

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 207 COVID-19 outbreaks were reported in K-12 schools between August 1, 2022 and September 30, 2022.
- 810 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:

- Multiple COVID-19 cases from positive viral tests comprising at least 10% of students, teachers, or staff within a specified core group¹

OR

- At least 3 cases within a specified core group¹ meeting criteria for a COVID-19 case from a positive viral test;

AND

- The following three criteria are met:

1. Cases have a symptom onset or positive test result within 14 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.

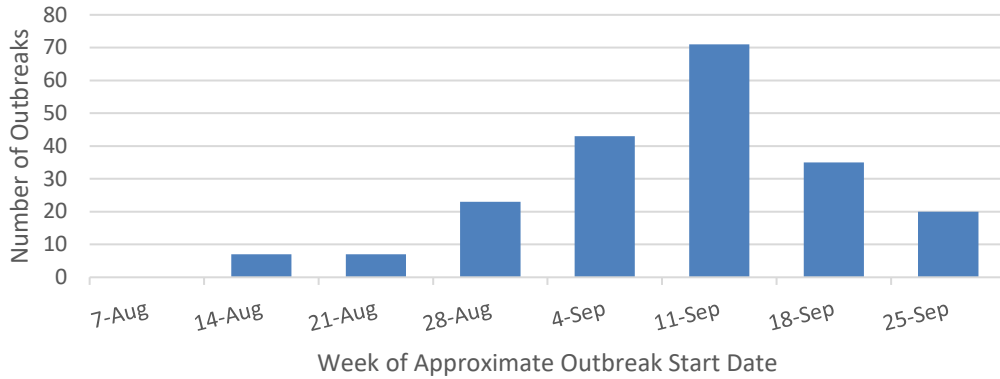
¹ A "core group" includes but is not limited to an extracurricular activity³, cohort group, classroom, before/after school care, etc.

² All groups of 10% or 3 cases 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.

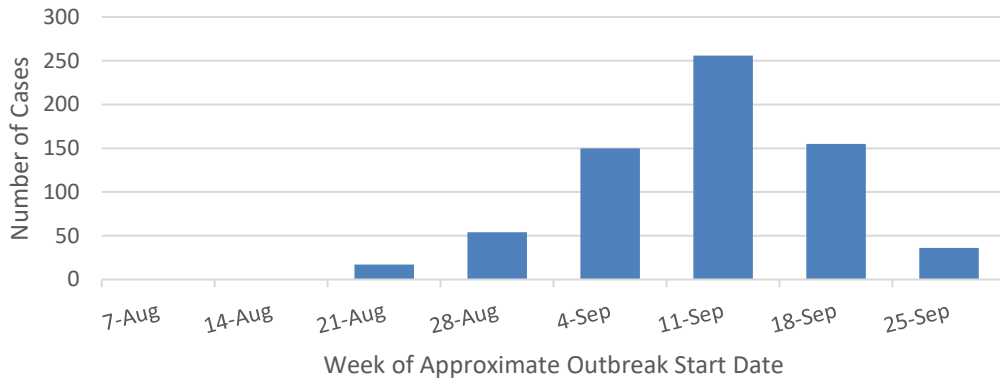
COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools between August 1, 2022 and September 30, 2022.

The following epidemiologic curve shows the weekly count of the 207 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 September 30, 2022.

The following epidemiologic curve shows the week of approximate outbreak start date of the 810 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 September 30, 2022.

Local health jurisdictions reported 207 COVID-19 outbreaks that occurred in K-12 schools across 17 counties. Of these outbreaks, 169 started in September 30, 2022. The number of outbreaks by county ranged from 1 to 46. A total of 810 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 September 2022	Number of Associated Cases	Cases from outbreaks in September 2022
Benton*	6	4	19	NA
Clark	24	17	97	60
Cowlitz*	3	1	10	NA
Douglas*	1	0	NA	NA
Franklin*	5	5	NA	NA
Grant*	1	1	NA	NA
Grays Harbor*	1	1	NA	NA
Kitsap*	26	22	NA	NA
Pend Oreille*	1	0	NA	NA
Pierce	18	4	85	18
Skagit	6	5	21	16
Snohomish	46	43	154	148
Spokane	34	34	236	236
Thurston	21	21	60	60
Walla Walla*	1	1	NA	NA
Whatcom	12	9	63	51
Yakima*	1	1	NA	NA
Total	207	169	810	649

*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 September 30, 2022.

Among the 207 COVID-19 outbreaks that occurred in K-12 schools, 199 (96%) were in public schools, and 8 (4%) were in private schools. Fifty-seven percent of outbreaks involved elementary schools, and 65% impacted classroom settings. The 46 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	199	96
Private	8	4
Grade Level Served*		
Elementary	117	57
Middle	53	26
High	48	23
Settings Affected by Outbreak		
Classroom	135	65
Performing Arts	5	2
Sports	16	8
Transportation	6	3
Undetermined	46	22

*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 September 30, 2022.

There were 207 COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 schools between August 1, 2022 and September 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, 132 (5%) 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, 8 (3%) have experienced a COVID-19 outbreak since the beginning of the school year.

	Total K-12 schools with outbreaks (N)	Total Schools (N)	%
Public	132	2552	5
Private	14	505	3
Total	146	3057	5