



## ISLAND COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH

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### Administration

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## ISLAND COUNTY COVID-19 Updated Community Guidance September 15, 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**

Island County is still 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. Phase 3 guidance has been modified at this time; please visit the [WA State Coronavirus webpage](#) for updated guidance. Please continue to follow all recommendations along with additional public health guidance related to wildfire smoke.

- Gatherings should include no more than 10 people outside of your household per week. Whether indoor or outdoor, group activities must follow the gatherings limitation. Because air quality makes gathering outside difficult, consider delaying gatherings with non-household members until air quality improves.
- 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](#).
- In addition to COVID-19 guidance, wildfires throughout the West are causing hazardous air quality conditions. Stay indoors and keep windows and doors closed when it is smoky. Try to keep your indoor air clean by [improving filtration](#). Stay informed about current and forecasted air quality on the [Washington Smoke Information](#) blog, your [local clean air agency's](#) website, or the [WA DOH Smoke from Fires](#) webpage

### **Keep Up the Good Work!**

COVID-19 rates are plateauing and declining overall across the state. Rates vary by county and new outbreaks have been reported in the state, which may lead to wider community spread. Recent Labor Day gatherings and school reopening may influence rates.

- According to the current state [situation report](#) by the Institute for Disease Modeling (IDM), rates seem to be declining overall throughout Washington. This suggests that individual behaviors such as masking, limiting gathering size, and physically distancing are offsetting recent increases in community activity compared to early in the pandemic.
- A report released on September 10 discusses balancing [COVID-19 risk and educational benefits](#) and looks at the impact of school mitigation measures on the disease spread both within and outside of schools. School reopening and the amount of in-person school available to children is impacted by case

rates within the county. Island County residents can help children, families, and schools by following all recommended guidance to limit the spread of COVID-19.

- Schools and business depend on community support of mitigation measures to remain open and to have students return to in-person instruction.
- Testing is still recommend for close contacts. Despite changes in guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) maintains that all close contacts should be tested.

### **Vaccine Preparedness**

Washington State and Island County are beginning the planning process for vaccine distribution. It is still unknown when a safe and effective vaccine will become available.

- The federal government is leading the planning efforts around the dissemination of a potential COVID-19 vaccine, and they have released initial planning guidance to the states.
- Both DOH and Island County Public Health are monitoring the FDA approval process. At this time, all vaccine candidates are still in clinical trials to determine their safety and efficacy. “DOH is committed to science and the need to critically evaluate these new vaccines for their safety and efficacy in an unbiased way before their use,” said Dr. Kathy Lofy, State Health Officer.
- DOH released a press release on [September 9](#) stating that DOH is prepared to deploy a safe and effective vaccine in an equitable and timely manner, when available. We do not know when a safe and effective vaccine will be available, but Island County is also preparing for distribution of the vaccine in an equitable manner for Island County residents once it is available.

### **Embrace Available Resources**

- If you are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, or if someone you know is in crisis, call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at (800) 273-8255 or [chat online](#). Confidential support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.
- State Department of Commerce is distributing approximately \$100 million in “CARES” Act funding to operate a [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. The end date is December 31, 2020.
- Financial supports are available to help families impacted by increased childcare needs/ school schedule changes. This is time limited, so families will need to complete and **submit a referral by October 2**. 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.

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.