

COVID-19 Outbreaks in Washington State K-12 Schools

Washington State Department of Health

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Executive Summary

- This report describes COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 schools that have been reported to the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) during the 2022/2023 school year.
- A total of 247 COVID-19 outbreaks were reported in K-12 schools between August 1, 2022 and October 31, 2022.
- 1117 COVID-19 cases were associated with outbreaks in K-12 schools.
- There may be underreporting of outbreaks due to ongoing limitations of capacity to investigate and report COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 schools.

Methods

This report was created using information from COVID-19 case data and COVID-19 outbreaks reported by local health jurisdictions (LHJs) to DOH. The investigation of COVID-19 outbreaks to confirm that an event meets Washington State's outbreak definition is time intensive. Therefore, the number of cases and outbreaks reported by a LHJ may change over time as additional details become available.

Definition of a COVID-19 Outbreak in Washington State K-12 Schools

The DOH defines an outbreak in a K-12 school as follows:

- At least 5 cases within a specified core group¹ meeting criteria for a COVID-19 case from a positive test
OR
 - Multiple COVID-19 cases from positive tests comprising at least 20% of students, teachers, or staff within a specified core group;¹
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- AND
- The following three criteria are met:
 1. Cases have a symptom onset or positive test result within 7 days of each other,
AND
 2. There is no evidence that transmission was more likely to have occurred in another setting (e.g., household or outside social contact) outside of the school,
AND
 3. Cases were epidemiologically linked² in the school setting or a school-sanctioned extracurricular activity³.

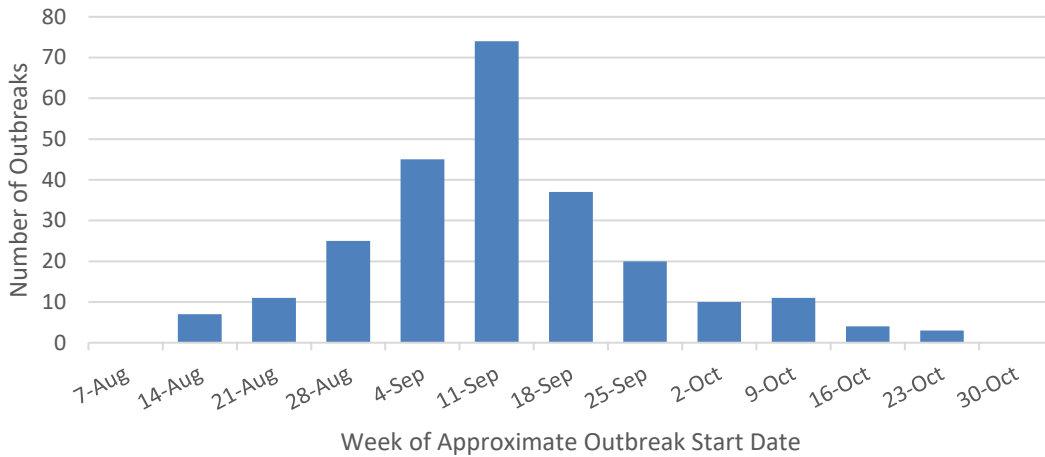
¹ A "core group" includes but is not limited to an extracurricular activity³, cohort group, classroom, before/after school care, etc.

² All groups of 5 cases or 20% within a specified core group that meet criteria 1 and 2 will be presumed to have an epi-link and must be reported to the LHJ as a suspected outbreak. The LHJ will make the final determination for classifying an outbreak.

³ A school- or child care-sanctioned extracurricular activity is defined as a voluntary activity sponsored by the school, local education agency (LEA), organization sanctioned by the LEA, or child care. Extracurricular activities include, but are not limited to, preparation for and involvement in public performances, contests, athletic competitions, demonstrations, displays, and club activities.

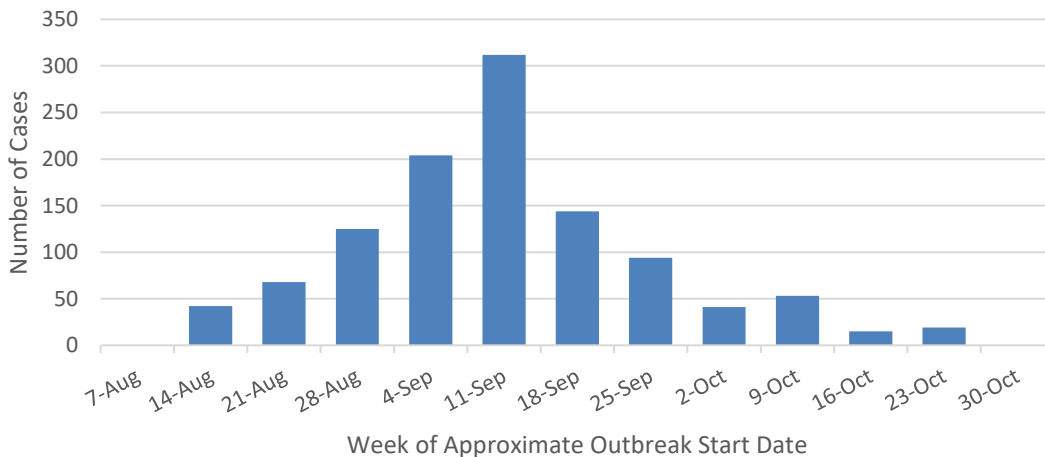
COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools between August 1, 2022 and October 31, 2022.

