

Dear School Partners,

DOH updated [K-12 Requirements for 2021-2022](#) on Jan. 7.

Here is a summary of key elements and additional recommendations that K-12 schools in Snohomish County can use and share. Note that these are subject to change.

### **Masks**

Please note that references to continue mask wearing through day 10 are carried over from CDC's language that addresses states with and without mask requirements. Wherever this guidance reads "10 days" with respect to mask wearing, it means "10 days and beyond" in schools and public indoor spaces in Washington State.

### **Isolation**

- Students and staff who test positive can return to school **after 5 full days** since developing symptoms. This means they are okay to return on day 6.
  - If they tested positive but never had symptoms and don't develop any symptoms during the isolation period, then the 5 days is counted from the day of the test, with return on day 6.
  - If they tested positive, were asymptomatic but later developed symptoms, the calendar resets and now follows the day that symptoms began.
- In order to return to school, they must also:
  - Be fever-free for 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medications and have an improvement in symptoms.
  - Wear a well-fitting mask around others through day 10.
- The Health District and DOH **do not** require an antigen test on day 5 to return on day 6, but one may be done at the discretion of the parent or the school. If one is done and is positive, the isolation must extend to 10 days, with return permitted on day 11.
  - Do not use PCR tests for release from isolation. PCR tests can remain positive for days or weeks beyond the end of the contagious period. While not recommended, if a PCR test is done on day 5 and the result is negative, it is acceptable for facilitating return.
- If a case is still positive with an antigen test, has a fever, or remains with significant symptoms (e.g, cough, sneezing, nasal congestion) on day 5, they must continue to isolate until day 10.

### **Quarantine**

- Students or staff who have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19 should quarantine for **at least 5 full days** after their last close contact if they:
  - Are 18 or older and completed the primary series of vaccine but haven't received a recommended booster shot when eligible.
  - Received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine (completing the primary series) more than 2 months ago and haven't received a recommended booster shot.
  - Aren't vaccinated or have not completed a primary vaccine series.
- They don't need to quarantine if they:
  - Are 18 or older and have received all recommended vaccine doses, including boosters and additional primary shots for some immunocompromised people.
  - Are 5-17 years old and completed the two-dose primary series of COVID-19 vaccines.
  - Had confirmed COVID-19 within the last 90 days.

- If students or staff need to quarantine, they have 3 options:
  - Test to Stay (if the school offers this program). They must test twice in the 5 days after exposure, wear a well-fitting mask around others through day 10 and monitor for symptoms.
  - Quarantine at home for 5 days and test on day 5. You must provide documentation of a negative test to the school. You must wear a well-fitting mask around others through day 10 and monitor for symptoms.
  - Quarantine at home for 10 days with no test.

DOH updated [Supplemental Considerations to Mitigate COVID-19 Transmission in K-12 Schools](#) on Jan. 7:

- Schools must notify the State Board of Education when they change to modalities other than in-person instruction because of a qualifying emergency pursuant to WAC 180-16-195, -200 and -212.
- DOH has established a prioritization hierarchy for contact investigations in school settings to help with rationing available capacity for contact tracing. In general, high-risk settings where physical distancing or mask use is not consistent are prioritized and classroom-associated cases are deprioritized. Refer to the table on page 11 for further details.
- Test to Stay:
  - Staff are now eligible to participate, and the source of the exposure no longer needs to be in the school setting. Off campus exposures are now eligible for inclusion among both students and staff.
  - If you were exposed outside of school, including household contacts, and need to quarantine, you can follow Test to Stay protocol. We are seeking clarification from the state to determine whether the duration of observation under Test-to-Stay needs to be extended when the exposure was at home and is ongoing.
  - Students may continue to attend class and staff may come to work. They can also participate in extracurricular activities and attend childcare or youth development programs provided before and after school.
  - You must still quarantine from social gatherings and community activities.
  - You should be tested twice within 5 days after exposure.

If schools are not able to meet testing requirements for all related events (e.g., athletics, performing arts) because of limited testing supplies, they must suspend those activities until supply chain issues are resolved. As a reminder, previous updates made on Dec. 17 require testing 3 times per week for high-risk sports (basketball, wrestling, water polo and indoor cheer), regardless of vaccination status.

We are working to update our website and resources to reflect these new changes. DOH will update additional school-related documents ([Symptom Decision Trees for Schools](#) and [Contact Tracing Guide and FAQ for K-12 Schools](#)) soon.

### **Sports & Large Gatherings**

While the decision to hold in-person school events and gatherings remains with each district's administrators, large events and gatherings provide an opportunity for multiple people to become infected or even superspreading events to occur. Given the exceedingly high transmission rates, large school events could result in a further surge of cases concentrated in K-12 schools within a single community or district. This may lead to more acute:

- Strains on school testing resources, contact tracing and school nurse activities
- Increases in student absences

- Staffing shortages
- School closures

Due to these concerns and possible outcomes, schools should consider the following actions to help mitigate the current surge of COVID-19 cases in our community for the time being:

- Close food concessions at such events to keep further close contact at a minimum
- Require attendees to show proof of vaccination and/or a negative COVID-19 test taken within 72 hours
- Do not allow spectators at athletic and other such events. Limit attendance to participants, coaches, and support staff only.
- Cancel or postpone large school events.

We are thankful for the excellent communication and collaboration with the school districts as we work together to keep our community healthy.