JFK)
- Chicago O'Hare (ORD)
- San Francisco (SFO)
- Daniel K. Inouye (HNL)
- Los Angeles (LAX)
- Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta (ATL)
- Washington Dulles (IAD)
- Dallas Fort Worth (DFW)
- Detroit International (DTW)
- Newark Liberty Airport (EWR)

## COVID-19 in King County

- **What is the current situation in Washington and King County?**

King County has confirmed cases of novel coronavirus and more cases have been identified in the U.S. Many of these cases are associated with a nursing facility in Kirkland, WA.

We expect that more cases will be identified now that testing for coronavirus has expanded at state health departments and the criteria used to determine if someone should be tested have broadened.

This is a quickly changing situation. Check [Public Health's coronavirus page](#) for frequent updates on the local situation and the [Washington Department of Health's website](#) for daily updates for Washington State.

- **What is Public Health recommending to slow the spread of COVID-19?**

People at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible.

Employers should take steps to offer flexible sick leave and telecommute options as well as other ways to minimize close contact with large numbers of people.

Everyone should consider postponing events and gatherings if feasible; if you can't avoid bringing people together, take precautions to minimize risk of spreading disease.

The general public should continue to practice healthy habits, including staying home when sick, practicing good hand hygiene, and avoiding touching your face.

Public Health – Seattle & King County has set up a call center for you and members of the community to ask questions that may arise. The phone number for that call center is: 206-477-3977. Please note that call volume is very high at this time. We thank you for your patience in getting through to a call taker.

Lastly, please stay informed. Information is changing frequently. Check and subscribe to Public Health's website ([www.kingcounty.gov/COVID](http://www.kingcounty.gov/COVID)) or blog ([www.publichealthinsider.com](http://www.publichealthinsider.com)).

- **What should I be doing as an individual to prepare?**

Plan now so that you can be ready in case many people are sick and can't go to work or school.

- Talk at work about how your workplace can still operate if many workers are out sick or if they need to stay home to care of their family members. We have a [guide for businesses and organizations](#) to help you. The Washington State Department of Health has [resources for individuals and schools](#).
- Talk to your friends and neighbors about how you can help each other if people in your households get sick or if your children aren't able to go to school or childcare. Can you drop groceries off on their doorstep? Can you take turns looking after children who aren't sick?
- Prevent any discrimination or stigmatization by sharing accurate information. Coronavirus infection is not connected to any race, ethnicity, or nationality. Misinformation about coronavirus can create fear and hostility that harms people and makes it harder to keep everyone healthy.

## Isolation & Quarantine

### What is isolation?

Isolation is used for people who are currently ill and able to spread the disease and who need to stay away from others in order to avoid infecting them.

### What is quarantine?

Quarantine is for people who are not currently showing symptoms, but are at increased risk for having been exposed to an infectious disease. Quarantine is for people who could become sick and spread the infection to others.

### Why is quarantine used?

Quarantine is put into place to prevent the possible spread of an infectious disease from someone who may have been exposed to the disease but is not yet sick. When people are quarantined, they are kept separate from others until they are out of the period when they could get sick. During that time, health

officials track their health so that if they do develop symptoms, they can get them to a healthcare provider quickly for evaluation, testing if needed, and care.

### **How does self-quarantine work?**

When people are in self-quarantine, they have no symptoms, but because there is a possibility that they might have been exposed, they stay away from others in public settings. For 14 days from their last possible exposure, people in self-quarantine cannot go to work, school, or any public places where they could have close contact with others. Public health departments direct them in how to monitor their health so that should they develop symptoms, they can be quickly and safely isolated from all others, including those in their household.

We've found that people who are asked to self-quarantine want to do whatever they can to remain healthy, prevent others from becoming ill, and are very cooperative with our recommendations.

### **Can people in self-quarantine still have contact with their household members?**

Yes, people in self-quarantine are not sick and can still have contact with their household members. Should they develop any symptoms, they are asked to quickly and safely isolate from all others, including those in their household, and to contact their medical provider.

### **Who is likely to be temporarily housed in Isolation and Quarantine sites?**

Examples of people who may occupy the facilities:

- First responders and health care workers
- Travelers
- People who can't safely self-isolate or quarantine at home, e.g., a student living in a congregate dorm room
- People experiencing homelessness

### **Why do we need this action?**

It is critical to do all that we can to 1) reduce the spread of the illness; and 2) keep our hospital beds available for people with acute healthcare needs. Public Health has been clear that isolation and quarantine help keep the community safe by containing illness.

### **How many beds are available at each location?**

Kent: 30 rooms initially. Total capacity is 84. White Center: Eight modular units with four separate rooms per unit. Total: 32 Aurora: Six modular units with four separate rooms per unit. Total 24 Interbay: Room for 72 persons.

### **Can people bring their pets to the Isolation and Quarantine facilities?**

No, but King County has made arrangements to board any pets at the Regional Animal Services of King County for the duration of a person's stay in isolation and quarantine.

### **How will we decide who stays in these facilities?**

Public Health-Seattle & King County will triage calls to the King County COVID Call Center and assess individual need for isolation or quarantine. They will make a determination of the need for self-isolation at home or assignment to a facility. A referral will be made by PHSKC.

### **How will they get there?**



Transportation to and from will be provided by the most appropriate source, including ambulances or other contracted transportation providers.

**How will you monitor the health of those in the facilities?**

Isolation and quarantine is a proven Public Health practice, giving people a place where they can go to wait out their exposure and keep their family members safe. In most cases, isolation and quarantine monitoring is handled via regular telephone contact. Trained health and, where appropriate, behavioral health professionals will speak regularly with each person in I&Q and monitor any changes in health status and any need for additional care.

**Will there be onsite medical assistance?**

In most cases, health and behavioral health care will be closely monitored by phone. As the situation in our community changes, it may be necessary to make changes in our response, including the possibility of adding an onsite medical or behavioral health component.

**Will there be onsite security?**

Yes, there will be 24/7 onsite security at all locations and an on-site manager.

**How will people get their other needs met - food, water and other supplies?**

Staff will check in with every patient multiple times per day to identify any needs, including food, water, or other requests. Supplies will be delivered to their door. There will be no person-to-person contact between patients and delivery persons.

**Who will provide the food?**

King County is contracting with FareStart and possibly other food delivery outlets. Dietary restrictions, allergies and cultural needs will be addressed through the food options.

**Will the individuals be allowed to leave the premises?**

Isolation and quarantine means that you stay away from the general public. Every person will have a phone number they can call if they need anything, or if their condition changes. In addition, staff will check in with every patient multiple times per day to identify any needs. Supplies will be delivered to their door. They will have no need to go out to get anything.

**Who decides when they get to leave?**

Will they have transportation upon departure? Medical staff will monitor each person's condition and make an individual determination as to when it is safe for the individual to leave the isolation and quarantine site. They will receive transportation to return to their home or shelter when they have been cleared to leave by PHSKC staff.

