



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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District One

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PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

May 3, 2021

Schelli Slaughter, MHA
Director

Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH
Health Officer

Dear Superintendents and Heads of School,

Thurston County is experiencing higher levels of COVID-19 transmission in our county. This is reflected in the following metrics:

- Thurston County's current rate per 100k of newly diagnosed confirmed and probable COVID-19 cases over the last two weeks is 192.1
- Test positive rate is 7.2%
- Rate of newly hospitalized COVID-19 patients per 100K during the past week is 8.9

I am concerned if we continue to remain on this same trajectory, we will reach or exceed the 200 mark for COVID-19 cases per 100K over 14 days or test positivity rate will increase to greater than 10% which will affect schools. The Washington Department of Health (DOH) has outlined in the [K-12 School 2020-2021 Guidance](#) the following instructions on page 8:

In areas with high community transmission, CDC and DOH recommend that middle and high school students use cohorting (grouping students) and at least three feet of distance between students or at least six feet of physical distance between students if cohorting is not possible. CDC defines high community transmission as COVID-19 case rate of greater than 200 cases per 100,000 population over 14 days or test positivity is greater than 10%. Community case rates and test positivity are available by county on the [Governor's Risk Assessment Dashboard](#) and [DOH Data Dashboard](#).

This guidance is a protective measure to ensure we can keep as many students as we can in school safely when we experience higher levels of COVID-19 transmission. If Thurston County reaches either of these thresholds, I will send a letter to the Superintendents and Heads of Schools alerting them to this fact and each school district will need to plan implementation of the DOH guidance. I anticipate each school district will transition to be in alignment with the guidance appropriate to the high levels of COVID-19 transmission.

I am strongly urging parents, students, teachers, and community members in Thurston County to follow the guidance we know works to reduce disease transmission. Wear your mask, stay distanced from non-household members, and socialize responsibly. We can turn these numbers around because we have pulled together and done so many times in the past. We need to reduce COVID-19 transmission in Thurston County to ensure schools do not have to implement high transmission guidance.

Sincerely,

Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH
Health Officer, Thurston County