

The Department of Health and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction feel strongly about the importance of keeping our students, staff, and their families safe and healthy. We understand that during these extraordinary times, there may be questions and concerns about school immunization requirements as we begin this unique school year. This document clarifies state law and our recommendations about immunization requirements and exclusion of students.

**For the 2020–21 School Year and K–12 Programs Only**

- In light of the pandemic, if a student cannot meet the immunization requirements by the first day of school and a student is fully participating in remote learning, we are not recommending that the school exclude that student from school. The student should be immediately enrolled and served remotely.
- Students should be in compliance when they are back on campus for any reason, including small group learning or extracurricular activities.
- If the student’s learning program is at school or only partially remote and the student is not in compliance with immunization requirements, they should be enrolled but excluded from physically attending school.
- As required by current state and federal law, any student experiencing homelessness or living in foster care must immediately be enrolled and served, regardless of their immunization status or educational setting.
- Schools should continue to work with the families to bring students into compliance as soon as possible.

**Background Information**

State laws and rules require compliance with immunization requirements on or before the first day of attendance at school. The purpose of the state immunization requirement is to protect the health of the public and individuals against certain vaccine-preventable diseases. Schools should continue to work to ensure compliance with immunization requirements in state law no matter the student’s learning location. This means if a child participates in a school program, regardless of their location including online or remote learning, they must meet school immunization requirements per RCW [28A.210.080](#).

The Department of Health has communicated with health care providers about the importance of continuing routine immunizations during the COVID-19 pandemic, and many providers have been actively working to get kids caught up on vaccinations. If families don’t have a family doctor or nurse, they can find a location that provides childhood immunizations by using the [Vaccine Finder](#) or by calling their [local health department](#).

**Suggested Messages for Parents and Families**

- It is important to keep students up to date on their immunizations. Students who are behind on required immunizations will need to be in compliance before scheduled in-person learning begins.
- Keeping students vaccinated will protect more than just the student. It also protects friends, family, and the community from disease outbreaks, such as measles. We’ve seen multiple disease outbreaks throughout the state in the past few years, and we don’t want to experience another, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Getting a student in to a health care provider is about more than vaccinations. Well child visits ensure students get continued medical check-ups. These visits ensure the student is healthy and prepared to learn.

Thank you for your continued hard work during this challenging time. Keeping students immunized during the COVID-19 pandemic will reduce the risk for other disease outbreaks, which would further strain the return to in-person learning and the entire community and health care system. Thank you for helping us keep our communities safe and healthy.

**Questions:** Email [oi cpschools@doh.wa.gov](mailto:oi cpschools@doh.wa.gov)

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