**Why were communities not consulted in advance of siting?**

Executive Constantine signed a proclamation of emergency, enabling the County to take swift measure to find locations that could house people in isolation and recovery, to maintain the effectiveness of our overall health system. In an emergency, swift action is key. The County's real estate people identified and moved on properties that met the requirements of Public Health. We are communicating with communities in Kent, White Center, and Seattle, the first locations announced. We are meeting with community-based organizations, local businesses, and residents to explain the unfolding situation and to gather their questions and respond. The Executive Office and the Department of Local Services have

been leading this work. We are absolutely committed to ongoing communications with our communities and our residents.

King County is in negotiations on additional properties throughout the region. This is a countywide emergency. It is not contained to one city or neighborhood, but is an emergency for our entire region. Subsequent announcements from the City of Seattle and King County have identified additional sites on land owned by the city or county. King County is continuing to explore additional sites countywide.

#### **How will you get information to people who speak languages other than English?**

The Public Health website has information available in multiple languages on the COVID-19 outbreak, including what to do if you suspect you have been exposed to the illness or are experiencing symptoms. The King County emergency appropriations ordinance includes funding for language access services, community engagement and outreach/education pertaining to the COVID-19 response.

#### **What is the future use of these locations?**

We are focused on the public health emergency and creating spaces for people to safely isolate and quarantine. Future use of any of the emergency community services locations being created now is a conversation for a future time.

#### **How does community connect to ask questions about sites?**

If there are questions that are not included in this FAQ sheet, please contact our 'contact us' via the dedicated subcategory on this issue at (<https://blue.kingcounty.gov/about/contact/>)

## Translations

[Amheric](#), [Arabic](#), [Chinese](#), [Filipino/Tagalog](#), [French](#), [Hindi](#), [Japanese](#), [Khmer](#), [Korean](#), [Marshallese](#), [Russian](#), [Somali](#), [Spanish](#), [Thai](#), and [Vietnamese](#).

## Updated Isolation/Quarantine Sites



COVID-19-IQ  
Sites.pdf

# Governor's new rules to protect older adults in nursing homes, living facilities

Gov. Jay Inslee announced [new rules](https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-issues-new-rules-protect-older-adults-nursing-homes-living-facilities) today around nursing homes and assisted living facilities that focus on better protecting older adults – a population more likely to be hit by COVID-19 (coronavirus) – during the ongoing statewide, unprecedented health crisis. <https://www.governor.wa.gov/news-media/inslee-issues-new-rules-protect-older-adults-nursing-homes-living-facilities>

## Rules that go into effect today (March 11, 2020):

- Visitors must be adults and the visit must take place in the resident's room. This does not apply to end-of-life situations.
- All visitors must follow COVID-19 screening and follow reasonable precautionary measures. Precautionary measures include, but are not limited to, wearing personal protective equipment, social distancing, or visiting in designated locations.
- All visitors must sign into a visitor's log. Owners and operators must retain that log for 30 days.
- Employees or volunteers must be screened for COVID-19 symptoms at the start of each shift.
- People who live in nursing homes or assisted living facilities and who test positive for COVID-19 must be isolated away from other people.
- Owners, operators, staff and volunteers are prohibited from disclosing protected and confidential health information, except as otherwise provided by law or with the resident's consent.

These rules remain in effect until midnight on April 9, 2020.

# Public Health Orders

## Gatherings: Over 50 | March 16, 2020



LHO Order  
Gatherings Over 50

1. All events with 50 people or more are hereby prohibited until further notice;
2. All events with fewer than 50 people are discouraged and prohibited unless event organizers observe the COVID-19 prevention measures outlined below.
3. All bars, dance clubs, fitness and health clubs, movie theatres, night clubs, and other social and recreational establishments shall be closed until March 31, 2020 or later if determined necessary;
4. Until March 31, 2020 or later if determined necessary, all restaurants and food service establishments shall cease providing dining room services but may remain open for drive thru, take-out and delivery services and must adhere to the COVID -19 Public Health – Seattle and King County Guidance for retail businesses and service operators.
5. All other retail, including banks, grocery stores, hardware stores, and pharmacies, should and may remain open provided they observe the COVID-19 prevention measures and adhere to the Seattle and King County Guidance for retail businesses and service operators.

Under this local health officer Order, an "event" is defined as a public gathering on non-tribal lands for business, social, or recreational activities including, but not limited to, community, civic, public, leisure, or sporting events; parades; concerts; festivals; conventions; fundraisers; and similar activities.

Healthcare settings and veterinary clinics are not considered events and should remain open while observing COVID-19 prevention measures. This order does not apply to and/or exempts food services provided in health care facilities, shelters, schools, and educational settings.

### **COVID -19 Prevention Requirements**

- Organizers of events of fewer than 50 people and all establishments that are not closed must ensure that the following COVID-19 prevention measures are taken:
- Older adults and individuals with underlying medical conditions that are at increased risk of serious COVID-19 are encouraged not to attend (including employees);
- Social distancing recommendations must be met (i.e., limit contact of people within 6 feet from each other for 10 minutes or longer);
- Employees must be screened for coronavirus symptoms each day and excluded if symptomatic;
- Proper hand hygiene and sanitation must be readily available to all attendees and employees; and,
- Environmental cleaning guidelines from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are followed (e.g., clean and disinfect high touch surfaces daily or more frequently).

## Gatherings: 250 | March 11, 2020



LHO Order.pdf

### Summary:

1. All events of 250 people or more are prohibited.
2. Events with fewer than 250 attendees are prohibited unless event organizers take the following steps to minimize risk:
  - Older adults and individuals with underlying medical conditions that are at increased risk of serious COVID-19 are encouraged not to attend (including employees);
  - Social distancing recommendations must be met (i.e., limit contact of people within 6 feet from each other for 10 minutes or longer);
  - Employees must be screened for coronavirus symptoms each day and excluded if symptomatic; and
  - Proper hand hygiene and sanitation must be readily available to all attendees and employees.
  - Environmental cleaning guidelines from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are followed (e.g., clean and disinfect high touch surfaces daily or more frequently)

For the purposes of this Order, an “event” is a gathering for business, social, or recreational activities including, but not limited to, community, civic, public, leisure, or sporting events; parades; concerts; festivals; conventions; fundraisers; and similar activities.

## FAQs on Gatherings

**What are the actions?** The Governor’s Emergency Proclamation prohibits events with 250 or more people in King, Snohomish and Pierce Counties.

In King County, our Health Officer, Dr. Jeff Duchin, is issuing a parallel local Health Officer Order to prohibit gatherings of 250 people or more. In addition, the local order is prohibiting events of less than 250 people, unless measures are taken by event organizers to minimize risk.

- **Who enforces?** For the King County Order, violating a Local Health Officer Order is a misdemeanor. Our focus will be on helping people understand the importance of avoiding gatherings of people, rather than citations. We will not be actively searching for violations, but if we receive reports of events contrary to the order, we will reach out to the organizer to educate and provide guidance.
- **How is an event defined?** For the purposes of this Order, an “event” is a gathering for business, social, or recreational activities including, but not limited to, community, civic, public, leisure, or sporting events; parades; concerts; festivals; conventions; fundraisers; and similar activities.
- **When exactly will these measures be implemented?** They go into effect today, March 11, 2020.

