



ISLAND COUNTY COVID-19 Updated Community Guidance September 29, 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.

Increase in Island County COVID-19 cases

Island County has been undergoing a steady rise in the COVID-19 case rate since early September. Please do your part to help limit the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

- Island County has had 44 new cases of COVID-19 between September 9 and September 25, 2020. This is a significant increase from case rates in late August and early September. A majority of the new cases in Island County have been linked to travel and gatherings, with transmission then occurring among family members.
- Non-essential travel outside of the county and state remains highly discouraged. Please recreate and shop as local as possible. Before necessary travel, research destinations to assess exposure risk using the [Phase and Risk Assessment Dashboard](#) and [COVID-19 Data Dashboard](#). For those who need to travel, [new requirements](#) for commercial airlines and recommendations have been announced for airlines throughout Washington State

Fall has begun!

From the beautiful changing foliage to delicious comfort foods, many of us are looking forward to embracing the joys that the fall season brings. While participating in seasonal activities, please be sure to continue following [modified Phase 3 guidance](#) to support the health and safety of yourself and your fellow community members.

- WA Department of Health (DOH) has issued [guidance](#) for individuals participating in Halloween celebrations this season. In preparation for fall season events, updated [guidance is also available](#) for agritourism activities such as animal viewing, hay rides, and corn mazes.
- Social gatherings should include 10 people outside of your household per week or fewer. Whether indoor or outdoor, group activities must follow the gatherings limitation.
- We may not have a vaccine yet for COVID-19, but we DO have a vaccine for influenza. The flu vaccine can prevent you from getting sick with flu during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#). Young children, pregnant women, [people with underlying health conditions](#), and those aged 65 and older are at high risk of complications from flu illness. As we move into flu season, we can all help save healthcare resources for COVID-19 response in our communities by doing our part to prevent illness and hospitalizations caused by flu.

Vaccine planning update

From local to federal government agencies, vaccine planning is well underway. Credible science will be used to critically evaluate the safety and efficacy of new vaccines before they are distributed to Washington and Island County residents.

- 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.
- We still do not know when a safe and effective vaccine will be available, but Island County is preparing for distribution of the vaccine in an equitable manner for Island County residents once it is available.
- Both Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and Island County Public Health are committed to basing decisions upon credible science needed to critically evaluate these new vaccines for their safety and will be monitoring the FDA approval process.

Embrace available resources

- 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 WA State Department of Commerce is collaborating with organizations to provide support through the newly launched [Small Business Resiliency Assistance](#) program. Twenty partner organizations are available to help small businesses and nonprofits in a variety of ways, including planning for recovery and safe re-opening, retaining and supporting the work force, access to translation services, [and more](#).
- The Washington State Department of Commerce is partnering with School's Out Washington to distribute [approximately \\$9 million](#) in state Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding to respond to the impact of COVID-19 by supporting programs serving school age kids and young adults facing the most significant challenges to educational and economic opportunity.
- 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.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture has extended the waivers that allow the [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children](#) (WIC) to offer remote services to participants. 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.