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## PUBLIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

December 17, 2021

Schelli Slaughter, MHA  
Director

Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH  
Health Officer

Dear Superintendents and Heads of Schools,

In recent weeks there have been an increase in COVID-19 cases and outbreaks in schools in Thurston County. An investigation into an outbreak related to four wrestling tournaments on December 4, 2021, resulted in 24 confirmed linked cases in Thurston County and we have seen a rising number of outbreaks in high contact indoor sports. There have also been instances of COVID-19 transmission involving individuals who have had prior COVID-19 infection and people who have been fully vaccinated.

Thurston County is in alignment with the updated [guidance from Washington State Department of Health](#) released this morning:

All athletes, coaches, trainers and other personnel who work with athletes in high contact indoor sports (wrestling, basketball, water polo, and indoor cheer) are required to participate in three times a week testing for COVID-19 with a molecular or antigen test regardless of vaccination status.

One of the thrice weekly tests must be performed on all athletes, coaches, trainers, and support personnel no sooner than the day before the competition. Best practice is for pre-competition testing to be performed the day of the event whenever possible.

I recommend each school carefully weigh the risks of COVID-19 transmission in teams scheduled to practice or compete over winter break. Tournaments have a demonstrated risk of COVID-19 spread in our community. In the face of these risks, caution and care should be exercised in making the decision to participate. Schools may elect to pause practices, competitions, and tournaments over winter break. I support each school in taking the precautions necessary to keep their students safe.

Thurston County Public Health continues to provide guidance for each identified outbreak to interrupt the cycle of COVID-19 transmission using testing, symptom screening and quarantine. The flowchart for management of COVID-19 cases in our schools can be accessed [here](#).

Thank you for your support for communities of learning in Thurston County and for all you are doing to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Dimyana Abdelmalek, MD, MPH  
Health Officer, Thurston County