- **Why are you doing two actions, local and state?** The Local Health Officer has additional powers under the law that the Governor does not. The Governor has the authority to cancel, close or restrict.

The local health officer authority is broader. He can take actions like the Governor's to prohibit events, and also require additional measures, such as to put conditions on meetings, like this new order for prohibiting meetings of under 250 people unless social distancing measures are put into effect.

- **How long will these orders last?** The Governor's Emergency Proclamation goes through March 31, 2020. The Local Health Officer Order has no specified end date.

## Financial Assistance

The Washington State Department of Financial Institutions has [developed a list of financial resources](#) for Washington consumers impacted by the Coronavirus. We will add to this list as more resources become available.

## Trouble Paying Rent or Mortgage

If you don't have enough money to pay, contact your lender or landlord immediately. Help includes:

- Washington Homeownership Hotline (877-894-HOME)
- [Consumer Financial Protection Bureau suggestions](#)
- Rental assistance & counseling (800-569-4287)
- [List of Housing Counseling Agencies](#)
- For Seattle renters, the Mayor has issued a [30-day moratorium on evictions](#) – through mid-April

## Student Loans Deferment

Student Loans. If you need help with your student loans, you may be able to temporarily suspend your payments by applying for a deferment or forbearance from the US Department of Education.

<https://studentaid.gov/announcements-events/coronavirus>

## Paying Utilities

If you need help paying your utility bills, contact your service provider immediately.

- [Puget Sound Energy](#) will not disconnect customers, will waive late fees, and offers payment plans.
- For Seattle residents, Seattle City Light and Seattle Public Utilities [will not shut off service](#) during the emergency. They also offer [deferred payment plans and discount programs](#).
- The Utilities and Transportation Commission offers [energy assistance programs](#).
- The federal government also has [assistance programs](#) to help with telephone and heating bills.
- [Comcast](#) is offering free WiFi hot spots, unlimited data, and no disconnects or late fees.

## Food Assistance

If you're looking for help feeding yourself or your family, visit the [Food Lifeline website](#) to find a partner food bank, food pantry, or hot meal program in your neighborhood. This food is free and available to you, even if you don't qualify for SNAP or EBT.

# Businesses

<https://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources/covid-19-resources-businesses-and-workers>

## Federal Small Business Administration

The federal Small Business Administration (SBA) is providing low-interest loans of up to \$2 million to help with operating expenses. The SBA defines a Small Business as one with less than 500 employees. The interest rate is no higher than 4%, and the duration of the loans are no more than 30 years, but looks like the specific rates/duration are determined through the application process. More information and the application are available at this site:

<https://disasterloan.sba.gov/ela/Information/EIDLloans>

## Businesses in Seattle

The City of Seattle has delayed B&O taxes for small business and established a small business stabilization fund to provide grants of up to \$10,000. Important to note that the criteria for this is low or moderate income (less than 80% area median income) and must have 5 employees or less. More information is available here: <http://www.seattle.gov/office-of-economic-development/small-business/small-business-programs-stabilization-fund->

## Washington State Department of Revenue

The Washington State Department of Revenue can provide extensions on taxes and/or waive filing fees, more information here: <https://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources/covid-19-resources-businesses-and-workers>

## Financial assistance for Businesses

- The Washington State Department of Revenue (DOR) can work with impacted companies that request an extension on tax filing. The law grants the Department authority to extend the due date for excise tax returns. A business may request such an extension from the Department prior to the due date of the return, and, if granted, the business would be allowed to delay reporting and paying its tax liability. If a business needs an extension of more than 30 days, the law requires the Department to collect a deposit from the business. The amount of deposit required is based on the business' reporting history and how many reporting periods are covered under the extension [WAC 458-20-228 \(13\)](#). Contact DOR at 360-705- 6705.
- DOR may also waive penalties under limited circumstances if a business is late in paying its tax obligation. The law also grants the Department authority to provide a one-time, 24 month, late payment penalty waiver if the business has not owed a late payment penalty during the previous 24 months [WAC 458-20-228 \(9\)](#). Contact DOR at 360-705- 6705.
- DOR may also work with businesses that cannot file or pay their taxes on time if they are impacted by a declared state of emergency. When a state of emergency or disaster has been officially declared, affected businesses that owe Washington taxes may qualify for:
  - A filing extension for excise tax returns (without the limitations described above); and/or



- A late payment penalty waiver request (without the limitations described above)
- The state is working to compile a larger list of local bankers, financial associations, telecoms, utilities and major employers that may be able to provide relief, such as:
  - Deferred bills, waived fees, discounts, no-interest loans and other support.
  - Debt and late-penalty forgiveness for companies and workers in order to help keep people employed.
  - Favorable credit terms for firms that encounter cash flow problems.

## Export assistance

- The Washington State Department of Commerce's Export Assistance Team division can help companies identify alternative markets and provide firms with STEP Vouchers to defray the costs of trade show or trade mission fees, airfare, interpreter and translation services, business matchmaking, export training programs and more. Visit: [www.commerce.wa.gov/promoting-washington-state/export-assistance](http://www.commerce.wa.gov/promoting-washington-state/export-assistance) or contact the Export Assistance team at 206.256.6100.
- The SBA's Export Working Capital Program can help small businesses obtain working capital advances from lenders on export orders, export receivables or letters of credit. SBA's Senior International Credit Officers can work directly with an impacted company to explain the program and application process. Visit: <https://www.sba.gov/content/financing-your-small-business-exports-foreigninvestments-or-projects-0>

## Employer and worker assistance

- The Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD) can provide support in the form of unemployment benefits. For employers that want to keep from losing highly-trained employees, these unemployment benefits can be received through, or while covered by, Shared Work, Partial Unemployment and Standby (which allow certain workers to collect unemployment while remaining with their employers and not actively seeking other jobs). Visit: <https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19>
- ESD's Paid Family and Medical Leave program can provide paid leave benefits for Washington workers who need to take time off from work due to a serious health condition or to care for a family member with a serious health condition. Certification by a healthcare provider is required for applications for Paid Family and Medical Leave due to a serious health condition. Visit: <https://paidleave.wa.gov/>
- If COVID-19 disrupts a Washington business and causes a mass layoff or closure, ESD and its local workforce development board partners can respond with Rapid Response services and funding to help impacted workers get connected to unemployment benefits and re-employment services, including re-training, worker support services, and referrals to other social services. Visit: <https://www.esd.wa.gov/newsroom/layoffassistance>


# Workers

<https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19>




The Employment Security Department expanded benefits for workers impacted by COVID-19.

- Benefits for employees directed to isolate or quarantine
- Temporary layoffs related to COVID-19
- Job loss related to COVID-19

<b>COVID-19 Scenarios &amp; Benefits Available</b> <small>The information shared on this flyer does not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any other agency or company. It is the reader's responsibility to verify the facts of coverage.</small>					
COVID-19 SCENARIOS	Paid Sick Leave (employer paid)	Unemployment Insurance		Paid Family & Medical Leave	Industrial Insurance (L&I)
	Current Law	Current Law	Emergency Rule	Current Law	Current Law
1 Worker is mildly ill with COVID-19.	✓	✗	✓	?	?
2 Worker is severely ill with COVID-19.	✓	✗	✗	✓	?
3 Worker was exposed and quarantined. Business remains open.	✓	✗	✓	✗	?
4 Worker is caring for sick family member.	✓	✗	?	✓	✗
5 Schools are closed by a public official because of COVID-19 and worker has no childcare.	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗
6 Worker is immune-compromised and advised to self-quarantine.	?	✗	✓	?	✗
7 Worker is afraid of gathering in a group and refuses to go to work (self-distancing).	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
8 Employer must shut down due to a quarantine by a public official.	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
9 Employer shuts down due to a business slowdown or lack of demand.	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
10 Employer reduces available hours due to business slowdown or lack of demand.	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
11 Employer stays open in defiance of public health urging to close.	✗	?	?	✗	✗
12 Health care workers and first responder are under quarantine.	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓


**Employment Security Department**  
WASHINGTON STATE

The Employment Security Department is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Language assistance services for limited English proficient individuals are available free of charge. Washington Relay Service: 711

 YES  
 NO  
 MAYBE (case by case)

**ESD.WA.GOV**

UPDATED: 03.12.20 - 1:00 p.m.

## Unemployment

If you have lost your job in Washington State through no fault of your own, you can apply for unemployment benefits through the Washington State Employment Security Department [esd.wa.gov/unemployment](https://esd.wa.gov/unemployment).

- You must prove that you have worked at least 680 hours during the last 12-18 months, at least some of that in Washington State.
- You must provide basic information, including:
  - Your name, date of birth, and Social Security number
  - Names and addresses of all employers
  - Dates you worked at each employer
  - Your citizenship status or authorization to work
- Once you are approved, you will need to submit a weekly claim for each week you are unemployed.
- You may need to prove you are looking for a new job. However, if you have been temporarily laid off due to COVID-19 you do not need to look for a new job.

**Apply Online:** <https://secure.esd.wa.gov/home/>

**Apply By Phone:** 800-318-6022  
The claims center number will be open  
Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m. (except holidays) as follows:

**Monday:** New applications for those with Social Security numbers ending in 0-3.  
Open only for questions about weekly claims and other general questions.

**Tuesday:** New applications for those with Social Security numbers ending in 0-6.  
Open for questions about weekly claims and other general questions.

**Wednesday, Thursday and Friday:** Everyone (Social Security numbers ending in 0-9) can submit new applications. Open for questions about weekly claims and other general questions.

There are extra protections in place for people who have lost work due to COVID-19. These are described at [esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19](https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19). These extra protections cover you if your employer closed because of lack of business or a government order, or if you must take time off to quarantine or care for a family member and do not have paid sick leave.

## Workers' Compensation

Workers' compensation is a state-run insurance program that provides benefits for people who suffer job-related injuries or illnesses. It is operated by the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries ([lni.wa.gov](http://lni.wa.gov)).

In most cases, exposure to or contraction of COVID-19 is not considered to be an allowable, work-related condition.

However, under certain circumstances, claims from health care providers and first responders involving COVID-19 may be allowed. For a COVID-19 claim, you must show:

- There is an increased risk due to your occupation
- If not for your job, you would not have been exposed
- You can identify a specific source or event in your job that led to your exposure (for instance, you treated a patient with the virus)

### How can I file a COVID-19 claim?

For workers

- Online via our [FileFast](#) tool.
- By phone: 1-877-561-3453 (FILE) | 360-902-5410
- At your doctor's office (if you complete the Report of Accident at your doctor's office, the doctor files the form for you).

## FAQs for Employees

<https://lni.wa.gov/agency/outreach/workers-compensation-coverage-and-coronavirus-covid-19-common-questions>

### Can COVID-19 ever be allowed as a work-related condition?

Under certain circumstances, claims from health care providers and first responders involving COVID-19 may be allowed. Other claims that meet certain criteria for exposure will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In most cases, exposure and/or contraction of COVID-19 is not considered to be an allowable, work-related condition.

### When to file a claim

The Industrial Insurance Act allows for treatment of COVID-19 when work-related activity has resulted in probable exposure to the virus and certain criteria are met. In these cases, the worker's occupation must have a greater likelihood of contracting the disease because of the job (examples include first responders or health care workers). There must also be a documented or probable work-related exposure, and an employee/employer relationship.

### When will a claim likely be denied?

When the contraction of COVID-19 is incidental to the workplace or common to all employment (such as an office worker who contracts the condition from a fellow employee), a claim for exposure to and contraction of the disease will be denied.

### Filing a worker's compensation claim: Exposure vs. contraction of COVID-19

Workers exposed to COVID-19 must submit the appropriate accident report form before the insurer (L&I or the self-insured employer) can pay for treatment or time-loss benefits. The same is true if the worker is unable to work during the quarantine period or is ill from the virus.

While in most cases, L&I expects to receive claims for contraction of COVID-19, the Industrial Insurance Act allows the insurer to pay for testing before someone is ill when there's been a documented, work-related exposure.

If the diagnosed condition on the original accident report form is contraction of COVID-19 and the three criteria under "when to file a claim" are satisfied, the claim will be allowed and treatment authorized.

When a claim is filed for probable exposure and the criteria under "when to file a claim" are satisfied, the claim will be allowed for the quarantine period whether or not the worker actually contracted COVID-19.

### **Quarantine**

L&I will accept claims of health care workers and first responders who are quarantined after COVID-19 exposure on the job. Other quarantine claims will be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

For an exposure claim to be considered, it must meet the criteria AND the worker must have been quarantined by a public health officer or physician because of that exposure.

Time-loss payments may be allowed for lost wages during the quarantine period of up to 14 days. The CDC indicates that COVID-19 symptoms may appear anywhere from two to 14 days after exposure. Appropriate, medically required testing/surveillance would also be covered. This is a time-limited benefit, and no benefits would be paid after the quarantine period has ended unless the worker develops COVID-19. As with all wage replacement benefits under the Industrial Insurance Act, the first three days are not paid unless the worker is medically required to remain off work on the 14th day following exposure.

### **Covered treatment and post-exposure care**

Once a claim is allowed and the 3 criteria under "When to file a claim" are satisfied, the insurer will pay for treatment of COVID-19. Currently, the only treatment for this new coronavirus is supportive care to help relieve symptoms.

### **What if I need to take time off work because I contract COVID-19?**

The first and best option for employees who need to miss work due to illness is to use their employer-paid time off. Labor and Industries has [information about Paid Sick Leave](#). When this leave is not available, [Paid Family & Medical Leave](#) may be available to help.

Check out this [Paid Family & Medical Leave Q & A](#) about COVID-19. Remember, medical certification can be done electronically. The [Certification of a Serious Health Condition form](#), found on the ["Get ready to apply" page](#) of the paid leave website, can be emailed to your healthcare provider and emailed back to you, then you can upload it to your Paid Leave account. Electronic signatures from healthcare providers are accepted.