The following epidemiologic curve shows the weekly count of the 247 COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools by week of approximate outbreak start date. Reporting of COVID-19 outbreaks and associated cases for the most recent months is ongoing, so the number of outbreaks and associated cases may change.



Cases associated with COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools between August 1, 2022 and October 31, 2022.

The following epidemiologic curve shows the week of approximate outbreak start date of the 1117 COVID-19 cases that were associated with outbreaks in K-12 schools. Cases from a specific outbreak can be spread out over time, so the cases reported as associated with a specific outbreak may not all have tested positive with COVID-19 or become sick in the same week that the outbreak was reported. Reporting of COVID-19 outbreaks and associated cases is ongoing, so the number of outbreaks and associated cases may change.



COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools, by county, between August 1, 2022 and October 31, 2022.

Local health jurisdictions reported 207 COVID-19 outbreaks that occurred in K-12 schools across 18 counties. Of these outbreaks, 28 started in October 2022. The number of outbreaks by county ranged from 1 to 55. A total of 1117 COVID-19 cases were associated with these outbreaks. Reporting of COVID-19 outbreaks and associated cases is still occurring, so the number of outbreaks and associated cases may change

| County | Number of Outbreaks | Outbreaks occurring in October 2022 | Number of Associated Cases | Cases from outbreaks in September 2022 |
|---------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Benton* | 6 | 1 | 38 | NA |
| Clallam | 1 | 1 | 10 | 10 |
| Clark | 23 | 0 | 106 | 0 |
| Cowlitz* | 3 | 0 | 13 | 0 |
| Douglas* | 1 | 0 | NA | 0 |
| Franklin* | 5 | 1 | 23 | NA |
| Grant* | 1 | 0 | NA | 0 |
| Grays Harbor* | 1 | 0 | NA | 0 |
| Kitsap* | 27 | 1 | 100 | NA |
| Pend Oreille* | 1 | 0 | NA | 0 |
| Pierce | 38 | 4 | 176 | 15 |
| Skagit | 6 | 0 | 37 | 0 |
| Snohomish | 55 | 9 | 212 | 38 |
| Spokane | 39 | 4 | 199 | 20 |
| Thurston | 22 | 3 | 98 | 14 |
| Walla Walla* | 1 | 0 | NA | 0 |
| Whatcom | 16 | 4 | 82 | 19 |
| Yakima* | 1 | 0 | NA | 0 |
| Total | 247 | 28 | 1117 | 128 |

*To protect privacy, case counts of less than 10 are not reported.

Characteristics of COVID-19 Outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools, between August 1, 2022 and October 31, 2022.

Among the 247 COVID-19 outbreaks that occurred in K-12 schools, 233 (94%) were in public schools, and 14 (6%) were in private schools. Sixty percent of outbreaks involved elementary schools, and 67% impacted classroom settings. The 48 outbreaks with an undetermined suspected transmission location could have been in classroom, sports, lunchroom, or other locations, though the data are incomplete.

| | N | % |
|--------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Public/Private | | |
| Public | 233 | 94 |
| Private | 14 | 6 |
| Grade Level Served* | | |
| Elementary | 147 | 60 |
| Middle | 61 | 25 |
| High | 53 | 21 |
| Settings Affected by Outbreak | | |
| Classroom | 165 | 67 |
| Performing Arts | 4 | 2 |
| Sports | 19 | 8 |
| Transportation | 7 | 3 |
| Other | 6 | 2 |
| Undetermined | 48 | 19 |

*Grade level served is not a mutually exclusive category. Percent reflects the percentage of total schools serving each grade level.

Proportion of K-12 schools reporting COVID-19 Outbreaks in Washington State, between August 1, 2022 and October 31, 2022.

There were 247 COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 schools between August 1, 2022 and October 31, 2022. The Washington State Office of the Superintendent (OSPI) education directory lists 2,556 public K-12 schools on their [website](#). Among these 2,556 public K-12 schools, 158 (6%) have experienced a COVID-19 outbreak since the beginning of the school year. The Washington State Board of Education [licenses](#) 558 private K-12 schools, and among them, 11 (2%) have experienced a COVID-19 outbreak since the beginning of the school year.

| | Total K-12 schools with outbreaks (N) | Total Schools (N) | % |
|---------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Public | 158 | 2556 | 6 |
| Private | 11 | 558 | 2 |
| Total | 169 | 3114 | 5 |