

Re-opening K-12 Schools 2020-2021 Worksite Health and Safety COVID-19 Requirements

All school districts must adopt a written procedure for employee safety and student interaction that is at least as strict as this procedure and complies with the safety and health requirements below.

Safety and Health Requirements

All school districts have a general obligation to keep a safe and healthy worksite in accordance with state and federal law and safety and health rules for a variety of workplace hazards. In addition, they must comply with COVID-19 worksite-specific safety practices as outlined in the Governor's orders enacted now and in the future, and in accordance with L&I [General Requirements and Prevention Ideas for Workplaces](#) and the Washington State Department of Health Workplace and Employer Resources & Recommendations at <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Coronavirus/workplace>. Amendments and changes to these requirements will be implemented in accordance with the timelines provided in the amendments issued by these agencies.

K-12 employers must specifically ensure operations follow the main L&I COVID-19 requirements to protect workers, including:

- Educate workers in the language they understand best about coronavirus and how to prevent transmission and the employer's COVID-19 policies.
- Limit all indoor spaces to a capacity in which a six-foot distance can be kept between all staff, students, and others.
- Maintaining a minimum six-foot separation is required between all employees, students, and others to the maximum extent feasible. When strict physical distancing is not feasible for a specific task, the employer is required to provide additional prevention measures, such as use of barriers, PPE that provides a higher level of protection, minimize the number of staff or students in the enclosed areas, and stagger breaks, recesses and work shift starts.
- Provide at no cost to employees and require to be worn personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, goggles, face shields and face coverings or masks as appropriate or required for the activity being performed. Cloth facial coverings must be worn by every employee not working alone on the jobsite unless their exposure dictates a higher level of protection under L&I safety and health rules and guidance with the following exceptions: when working alone in an office, vehicle, or at a job site; if the individual is deaf or hard of hearing, or is communicating with someone who relies on language cues such as facial markers and expression and mouth movements as a part of communication; if the individual has a medical condition or disability that makes wearing a facial covering inappropriate; or when the job has no in-person interaction. . Refer to [Coronavirus Facial Covering and Mask Requirements](#) for additional details. A cloth facial covering is described in the Department of Health guidance, <https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/ClothFacemasks.pdf>.

- Ensure frequent and adequate hand washing with adequate maintenance of supplies. Use disposable gloves where safe and applicable to prevent transmission on tools or other items that are shared.
- Increase the frequency of facility cleaning schedules that includes cleaning and sanitizing with a particular emphasis on commonly touched surfaces – which shall be no less stringent or frequent than what is required by the department of health for K-12 schools. When finalized, the state Department of Health cleaning guidance will be posted to their website and on the OSPI COVID 19 webpage.
- Screen employees, students, and any other individual who will be at the school facility for more than 15 minutes, for signs/symptoms of COVID-19 at start of every shift, including taking temperatures prior to the start of each workday or shift.
- Make sure sick employees and students stay home or immediately go home if they feel or appear sick.
- Cordon off any areas where an employee or students with probable or confirmed COVID-19 illness worked, touched surfaces, etc. until the area and equipment is cleaned and sanitized. Follow the cleaning guidelines established by the Department of Health to deep clean and sanitize.

A site-specific COVID-19 supervisor shall be designated by the employer at each school and other work site to monitor the health of employees and enforce the COVID-19 job site safety plan.

A worker may refuse to perform unsafe work, including hazards created by COVID-19. And, it is unlawful for an employer to take adverse action against a worker who has engaged in safety-protected activities under the law if the individual's work refusal meets certain requirements. Information is available in these publications: [Safety and Health Discrimination in the Workplace brochure](#) and [Spanish Safety and Health Discrimination brochure](#).

Employees who choose to remove themselves from a worksite because they do not believe it is safe to work due to the risk of COVID-19 exposure may have access to certain leave or unemployment benefits. Employers must provide high-risk individuals with their choice of access to available employer-granted accrued leave or unemployment benefits if an alternative work arrangement is not feasible.

Other employees may have access to expanded family and medical leave included in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, access to use unemployment benefits, or access to other paid time off depending on the circumstances. Additional information is available at [Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\) Resources](#) and [Paid Leave under the WA Family Care Act and the Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#).

No school district may operate until they can meet and maintain all the requirements in this document, including providing materials, schedules and equipment required to comply. Additional considerations may be adopted, as appropriate.

Generally, the K-12 school environment is considered a **medium risk transmission area** where work is inside a structure/office where at least 6-foot distance is mostly maintained but with job tasks that

require several minutes of 6-foot distance broken several times a day. In a medium risk transmission area or higher risk level, a cloth mask is not sufficient without additional controls. There may be some work environments that represent a higher or lower risk, and in those cases, the employer is authorized to adopt the requirements for each work environment separately, or may adopt a single set of requirements provided they address the highest risk work environment at the work site.

To address workplace safety and health risks the following **requirements exist in school settings:**

- All employees are required to use at least a cloth face covering that fully covers mouth and nose. Additional personal protective equipment or other controls are required for workers in medium and higher risk transmission areas.
- All students and other individuals who will be in a school facility for greater than 15 minutes are required to use cloth face coverings that fully covers mouth and nose or higher protection.
- For employees or students who cannot or should not where masks consistent with Department of Health exemption criteria, the employer must provide additional safeguards to address the additional risk – such as:
 - The employee providing the service remotely or students receiving the service(s) remotely;
 - The use of face shields and other protective equipment combined with additional measures that limit the risk that individuals will not come into contact closer than 6 feet;

Implementing other specific procedures and/or accommodations that mitigate the added COVID-19 risks due to the lack of a cloth face covering.

For K-12 employees who do not work in the school/classroom environment, employers will implement Labor & Industries' health and safety standards that are best suited for each job class (grounds/landscapers, carpenters, non-school based food service workers, warehouse workers, etc.).

All requirements in this document are subject to additional review and revision by the Department of Health and Department of Labor & Industries, in conjunction with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Additional supplementary documents and guidance are anticipated to be produced prior to the start of school to clarify expectations and provide examples for specific situations.