**If I become seriously ill and I am forced to quit my job as a result of COVID-19, will I qualify for unemployment benefits?**

You may qualify for Paid Family & Medical while you are sick. You can learn more by checking out the [Q & A](#) on the Paid Family & Medical Leave website. Once you recover and are available for work again, you can apply for unemployment benefits.

**What if I am asked by a medical professional or public health official to quarantine as a result of COVID-19, but I am not sick?**

If you are following guidance issued by a medical professional or public health official to isolate or quarantine yourself as a result of exposure to COVID-19 and you are not receiving paid sick leave from your employer, you may be eligible to receive unemployment benefits. If you know you can return to your job as soon as your isolation or quarantine is lifted, you may not need to search for work.

**What if my employer goes out of business as a result of COVID-19?**

You are eligible for unemployment benefits. Here are instructions on [how to apply for unemployment benefits](#). (These benefits are intended to assist workers who lost their jobs through no fault of their own.)

**My employer has shutdown operations temporarily because an employee is sick and other employees have been asked to isolate or quarantine as a result of COVID-19. Am I eligible for unemployment benefits?**

If you are not receiving payment from your employer, such as paid sick leave or paid time off, you may be eligible for unemployment benefits during this time.

**What if I am temporarily laid off work because business has slowed down as a result of COVID-19?**

If you are laid off work temporarily or if your hours are reduced due to a business slowdown or a lack of demand as a result of COVID-19, you may be able to receive unemployment benefits.

- [Standby](#) means you do not have to look for another job while you collect unemployment benefits, so long as you stay in touch with your regular employer. Standby is for both part-time and full-time employees.
- [Partial Employment or SharedWork: Under certain circumstances, you may work part-time while collecting unemployment benefits.](#)

**I am a part-time employee. Am I eligible for standby?**

Under the emergency rules we put into place as a result of COVID-19, standby may be available to you if you meet the minimum requirement of 680 hours.

**What should I do if I contract COVID-19 on the job?**

See information from the Dept. of Labor and Industries [information on Workers' Compensation](#).

**Do I qualify for unemployment benefits if I become seriously ill and I am forced to quit my job as a result of COVID-19?**

You may qualify for Paid Family & Medical while you are sick under the existing program. You can learn more by checking out the [Q & A](#). Once you recover and are available for work again, you can apply for unemployment benefits.

**How am I supposed to meet deadlines related to my existing unemployment claim or attend mandatory appointments, such as training programs or mandatory reemployment service appointments, if I am in isolation or quarantine as a result of COVID-19?**

Under the emergency rules we put into place as a result of COVID-19, we are providing more leniency

for many UI deadlines and mandatory appointments, such as deadlines for training programs or mandatory reemployment service appointments.

**I am still confused about what benefits and programs may be available to individuals who are financial affected by COVID-19.**

This [easy-to-read reference guide](#) provides a simple list of many scenarios related to COVID-19 and benefits that may apply.

## Additional Resources

Information from the Governor's Office:

[COVID-19 resource list for impacted Washington businesses and workers](#)

Information from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau:

[Protect Yourself Financially from the Coronavirus](#)

Information from the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority:

[Job Interrupted —A To-Do List for Tough Times](#)

Information from the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority:

[Financial Peace of Mind in the Age of Coronavirus](#)

Information from the Federal Trade Commission:

[Avoiding Coronavirus Scams](#)

# Insurance

The Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner has resources and information available for consumers who have insurance related questions. <https://www.insurance.wa.gov/coronavirus>

## Health Insurance

### Will my insurance cover testing and treatment for COVID-19?

Yes. Most health insurance plans will cover testing and treatment for medically-necessary services related to COVID-19. Commissioner Kreidler has ordered all health plans his office regulates to waive copays and deductibles for [people requiring testing \(doh.wa.gov\)](https://doh.wa.gov) for COVID-19. If you are concerned about whether or not you should be tested, read the guidance from the Department of Health and call your providers first. Copays and deductibles will still apply if you need treatment.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is [updating its recommendations \(www.cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov) for who should be tested.

If you are a member of a health sharing ministry, your coverage may be limited. Check the language of your coverage to understand what's covered and what's excluded.

### Is testing free? Is the patient exam free?

Commissioner Kreidler has ordered all health plans regulated by his office to cover testing for COVID-19 without copays or deductibles. His emergency order is in effect from March 5-May 4, 2020. State-regulated health plans include individual health plans, small employer health plans and some large employer plans. **It does not apply to employer plans that are self-funded, Medicaid, Medicare, federal employee health plans, health plans for members of the military or veterans, or the Uniform Medical Plan for state and school employees.** If you are unsure what type of health plan you have, you should contact your employer's HR department. We estimate there are 1.2 million people in state-regulated health plans in Washington state.

Before you show up at your provider's office, make sure you have [the symptoms necessary for testing \(doh.wa.gov\)](https://doh.wa.gov) (the criteria are changing as more tests become available) and contact your provider's office first. If you do not have COVID-19, the testing and visit will be covered by your plan, but may not be free.

### Will my health insurer waive my deductible since this has been declared an emergency?

Commissioner Kreidler has [instructed all state-regulated health plans \(PDF, 251KB\)](#) to waive deductibles and copays for people who need testing for COVID-19. [State law gives him the authority \(leg.wa.gov\)](#) to do so, once the governor has issued an emergency proclamation. The waiver only applies to the testing for COVID-19 and the provider visit to order the testing. People who suspect they need testing should [check with the Department of Health \(doh.wa.gov\)](https://doh.wa.gov) and contact their provider's office first. People who do not test positive for COVID-19 may still need to meet their deductibles and pay a copay.

### What if I have a high-deductible health plan with a health-savings account?

The co-pay and deductible waiver also applies to all high-deductible health plans with qualifying health savings accounts (HSAs), according to [guidance from the IRS \(PDF, 27KB\)](#).



**What guidance are you giving to health insurers, if any?**

We are [telling all state-regulated health insurers \(PDF, 251KB\)](#) to waive copays and deductibles for enrollees who need testing for coronavirus, COVID-19. This applies to the test itself and the provider visit. Also, we're telling health insurers to not require any prior approval for testing or treatment of COVID-19, to allow a one-time early refill for prescriptions, and allow enrollees to see out-of-network providers for testing and treatment with no additional costs, if the insurer doesn't have enough in-network providers to meet demand.

**Will my health plan allow me to refill my prescriptions early so I can have a 30-day supply on hand?**

The commissioner has instructed health plans to allow for one-time early refill for most prescriptions. You should check with your health plan if you have questions about whether or not your prescription is included. Also, the federal government is directing Medicare Part D (prescription drug plans) and Medicare Advantage plans to allow early refills, too, but you should check with your plan for more details.

**Could I get a surprise bill if I need testing or treatment for coronavirus?**

You should not get a [surprise bill](#) for testing for coronavirus. All health plans are covering testing without copays or deductibles when you see an in-network primary care provider or are tested at an in-network facility. If you are treated at an emergency room, you also should not receive a surprise bill from an out-of-network provider. If you have questions about your coverage, contact your health plan. [Contact us if you need additional help](#) or if you believe you have received a surprise bill.

