



ISLAND COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

Administration

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ISLAND COUNTY COVID-19 Updated Community Guidance August 25, 2020

Island County Public Health wants to make sure that the citizens of Island County have access to reliable guidance surrounding COVID-19. We will be updating our guidance to the community weekly and hope that you use this to help inform and empower yourself and our community.

Reduced and Modified Phase 3 Guidance

Island County is currently in a reduced and modified Phase 3 of the Governor's Safe Start Reopening plan. We are not in full Phase 3 and many restrictions remain in place. Continue to support our community by following current guidance.

- Gatherings should include no more than 10 people outside your household per week. Whether indoor or outdoor, group activities must follow the gatherings limitations. Social gatherings and sustained close contact with non-household members continue to be leading causes of COVID-19 spread.
- Many pieces of Phase 3 guidance have been modified at this time; please visit the [WA State Coronavirus webpage](#) for current, modified guidance. An [FAQ document](#) is available to clarify some details related to gatherings, food and alcohol service, and events.
- This week, new [guidelines](#) allow museums in Phase 3 counties to open with lower occupancy. New [guidelines](#) also allow for bowling league play in Phases 2 and 3, as long as facilities meet certain requirements. New [guidance](#) is also available for agritourism, such as U-pick farms and tree farms.
- Non-essential travel outside of the county and state is highly discouraged at this time. Please recreate and shop as local as possible. Before necessary traveling, research destinations to assess exposure risk using the [Phase and Risk Assessment Dashboard](#) and [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#).
- On August 18, the Island County Board of Health issued a motion regarding restrictions to outdoor recreation activities, including sports, in Island County. [August 20 Announcement Regarding Recreation and Sporting Activities](#).

A New Normal – Living with COVID-19

As a community, we will need to continue to do things that limit the spread of COVID-19 until a safe and effective vaccine is available in our community. This is the new normal for the near future. The most recent modeling and data across the state indicates that new cases are plateauing and that this is a result of increased mitigation measures (e.g., social distancing, masking, and limitations on gatherings).

- According to the current situation [report](#) by the Institute for Disease Modeling (IDM), mitigation measures such as masking, social distancing, restrictions on gatherings, and limitations on traveling and activities will need to remain in place until a safe and effective vaccine is available.
- According to this most recent report, cases were increasing in people age 40 to 69 and over 70, but the positive news is that a plateauing of cases is generally occurring across age groups in both western and eastern Washington (Spokane excepted). Continuing to follow masking and distancing guidelines will help continue this trend.
- Schools and business depend on community support of mitigation measures to remain open and to have students return to in-person instruction.
- Continuing to follow guidance and practice mitigation measures is hard- we need to continue to support each other during this difficult time. Talk to your loved ones and friends about the importance of following guidance. Read this [blog](#) for suggestions on talking about COVID-19 safety with friends and family.

Back to School

The school year is right around the corner. As parents, school staff, and children deal with the uncertainty of the school year, decisions regarding school will affect the community as a whole.

- Island County schools are making final decisions on how they will open for the coming school year. Some programs will begin in-person, some entirely remote, and some will follow a hybrid model. The WA State Department of Health (DOH) has provided a [decision framework](#) to assist local health officers and school administrators in making decisions around models of school instruction. Please see individual school district and school websites for the most updated information on reopening plans.
- Counties are organized into high, moderate, and low risk recommendation groups, which are determined by the number of new cases per 100,000 residents over a two-week period. Island County's average case rate per 100,000 over a two-week period has been in the low and moderate range over the last month.
- Changes to school delivery models will have serious impacts on our community as parents seek to find ways to meet childcare and learning needs of children. The community and employers have an opportunity to support parents with these difficult challenges by seeking creative and flexible solutions to support families. **Please also see the resources section below for financial assistance available through the CARES Act to cover increased childcare expenses.**
- CDC believes it is likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will both be spreading at the same time, especially with some face-to-face school starting. In this context, getting a flu vaccine will be more important than ever. A possible seasonal influenza epidemic in the fall will lead to additional challenges including disruption of the health and social care systems and a large resurgence of Influenza-like illness and COVID-like illness with local or regional epidemics.

Embrace Available Resources

- Washington State Department of Commerce is distributing approximately \$100 million in "CARES" Act funding to operate a [new rent assistance program](#). The program will focus on preventing evictions by paying up to three months of past due, current and future rent, for eligible participants.
- Financial supports are also available to help families impacted by increased childcare needs/ school

schedule changes. This is time limited, so families will need to complete a referral as soon as possible (by mid-September at the latest). Please complete the [online referral form](#) or call the Human Services Help Line at 360.678.2346 to learn more.

- The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC) will [offer services remotely](#) until Sept. 30. In lieu of in-person visits, WIC may enroll new applicants, provide nutrition education and breastfeeding support and issue food benefits by phone or video chat.
- Visit the Washington State Department of Commerce [website](#) to locate drive-in Wi-Fi hotspots that provide free, temporary emergency internet access for Washingtonians.

Contact Us

If you have questions or concerns about COVID-19 in Island County, start by visiting our [website](#) or our [Facebook](#) page. The Island County call center may be reached at **360.678.2301**; Monday through Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm.