

COVID-19 Outbreaks in Washington State K-12 Schools

Washington State Department of Health

July 30, 2022

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Publication Number: 420-312

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 2021/2022 school year.
- A total of 1871 COVID-19 outbreaks occurred in K-12 schools between August 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.
- 11916 COVID-19 cases were associated with outbreaks in K-12 schools. Eighty-nine percent of COVID-19 cases associated with outbreaks were among those aged 19 and under.
- This report includes outbreaks that were reported to DOH in June 2022. Some LHJs had a backlog of outbreaks to report, as surges in cases and outbreaks strained LHH resources for outbreak reporting.
- There may be underreporting of outbreaks as a result of 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 test results and COVID-19 outbreaks reported by local health jurisdictions to DOH. The investigation of COVID-19 cases to confirm that an event meets Washington State's cluster or outbreak definition is time intensive. Therefore, the number of cases and outbreaks reported by a local health jurisdiction may change over time as outbreak details become available.

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

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) has updated our school outbreak definition for the 2021/2022 school year. During the 2020/2021 school year, the case count threshold to meet outbreak definition was two epidemiologically linked cases. For the 2021/2022 school year, the threshold has been raised to 3 cases or 10% of a specified core group, as defined below. This change was made to bring DOH in alignment with national standards based on the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) definition (<https://preparedness.cste.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/CSTE-Standardized-COVID-19-K-12-School-Surveillance-Guidance-for-Classification-of-Clusters-and-Outbreaks.pdf>)

K-12 school outbreak definition:

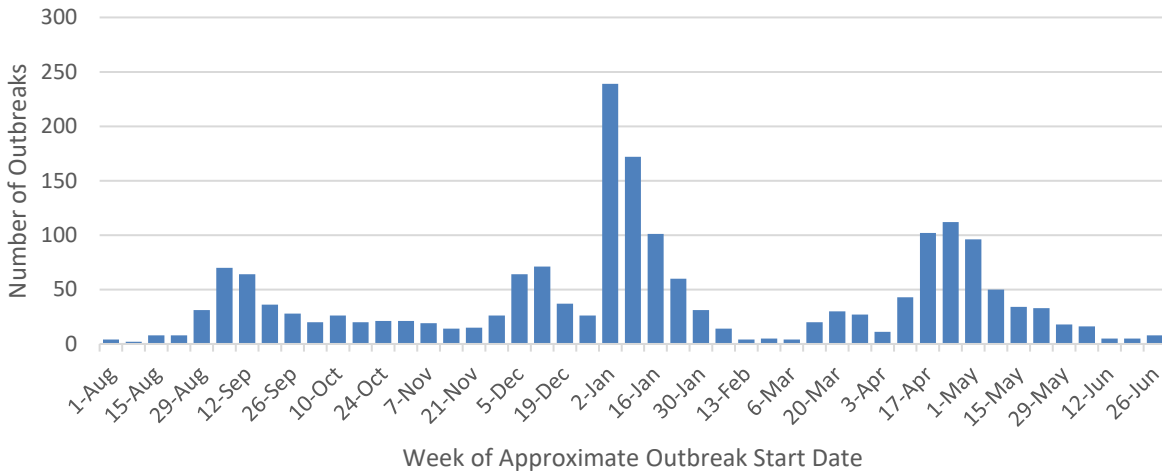
- Multiple probable or confirmed COVID-19 cases comprising at least **10% of students, teachers or staff within a specified core group***
- OR
- At least **3 cases within a specified core group*** meeting criteria for a probable or confirmed COVID-19 case
- AND
- Cases have symptom onset or positive test result within 14 days of each other, AND
 - Cases were not identified as close contacts of each other in another setting (i.e., household) outside of the school setting, AND
 - Cases were epidemiologically linked in the school setting or a school-sanctioned extracurricular activity

*A "core group" includes but is not limited to extracurricular activity†, cohort group, classroom, before/after school care, etc.)

† A school sanctioned extracurricular activity is defined as a voluntary activity sponsored by the school or local education agency (LEA) or an organization sanctioned by the LEA. 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, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

The following epidemiologic curve shows the weekly count of the 1871 COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools by week of approximate outbreak start date. Of the 1871 outbreaks reported, 45 outbreaks started between June 1, 2022 and June 30, 2022. 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.



COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools, by county, between August 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

Local health jurisdictions reported 1871 COVID-19 outbreaks that occurred in K-12 schools across 28 counties. Forty-five outbreaks occurred in June 2022. The number of outbreaks by county ranged from 1 to 669. A total of 11916 COVID-19 cases were associated with these outbreaks. Not all outbreaks have case level information available due to resource limitations at the school or local health jurisdiction level. The median number of cases per outbreak was five. 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	% of Schools with Outbreaks	Number of Associated Cases	Median Cases Per Outbreak
Benton	28	23	138	4
Chelan	2	4	33	17
Clallam*	1	3	NA	--
Clark	52	16	118	4
Cowlitz	40	36	130	3
Douglas*	2	5	NA	--
Ferry*	1	8	NA	--
Franklin	5	7	25	4
Garfield*	1	50	NA	--
Grant	33	27	131	4
Grays Harbor	15	19	86	5
Island	10	17	29	3
Jefferson	5	29	29	5
King	669	40	762	5
Kitsap	85	38	544	4
Klickitat*	2	4	NA	--
Lewis*	2	4	NA	--
Pend Oreille*	3	17	NA	--
Pierce	200	34	529	3
San Juan	16	26	84	4
Skagit	23	29	137	5
Skamania*	1	10	NA	--
Snohomish	308	72	7974	14
Spokane	39	15	193	5
Stevens	17	23	130	7
Thurston	213	62	503	3
Walla Walla*	2	5	NA	--
Whatcom	75	36	146	5
Yakima	21	10	45	3
Total	1871	30	11916	5

*To protect privacy, counts of less than 10 are not reported. Some additional values that could allow someone to calculate those small numbers are also not reported.

Characteristics of COVID-19 Outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools, between August 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

Among the 1871 COVID-19 outbreaks that occurred in K-12 schools, 189 (10%) were in private schools, and 1663 (90%) were in public schools. Sixty-one percent of outbreaks involved elementary schools, and 48% were suspected to have transmission in classroom settings. The 529 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	1663	90
Private	189	10
Grade Level Served*		
Elementary	1139	61
Middle	407	22
High	491	26
Suspected Transmission Location		
Classroom	907	48
Office	5	<1
Cafeteria/meal space	3	<1
Sports	322	17
Performing arts	41	2
Transportation/bus	60	3
Undetermined	529	28

*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 with COVID-19 Outbreaks in Washington State, between August 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

There were 1871 COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 schools between August 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022. The Washington State Office of the Superintendent (OSPI) education directory lists 2,552 public K-12 schools on their [website](#). Among these 2,552 public K-12 schools, 805 (32%) have experienced a COVID-19 outbreak since the beginning of the school year. The Washington State Board of Education [licenses](#) 505 private K-12 schools, and among them, 124 (25%) have experienced a COVID-19 outbreak since the beginning of the school year.

	Total K-12 schools with outbreaks (N)	Total Schools (N)	%
Public	805	2552	32
Private	124	505	25
Total	929	3057	30

Characteristics of cases associated with COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools, between August 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

Among the 11916 COVID-19 cases that were linked to outbreaks in K-12 schools, the median age was 13 years. Forty-five percent of COVID-19 cases were Non-Hispanic White, and 51% were male.

	N	%
Median Age	13	--
Age Group		
0-3	27	<1
4-10	4297	36
11-13	2186	18
14-19	4135	35
20-29	181	2
30-39	313	3
40-49	378	3
50-59	272	2
60+	126	1
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic	1159	10
Non-Hispanic American Indian/Alaskan Native	98	1
Non-Hispanic Asian	831	7
Non-Hispanic Black	427	4
Non-Hispanic Multiracial	322	3
Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	118	1
Non-Hispanic White	5378	45
Non-Hispanic Other Race	77	1
Unknown	3506	29
Sex		
Female	5688	49
Male	5809	51
Other	19	<1
Hospitalization overnight	35	<1
Deaths*	<10	--

*To protect privacy, counts of less than 10 are not reported. Some additional values that could allow someone to calculate those small numbers are also not reported.