**Will my health plan cover telemedicine for testing or treatment of coronavirus?**

All health plans regulated by the state [must cover telemedicine \(www.leg.wa.gov\)](#) if an in-network provider offers it and the services are medically necessary. Also, the services and how they are delivered must meet federal and state standards for protecting your medical information. Contact your health plan to see if they offer telemedicine through any of their providers.

**What should you do if you don't have health insurance?**

If you do not have health insurance, you should see if [your income qualifies you for free coverage \(www.hca.wa.gov\)](#). You can enroll in Medicaid year-round through [Washington's Health Benefit Exchange \(www.wahealthplanfinder.org\)](#). If you need an individual health plan, you have until April 8 to [sign up for a health plan \(www.wahealthplanfinder.org\)](#). After April 8, you must qualify for a [special enrollment](#) through the exchange.

If you believe you need to be tested for coronavirus, you should contact a local medical provider first. For now, they should contact a provider at a [local community clinic \(www.wacommunityhealth.org\)](#) in their area.

**Have insurance questions?**

[www.insurance.wa.gov](http://www.insurance.wa.gov)

[1-800-562-6900](tel:1-800-562-6900)

## Travel Insurance

Travel insurance can protect you against financial loss if you're forced to cancel, delay or interrupt your vacation, business trip, or other travels. It can also offer you protection if you experience a medical emergency, damage to personal property and even if a death occurs while you're traveling.

### Before buying travel insurance

Check to see if it covers trip cancellation due to [health and disease outbreaks \(i.e., Coronavirus\) or natural disasters where you are traveling to \(wwwnc.cdc.gov\)](https://wwwnc.cdc.gov).

## Insurance assistance

The Washington State Insurance Commissioner can help answer questions about insurance coverage for damages related to COVID-19.

### What you need to be covered

To be covered against any business losses due to a communicable disease, such as COVID-19, you would need to have purchased an additional endorsement to your policy.

Contact your insurance agent or insurance company directly to find out if you already have this added coverage. If you don't have added coverage and would like to buy it, contact your insurance agent or company to see if it's available.

If you didn't buy the added endorsement prior to the outbreak and you want to buy it, the insurer may not want to sell you the endorsement.

## Event cancellation insurance

Event venues typically require the person or company booking a scheduled event to have event cancellation insurance coverage. Coverage for communicable disease outbreaks is typically not included in a standard event cancellation insurance policy. This type of insurance only covers these type of perils:

- Adverse weather
- Natural disasters
- Labor disputes
- Acts of terrorism
- Failure to vacate
- Non-appearance

### What you need to be covered

You can buy an added endorsement to your event cancellation insurance policy to cover canceling an event due to a communicable disease. If your insurer doesn't offer this type of endorsement, you should shop around with other insurers.

Be aware that if you didn't buy the added endorsement prior to the outbreak and you need to cancel an event, the insurer cannot back date a policy to provide coverage for the cancellation. Insurers may also not want to sell this type of endorsement.

NOTE: The Office of the Insurance Commissioner does not have the authority to require insurers to sell any type of coverage or policy endorsements to consumers.

## Retail Guidance

This guidance applies to retail businesses and service operators such as grocery stores; drug stores, movie theaters; restaurants, and other retail establishments.

Today Public Health – Seattle & King County announced new recommendations to slow the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in addition to earlier guidance. Retail service may continue throughout King County; and it is recommended that the following public health guidance is observed in these settings.

**Based on [CDC guidance](#), retail and service operators, along with all workplaces, should take the following steps to help stop or slow the spread of COVID-19. An overview of workplace guidance is below and additional details follow:**

### Workplace guidance for the Seattle area and King County from the CDC

1. Encourage staff to telework
2. Expand sick leave policies
3. Implement social distancing measures, e.g.:
  - Spacing workers at the worksite
  - Staggering work schedules
  - Decreasing social contacts in the workplace (limit in-person meetings)
  - All break areas must accommodate distancing with regular disinfection of all eating surfaces
4. Eliminate large work-related gatherings (e.g., staff meetings, after-work functions)
5. Postpone non-essential work travel
6. Regular health checks on arrival each day (e.g., temperature and respiratory symptom screening) of staff and visitors entering buildings.
7. Implement extended telework arrangements (when feasible)
8. Ensure flexible leave policies for staff who need to stay home due to school/childcare dismissals and to encourage individuals to stay home if they are sick.
9. Cancel work-sponsored conferences, tradeshow, etc.

## Additional details about how to reduce the spread of COVID-19

### **We now encourage employees, onsite contractors and customers to...**

- Stop handshaking – use other noncontact methods of greeting
- Clean hands at the door and schedule regular hand washing reminders by email
- Promote tap and pay to limit handling of cash
- Create new habits and reminders to avoid touching their faces and cover coughs and sneezes
- Disinfect frequently-touched surfaces like doorknobs, tables, desks, and handrails regularly
- Increase ventilation by opening windows or adjusting air conditioning

### **We encourage businesses, including retail and service operators, to think creatively about how to avoid crowding, which could include:**

- Use booking and scheduling to stagger customer flow
- Use online transactions where possible
- Follow guidance about limiting attendance at larger gatherings, including managing ingress, egress, and lines within the establishment

### **For transportation businesses, taxis, and ride shares**

- Keep windows open when possible
- Increase ventilation
- Regularly disinfect surfaces

### **Handle food carefully**

- Limit food sharing
- Strengthen [health screening for staff](#) who handle food directly and their close workplace contacts
- Ensure staff who handle food directly and their close contacts practice strict hygiene

### **Employees and customers should stay home when sick**

- Encourage, and provide supportive and flexible leave policies when possible, so that employees, onsite contractors, customers and clients stay home if they are feeling sick and/or if they have a sick family member in their home
- Place posters and other signage that encourage [staying home when sick, cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) at the entrance to your establishment and in other nearby areas where they are likely to be seen by customers and clients.

### **Encourage social distancing**

- Where possible, limit distance between employees, onsite contractors, customers and clients to no less than 6 feet if contact will be 10 minutes or longer.
- Consider signage to promote social distancing/prevention messaging.

### **Employees and customers should cover coughs and sneezes and clean hands**

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees, onsite contractors, clients and customers.
- Employees and contractors should clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water is preferred if hands are visibly dirty.
- Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace for employees and onsite contractors. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.
- Visit the [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands webpage](#) for more information.
- Provide disposable wipes to customers, so they can clean carts and hand baskets before each use.

#### **Perform routine environmental cleaning:**

- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label. Frequency of cleaning should be reasonably based on the number of people in the retail establishment.
- For disinfection, review this list of [products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims](#), maintained by the American Chemistry Council Center for Biocide Chemistries (CBC). Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products.
- Provide disposable wipes or similar cleaning supplies so that commonly touched surfaces (for example, carts, cash machine key pads, doorknobs, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by retail establishment employees or cleaning service vendors before each use.

