



COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

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PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Schelli Slaughter, MHA
Director

Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH
Health Officer

August 31, 2021

Dear Thurston County Superintendents and Heads of Schools,

I am writing to inform you about the COVID-19 guidance from the [Washington State Department of Health for the 2021-2022 school year](#). The guidance is based on what has been learned about COVID-19 transmission over the past year and the impact of school on the health and well-being of students. The delta variant is a much more transmissible strain than previous variants and can spread rapidly. Following mitigation measures outlined by the Washington State Department of Health and getting tested for COVID-19 is more important now than ever before to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in schools. These mitigation measures include:

- 1) Following the indoor mask requirements outlined in the K-12 COVID-19 Requirements for Summer 2021 and the 2021-2022 School Year and the [Secretary of Health Order 20-03.4](#) requiring masks indoors in most situations.
- 2) Staying home from school when staff or students have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19 and when instructed by public health authorities.
- 3) Get a COVID-19 test when symptomatic, when found to be a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and when instructed by public health or your school.
- 4) Following the distancing guidance outlined in the K-12 COVID-19 Requirements for Summer 2021 and the 2021-2022 School Year.
- 5) For students in the classroom setting who do not have symptoms of COVID-19 and were sitting between 3 feet and 6 feet of a classmate during their infectious period and were masked, it is strongly recommended that they get tested for COVID-19 3-5 days after exposure, but do not have to quarantine as long as they do not have symptoms. By identifying cases early, we can prevent spread throughout a classroom.

Masking indoors, staying home when sick and when instructed, getting tested for COVID-19 when recommended and required, and maintaining distance are essential to reducing the risk of transmission in our schools.

We are currently experiencing unprecedented community transmission in Thurston County. When there are cases in our community there is an increased risk of transmission in our schools. Each of us in Thurston County can do our part to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in our schools by taking precautions, getting vaccinated when eligible, wearing masks indoors when around non-household members and crowded outdoor settings, avoiding large gatherings, and maintaining distance between ourselves and non-household members when possible. This is a dynamic situation and as we learn more, the guidance and best practices may change. I look forward to working with you as the year progresses.

Thank you all so much for your efforts to mitigate risk of COVID-19 in our schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "D Abdelmalek, MD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH
Health Officer, Thurston County