

DOH School and Child Care Guidance Talking Points

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) [Guidance to Prevent and Respond to COVID-19 in K-12 Schools and Child Care](#) has been updated as of October 25th and goes into effect on Nov 1st. This update was made in response to the rescission of [COVID-19 emergency proclamations and state of emergency](#). This guidance, in accordance with the Department of Health's mission to protect and improve the health of all people in Washington State, supports K-12 schools, child care/early learning, and school partners to achieve our shared goal of maintaining safe, in-person learning and mitigating the spread of COVID-19. The K-12 and child care guidance is now restructured, condensed, and follows the CDC guidance more closely. Section 3 provides considerations that are specific to child cares.

What schools, child care centers, partners and members of the public need to know:

- Many of the K-12 and child care COVID-19 guidance requirements have shifted to recommendations. To minimize the spread of COVID-19 and other illnesses, K-12 schools and child cares should continue to use best practices and lessons learned since the beginning of the pandemic, including masking, testing, and improving ventilation, as part of everyday infectious disease prevention.
- DOH recommends that schools and child cares develop protocols to ensure that individuals who have COVID-19 isolate away from others and do not attend in-person school or child care until they have completed isolation. Students, children, or staff who test positive for COVID-19 should follow the DOH [What to do if you test positive for COVID-19](#) guidance.
- Local health officers may require implementation of mitigation measures or more stringent guidance to control the spread of COVID-19 in schools or child cares ([RCW 70.05.070](#) and [WAC 246-110-020](#)), including the exclusion of individuals who are infectious from schools or child care. Schools and child care providers are required to cooperate with public health authorities in the investigation of cases, suspected cases, outbreaks and suspected outbreaks that may be associated with the school or child care ([WAC 246-101-420](#) & [WAC 246-101-415](#), respectively).
- A child care provider is required to send an ill child home or reasonably separate them from other children if there is a risk that the child's illness will spread to other children or individuals ([WAC 110-300-0205](#)).
- K-12 schools and child cares are required to report COVID-19 cases, suspected cases, and outbreaks to local public health ([WAC 246-101-420](#) & [WAC 246-101-415](#), respectively).
- The definition of a COVID-19 outbreak has changed to 5 COVID-19 cases within a core group or 20% of students, teachers, or staff within a core group.
- The [COVID-19 Symptom Decision Trees](#) will be updated following the release of the school and child care guidance. In the meantime, schools, child cares, and parents/guardians can continue to use this resource for steps on what to do if someone is exposed or experiences COVID-19 symptoms.

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- Schools, child care providers, and local health jurisdictions can continue to implement more protective measures to ensure that students and children safely continue in-person activities.
- Schools and child cares are encouraged to communicate directly with staff and families to inform them of any changes to their COVID-19 prevention strategies.
- Employers are required to follow [L&I requirements](#) regarding COVID-19 in the workplace.

If you have any questions, please contact your local health jurisdiction or the COVID-19 information hotline by dialing 1-800-525-0127, then press #.

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