### **Specific to restaurants and grocery stores**

Food has not been identified as a likely source of COVID-19 at this time; however, food businesses can play an important role in both protecting their employees and their customers from COVID-19 by following the routine food establishment personal and environmental hygiene practices identified below:

- **Strengthen [health screening of staff and onsite contractors](#)** for COVID-19 symptoms.
- **Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water** for 20 seconds upon first arriving to work, after using the restroom, before and after eating and frequently throughout the day. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- **Provide alcohol based (60%) hand sanitizers or similar cleaners** for use for both employees and customers by placing them at convenient/accessible locations.
- Use sanitizing solution (i.e., one teaspoon of unscented household bleach in a gallon of cool water, there is no need to change the ratio of bleach to water to kill the coronavirus. If in doubt, please follow the instructions on the bottle) to **frequently sanitize commonly touched surfaces and objects** such as cash machine key pads, counter tops, dining tables door knobs, electronics, faucet handles, and menus frequently throughout the day. Change the chlorine-based sanitizing solution at least once every four hours.

- **Ensure dishwasher and/or three-compartment sinks are used properly and have the appropriate level of sanitizer** for final rinse (50-100 PPM chlorine-based sanitizer, follow product label for other approved sanitizers).
- **Ensure sneeze guards are in place** where required.
- If you have food [employees at higher risk for COVID-19](#) with underlying health conditions, such as people 60 or older, people with underlying health conditions (heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes) or those with weakened immune systems or those who are pregnant: **consider temporarily re-assigning** them to non-public-contact duties.

### Relevant resources:

CDC Seattle Community Mitigation:

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/downloads/Seattle\\_Community\\_Mitigation.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/downloads/Seattle_Community_Mitigation.pdf)

CDC website for symptoms: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/about/symptoms.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/mass-gatherings-readyfor-covid-19.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/guidance-communityfaith-organizations.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>

<https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/disease-control/novelcoronavirus/food-establishments.aspx>

# School Preparedness and Planning for COVID-19

## Purpose and Background

To slow the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Washington state, Governor Inslee announced on March 13 that all public and private K–12 schools in the state will be closed through Friday, April 24.

As schools, students, families, and communities plan for closures, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is committed to providing ongoing guidance and resources as we sort through this unprecedented situation together. This bulletin will be the first in a series since the Governor's closure announcement. Please note, if a topic is included in multiple rounds of guidance, the most current guidance will override prior guidance.

The bulletin addresses:

1. Allowable building activities
2. Rulemaking
3. State and federal funding
4. Assessments
5. Federal accountability
6. Special education
7. Considerations for paid school staff
8. Meals and nutrition
9. Contact information

OSPI's Complete Guidance for School Districts: <https://www.k12.wa.us/about-ospi/press-releases/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-resources#dex-accordion-item>

## Information and Assistance

For questions regarding **school apportionment**, please contact Michelle Matakas, Director of School Apportionment and Financial Services, at 360-725-6019 or [michelle.matakas@k12.wa.us](mailto:michelle.matakas@k12.wa.us).

For questions regarding **assessments**, please contact Deb Came, Assistant Superintendent of Assessment and Student Information, at 360-725-6336 or [deb.came@k12.wa.us](mailto:deb.came@k12.wa.us).

For questions regarding **federal funding or Consolidated Program Reviews (CPR)**, please contact Gayle Pauley, Assistant Superintendent of Special Programs and Federal Accountability, at 360-725-6170 or [gayle.pauley@k12.wa.us](mailto:gayle.pauley@k12.wa.us).

For questions regarding **Washington Integrated System Monitoring (WISM)**, please contact Jennifer Story, Program Supervisor of Special Education Outcomes, at 360-726-6025 or [jennifer.story@k12.wa.us](mailto:jennifer.story@k12.wa.us).

For questions regarding **Methods of Administration (MOA)**, please contact Becky Wallace, Executive Director of Career and Technical Education, at 360-725-6243 or [rebecca.wallace@k12.wa.us](mailto:rebecca.wallace@k12.wa.us).

For questions regarding **Special Education**, please contact Glenna Gallo, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education, at 360-725-6075 or [glenna.gallo@k12.wa.us](mailto:glenna.gallo@k12.wa.us).

For questions regarding **staff expectations**, please contact Cindy Rockholt, Assistant Superintendent of Educator Growth and Development, at 360-725-4991 or [cindy.rockholt@k12.wa.us](mailto:cindy.rockholt@k12.wa.us).

For questions regarding **food and nutrition services**, please contact Leanne Eko, Director of Child Nutrition Services, at 360-725-0410 or [leanne.eko@k12.wa.us](mailto:leanne.eko@k12.wa.us).

The OSPI TTY number is 360-664-3631. Previous guidance and additional information related to COVID-19 and school closures is available on the COVID-19 page of the OSPI website. This bulletin is also available on the Bulletins page of the OSPI website.

## Planning Resources

CDC [Resources for K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs](#)

WA State Department of Health [School Resources for COVID-19](#)

WA (OSPI) [Emergency preparedness and response resources for schools](#)

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center

[Infectious disease planning resources](#)

American Academy of Pediatrics

[Germ prevention strategies and information on reducing the spread of illness in childcare settings,](#)

## Childcare Planning Resources

Seattle Emergency Management: <http://www.seattle.gov/emergency-management/prepare/childcare-provider>

Public Health Child Care Program: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/child-teen-health/child-care-health/emergency-preparedness.aspx>



## Public Health Recommendations: Implications for K-12 Schools and Childcare

As recommended by the CDC, at this stage of the outbreak, the public health focus is reducing transmission through broad-based community mitigation strategies and targeted disease investigation to protect those most at risk. These include measures to prohibit large gatherings and encourage social distancing. It is critical at this time to reduce transmission to those most likely to become severely ill, including people over 60 and those with underlying health conditions, and to the health care workforce.

COVID-19 is spreading in King County, with hundreds of cases having been reported to date. We expect the case count to double every 5–7 days. The public health approach is implementing community mitigation strategies to slow the spread of COVID-19. We are asking individuals, businesses, schools, and healthcare providers and community-based organizations to take steps to help everyone comply with the recommendations. We have also released [guidance for anyone who develops symptoms of COVID-19 and their contacts on how to prevent the spread to others](#). The goals for using mitigation strategies for communities with local COVID-19 transmission are to protect:

- Individuals at risk for severe illness, including older adults and people of any age with underlying health conditions
- The healthcare workforce and critical infrastructure workforces so that sick people can get the medical care they need and other aspects of the community can continue to function

These approaches are used to minimize morbidity and mortality caused by COVID-19 and minimize the social and economic impacts of COVID-19. Participation from individuals, communities and community based organizations, schools, businesses, and healthcare organizations is crucial to the success of these strategies.

**As of March 11, Public Health is no longer able to notify school leadership or conduct contact tracing in each school that has a case or cases of COVID-19.** With the increase in cases and testing in the community, Public Health does not have information about all cases. In addition, Public Health is shifting to a surveillance strategy that does not include individual case investigations for all reports.

