



## **ISLAND COUNTY COVID-19 Updated Community Guidance November 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 update guidance bi-weekly and hope that you use this to help inform and empower yourself and our community.

### **Numbers and data**

At the time of this writing, Island County has 583 confirmed COVID-19 cases, including 12 deaths. This number is expected to change after this evening's online case count update. A case rate of 152.09 COVID-19 cases per 100,000 was calculated for the two-week period of 11/08/20-11/21/20. The [message](#) from DOH health officials remains the same: disease transmission is widespread throughout WA and we are experiencing the highest risk we have been at throughout the entire pandemic. [Hospital occupancy](#) is rapidly increasing alongside spikes in transmission. "This situation is extraordinarily urgent, and we need everyone in Washington State to take action now to stop the spread of COVID-19 before our hospitals and frontline healthcare workers are overwhelmed," said State Health Officer Dr. Kathy Lofy.

### **Holiday Celebrations**

As we continue to move through this holiday season, many of us have encountered difficult decisions and disappointment. Island County Public Health sincerely thanks all of our dedicated community members who have made responsible choices and found creative ways to boost morale, support one another, and remain persistent throughout this challenging pandemic. We know this is not easy - please continue to protect the people you are thankful for during this upcoming holiday and know that your efforts are meaningful and appreciated.

Due to the recent surge in COVID transmission, gathering with friends and family outside of your household is strongly discouraged at this time. Current statewide restrictions prohibit indoor gatherings with people residing outside of your household, unless all individuals quarantine for 14 days prior to the event. Outdoor gatherings must be limited to five people from outside of your household. Testing facilities and data processing systems do not have capacity to support additional demand for testing due to individuals choosing not to follow current guidance. If you choose to gather, please follow the recommended 14-day quarantine rather than seeking COVID testing.

### **Coping with COVID**

The eight-month pandemic response has introduced great uncertainty and additional strain into our lives in a variety of ways. If you find yourself reacting more negatively to things you experience, you are not alone. Feeling angry or frustrated is a normal response during a pandemic, but there are things you can do to manage those emotions. Many support services are available at this time, including:

- DOH has launched a ["Coping with COVID" podcast series](#) with expert hosts discussing the causes of strong emotional reactions and what we can do to feel more in control during stressful times.

- If you or anyone you know is having difficulties managing stress, call the [Washington Listens](#) support line at 1-833-681-0211 Monday through Friday (9 a.m. to 9 p.m) and Saturdays and Sundays (9 a.m. to 6 p.m.). TTY and language access services are available by using 7-1-1 or their preferred method. Resources and self-help tips are also available on [walistens.org](#).
- If you are feeling anxious, scared, or are in need of resources related to mental health, please call the Island County Helpline at 360.678.2346 (M-F 10am – 6pm) or complete the online [referral form](#).

### **Financial support for families and businesses.**

On [Friday, Nov. 20](#), Gov. Inslee and Lisa Brown (Director of WA State Commerce) announced additional financial support funds for families and businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. [Business support grants](#) will focus on the hardest-hit industries. Information about [rental and energy assistance](#) is also available. Included in the \$135 million economic support is:

- \$70 million in business support grants - \$50 million for a new round of Working Washington grants and \$20 million for businesses who applied for earlier resiliency grants.
- \$30 million for the recovery loan program - this longer-term financing tool will be available early next year.
- \$20 million for rental assistance.
- \$15 million for energy bills for low-income households.

### **Vaccine availability**

There is no FDA approved COVID-19 vaccine at this time. Once a safe and effective vaccine is approved, the vaccine will be distributed to critical populations in phases, as supply becomes available. A date for widely available vaccine is still unknown at this time. While we do not yet have an available COVID-19 vaccine, we can all take action to get our flu vaccines! As we move through [flu season](#), we need to save local healthcare resources for the COVID-19 response by doing our part to prevent illness and hospitalizations caused by flu.

### **Embrace available resources**

- The Eviction Rent Assistance Program (ERAP) intends to prevent evictions that would contribute to the spread of the virus by paying past due, current due and future rent. The ERAP is targeting limited resources to those with the greatest needs while working to distribute funds equitably. To request assistance, please complete the [online application](#) or call **before December 31, 2020** (Whidbey Residents – (360) 678-8284; Camano Residents – (360) 629-5257 ext. 1009). If you are struggling with Homelessness, call the Housing Support Center at (360) 678-8284.
- As the economic impacts of COVID-19 continue, more families are taking advantage of free meals provided by school districts. While all students may be provided free meals through the end of December, families are strongly encouraged to complete a School Meal Application now. This application determines a student’s eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. Read more [here](#).
- The WA State Department of Commerce is collaborating with organizations to provide support through the [Small Business Resiliency Assistance](#) program. Support is available for small businesses and nonprofits in a variety of ways, including recovery and re-opening planning, employee retention, [and translation services](#).

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.