



Weekly Bulletin

Date: October 16, 2020

Subject: Island County COVID-19 Response

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Review of Current News and Updates

Numbers and data. At the time of this writing, Island County has 357 confirmed COVID-19 cases, including 12 deaths. This week's attached data sheet reflects a decrease in rate of COVID-19 cases per 100,000 from 29.47 to 25.94 for 9/27/20 to 10/10/20. DOH recently released a new [Statewide Outbreak Report](#), identifying food service/restaurant, retail/grocery, and agriculture/produce packing among the top three outbreak settings reported.

Island County data summary. We are not seeing new cases associated with any one sector, business, or population. A fair amount of transmission appears to be taking place between household members and we are working on messaging specific to this. We have also seen a few cases this week associated with local schools that are partially open. Overall, we continue to see that the community is experiencing fatigue in following mitigation measures. We want to continue to encourage the community to limit gatherings and travel and continue to social distance and wear masks. We continue to coordinate with WhidbeyHealth and NASWI on case and contact investigations within these populations.

COVID-19 transmission increasing in western Washington. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) recently released the latest [statewide situation report](#). Report findings include:

- Transmission is increasing in western Washington and recently plateauing in eastern Washington
- The situation in eastern Washington is unstable and efforts to control the spread of the virus must be strictly maintained or intensified to avoid a backslide
- Case counts in western Washington are increasing across all age groups and over broad geographic areas.
- Recent growth in cases is widely distributed across a number of counties.
- Trends are also mixed in counties with flat or decreasing case counts.

Behavioral Health. DOH released the most recent statewide [Behavioral Health Report](#), stating that 3 of 5 syndromic indicators fell below 2019 levels for the week of September 26, public sentiment was at a lower level than previous weeks, and census data indicates a potential rise in anxiety and depression symptoms (reversing the trend of the previous 4 weeks). The Island County [Behavioral Situation Report](#) was also released this week, stating that psychological distress and suicide ideation related emergency department visits have decreased over the previous 4 weeks, IC Human Services CARES support has fielded 1,000 requests for support, and crisis line calls have increased by 25% from 2019 to 2020. As a reminder, Island County Human Services offers various resources to Island County residents affected by COVID-19. For community members feeling anxious, scared, or in need of resources related to mental health, the Island County Helpline may be reached at 360.678.2346 (M-F 10am – 6pm). Support may also be requested through completion of the [online referral form](#).

Updated guidance. Governor Inslee recently released several updates to [Safe Start](#) guidance, effective immediately. A complete list of updated guidance is available on the Governor’s reopening webpage. Some recent changes are listed below for your convenience.

- Visit the new [WA State Safe Gatherings](#) webpage for helpful COVID-19 resources including planning tips, communication strategies, a safety checklist, and frequently asked questions!
- Further clarification regarding sporting activities is now available on the Governor’s recently released [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document.
- Under [miscellaneous venues guidance](#), retail events (including consumer trade shows/exhibits) are only permitted in outdoor settings in Phase 3. Outdoor capacity is limited to 200 people, provided all relevant guidance requirements are met.

Local COVID-19 vaccination planning update. The Planning team is currently reviewing the State’s Storage Plan and drafting the local plan for this upcoming week. Plans for ultra-cold storage capacity are well underway with quotes received for freezers and collaboration with WhidbeyHealth to address support storage needs. The Advisory Committee continues to grow, with current or anticipated participation from WhidbeyHealth, NASWI, private practices, human services and pharmacies.

Flu vaccine. While we do not yet have an available COVID-19 vaccine, we can all take action to get our flu vaccines! As we move into [flu season](#), we can all help save healthcare resources for the COVID-19 response in our communities by doing our part to prevent illness and hospitalizations caused by flu. We will be working in partnership with both state and local resources for flu vaccine messaging this season.

Available resources. A number of resources are currently available to Washingtonians that may help mitigate some negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 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 one of the following phone numbers before December 31, 2020:
 - For Whidbey Residents – Call Housing Support Center at (360) 678-8284
 - For Camano Residents – Call Community Resource Center Stanwood-Camano at (360) 629-5257 ext. 1009.
 - If you are struggling with Homelessness, call the Housing Support Center: 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 allocated \$1 million in CARES Act funding to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). In an effort to support housing stability, [stipends will be provided](#) to youth who exited the Extended Foster Care Program at age 21 between March 1, 2020 and Dec. 31, 2020.
- 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 [Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children](#) (WIC) continues to offer remote services to participants. WIC may enroll new applicants, provide nutrition education and breastfeeding support and issue food benefits by phone or video chat.

The call center is staffed Monday through Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm (360.678.2301).