## School and Childcare Mitigation Strategies

Health officials considered the range of potential benefits and negative consequences of school closures when making recommendations. This includes:

- the available data on the potential benefits of school closures
- the severity of disease among school-aged children (children and youth have not been shown at high risk for COVID-19)
- the potential risk to staff
- the potential risk to vulnerable household members of students
- the impacts on families and employers (including the healthcare system)
- the role schools play in providing nutrition and other critical resources to students.

### **School and childcare strategies:**

- Schools and childcare programs should prepare now for possible prolonged mandatory closures (weeks to months).
- A critical part of the planning must include how schools can continue to provide non-educational supports for their students such as providing food, developmental disability supports, and school-based healthcare.
- Schools, working together with local health departments, have an important role in slowing the spread of diseases and protecting vulnerable students and staff, to help ensure students have safe and healthy learning environments.
- Guidance for childcare programs and schools is organized into three categories based on the level of community transmission: 1) when there is no community transmission (preparedness phase), 2) when there is minimal to moderate community transmission, and 3) when there is substantial community transmission.
- Guidance is also provided for when a confirmed case has entered a school, regardless of the level of community transmission.
- All decisions about implementing school-based strategies (e.g., dismissals, event cancellations, other social distancing measures) should be made locally, in collaboration with local health officials who can help determine the level of transmission in the community.

### **What steps should be taken during an extended closure?**

- [Conduct routine environmental cleaning](#) of frequently touched surfaces.
- If possible, assess what close contacts the case had while ill. Notify close contacts and ask that they self-quarantine for 14 days and monitor for symptoms.
- Temporarily cancel extracurricular group activities and large events. Cancel or postpone events such as after-school assemblies and pep rallies, field trips, and sporting events.
- Discourage students and staff from gathering or socializing elsewhere such as at places like a friend's house, a favorite restaurant, or retail areas. This reduces the potential for transmission.
- Provide continuity of education to the extent possible. OSPI does not recommend closed schools transition to an online distance model unless the district can ensure a number of considerations can be met regarding equal access, sufficient training, and system security.
- A critical part of the planning must include how schools can continue to provide non-educational supports for their students such as providing food, special education services, and school health services.
- Consider ways to distribute food to students who are eligible for free/reduced meals, such as "grab-and-go" bagged lunches or meal delivery. If your school provides essential medical services for students, explore options to maintain these services either within the school setting or at home.
- Work on communication to families and staff to ensure that ill people know to remain home until well and that those with COVID-19-like symptoms self-isolate for 7 days OR until 72 hours from the time that fever has resolved (and symptoms get better) -- whichever is longer.

### **If we dismiss school, what do we need to consider when re-opening the facility to students?**

- Advise students and staff to stay home if they have cough, fever, or shortness of breath, or are otherwise ill. Parents should also avoid entering the school if they are ill.

- Continuously communicate with all students, staff, and volunteers about [steps everyone can take to protect themselves and prevent further spread](#), including: avoiding ill people, minimizing non-essential activities in the community, frequent handwashing for at least 20 seconds, Implement health monitoring practices to detect illness and prevent exposures in school:
  - Advise staff to monitor for students who may be exhibiting COVID-19 or other respiratory symptoms, and notify healthcare personnel within the school. Separate ill students and staff from others, immediately send ill persons home, and advise them to call their healthcare provider.
  - Consider asking parents to check their children's temperature and asking staff to check their own temperature daily before arrival at school. If the temperature exceeds 100.4oF or if the person has cough, advise the student or staff member to isolate at home.
- Consider having the attendance secretary or registrar collect information about the reason for each student's absence. This information can help determine whether absence is due to illness or other causes.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning by regularly disinfecting frequently touched surfaces (e.g. doorknobs, light switches, countertops). Refer to guidance from the CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
- Continue to review and update your district's emergency operations plan so that you can be best prepared for the possibility of more local cases.

These recommendations may be updated as the outbreak evolves.

## Sharing resources with families and staff

Childcare and K-12 administrators can also support their school community by sharing resources with students (if resources are age-appropriate), their families, and staff:

- Information about COVID-19 from [www.kingcounty.gov/covid](http://www.kingcounty.gov/covid).
- Subscribe to our blog, Public Health Insider ([publichealthinsider.com](http://publichealthinsider.com))
- General CDC fact sheets to help staff and students' families understand COVID-19 and the steps they can take to protect themselves:
  - [What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
  - [What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
  - [Stop the spread of germs – help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses like COVID-19](#)
- CDC Information on [COVID-19 and children](#)
- CDC information for staff, students, and their families who have recently traveled back to the United States from areas where CDC has identified community spread of coronavirus:
  - A list of countries where community spread of COVID-19 is occurring can be found on the CDC webpage: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel](#)

## Students who plan to Travel

For questions about students who plan to travel, or have recently traveled, to areas with community spread of COVID-19, refer to CDC's [FAQ for travelers](#).

Schools may need to postpone or cancel trips that could expose students and staff to potential community spread of COVID-19. Students returning from travel to areas with community spread of COVID-19 must follow guidance they have received from health officials. COVID-19 information for travel is updated regularly on the CDC website.

*These recommendations may be updated as the outbreak evolves. Public Health appreciates your patience and partnership as we respond to the daily challenges that COVID-19 presents to our community. Frequent updates on this emerging situation: [www.kingcounty.gov/covid](http://www.kingcounty.gov/covid)*

## Seattle Community Mitigation

[https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Seattle\\_Community\\_Mitigation.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/Seattle_Community_Mitigation.pdf)

## Links and Contact Information

<b>911</b>	<b>For medical emergency</b>
<b>1-800-525-0127</b>	<b>Washington State Novel Coronavirus Call Center</b> For general questions about COVID-19 or Washington State's response
<b>206-477-3977</b>	<b>King County Novel Coronavirus Call Center</b> Open daily from 8 AM to 7 PM PST If you are in King County and believe you were exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19, or if you're a healthcare provider with questions about COVID-19, contact our novel coronavirus call center.  <b>King County Public Health:</b> <a href="https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/disease-control/novel-coronavirus.aspx">https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/disease-control/novel-coronavirus.aspx</a>
<b>360-902-4111</b>	<b>Governor Inslee's Website:</b> <a href="https://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources">https://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/covid-19-resources</a>
<b>206-418-5500</b>	<b>WA Department of Health   Communicable Disease Epidemiology</b> <a href="https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus">https://www.doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/Coronavirus</a>
<b>1-877-561-3453</b> 1-877-561-FILE	<b>WA Labor &amp; Industries:</b> <a href="https://lni.wa.gov/agency/outreach/workers-compensation-coverage-and-coronavirus-covid-19-common-questions">https://lni.wa.gov/agency/outreach/workers-compensation-coverage-and-coronavirus-covid-19-common-questions</a>
<b>1-800-318-6022</b>	<b>WA Employment Security Department:</b> <a href="https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19">https://esd.wa.gov/newsroom/covid-19</a>
<b>1-800-562-6900</b>	<b>WA Office of the Insurance Commissioner:</b> <a href="https://www.insurance.wa.gov/coronavirus">https://www.insurance.wa.gov/coronavirus</a>