

INTRODUCTION

School districts, like all employers, are obligated to keep a safe and healthy worksite in accordance with state and federal law and safety and health rules. Schools must develop an [Accident Prevention Plan \(APP\)](#), including a Job Hazard Analysis that protects workers from COVID-19, a known workplace hazard.

While the [recent Washington State Department of Health \(DOH\) directive](#) requires masks for teachers, staff, and students when students are present or likely to be present, additional steps may

L&I has updated the following school scenarios to encompass a range of factors including vaccination status, ventilation, barriers and distance.

This information is provided as general guidance. [Consultative services from the Department of Labor & Industries Division of Occupational Safety and Health](#) are available for districts with specific questions.

SCENARIOS FOR SCHOOL SETTINGS

The following scenarios are intended as general guidance for local school districts and safety officers as they develop required COVID-19 safety plans and procedures and anticipate need for PPE supplies. Specific conditions of each work site must be considered.

Each scenario assumes:

- The activity is conducted indoors, if not otherwise specified. In general, working outdoors reduces potential exposure to airborne pathogens.
- People who are required to wear a cloth face covering are following the requirement.
- No known positive case of COVID-19 exists in the workplace. When a positive case is identified, that person is immediately removed from the worksite, and the locations where the person had been are cordoned off and sanitized before workers return to the area.
- All required protections – including PPE – are provided by the employer. These workplace protections work together to protect workers. No single protection is sufficient by itself.
- Additional controls are not present. Where additional barriers, ventilation, distance or other controls are provided, minimum requirements may be reduced further.
- When assessing respirator use, it is appropriate to consider the worker's vaccination status when determining whether a respirator is needed or what level of protection is needed. This applies even in situations when students are present and at least a cloth face covering is required.

SUMMARY OF PPE CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES IN SCHOOL-SPECIFIC SCENARIOS

Examples of Work Conditions by Transmission Risk Level is included below. Where students are present, at least a cloth face covering is required.

Vaccination Status	Transmission Risk Category		
	Low	Medium	High
Work characteristics	Working inside* with other people, but physical distancing is maintained between unvaccinated individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical distancing between unvaccinated people is not maintained Work in the presence of COVID-19 quarantined or isolated people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Close proximity between breathing zones (directly breathing exhaled air) High exertion activities or respiration (<6 foot distancing) Work in the vicinity of aerosol generating procedures
Unvaccinated or vaccination status unknown	Cloth face coverings required by proclamation	Medical procedure mask, KN95, or voluntary use respirator	N95 filtering facepiece respirator or more protective respirator
Verified fully vaccinated, except in certain sectors**	Employer not required to enforce mask use. Workers may choose to wear PPE.		Employer must assess exposures and may consider vaccination status in determining respiratory protection needs per Chapter 296-842 WAC

* Inside should be considered broadly to mean not outside. Outside environments have a free flow of air that limits viral transmission. Situations that are under cover or partially surrounded by walls are not necessarily outside or inside. Generally, these situations should be considered inside unless it can be shown that there is good flow of air that maintains an outside air environment.

** Except for the following sectors:

- Healthcare (including long-term care, doctor's offices, hospitals)
- Public transportation (aircraft, train, road vehicles)
- K-12 Schools, childcare facilities, and day camps in locations where students are present
- Correctional facilities
- Homeless shelters

Exposure Assessment:

Identifying medium and high risk exposures for unvaccinated workers and high risk exposures for fully vaccinated workers the following factors may be considered.

- Are there individuals in the workspace suspected or known to have COVID-19
- Fully vaccinated status of workers and others around them.
- Close proximity (within 6 feet) for an extended period of time on a frequent or infrequent basis
- Close by (e.g., within 3 feet) with no option to move safely away or stay behind a physical barrier
- Who need to breathe frequently and/or deeply due to physically strenuous work or other activity that requires deep breathing
- In an enclosed or confined space
- In a poorly ventilated area:
 - Indoor spaces are enclosed by walls and ceilings and of greatest concern
 - outdoor spaces have no structures or other objects that restrict air flow and are not a concern unless other factors are combined
 - Some spaces, such as breezeways, covered loading docks, covered porches, and so forth are not considered indoors or outdoors. Employers should consider the extent that air flow is constricted in assessing exposures in these spaces.

For example, protective masks may not be necessary for fully vaccinated employees riding with fully vaccinated coworkers to a jobsite a couple of hours away; but a respirator may be required for unvaccinated workers in this situation. Even fully-vaccinated employees working in some situations may need respiratory protection; such as, around an unvaccinated coworker performing heavy manual labor inside a confined space with poor ventilation should be considered for respiratory protection due to the particularly high level of exposure that could occur.

Other PPE:

Employers should consider other personal protective equipment when assessing mask requirements. Gloves, gowns, and face shields may be appropriate for limiting exposure to COVID-19.

Staff-Only Face Coverings Considerations in School-Specific Scenarios

Scenario	Low Transmission Risk	Medium Transmission Risk	High Transmission Risk
In Classroom or Office Working Alone	X – when “working alone,” a mask is not required		
General Group Instructional Setting	X – with 6 feet of distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) easily maintained		
Individual/Small Group Instructional Support Setting		X – with 6 feet of distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s)	X – without 6 feet of distance, sustained close contact between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s)
Office Settings— School and Non- School-Based	X – with 6 feet of distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) easily maintained		
Transportation (Driver and Staff)		X – with 6 feet of distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) mostly maintained	X – without 6 feet of Distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s), sustained close contact
Food Service	X – with 6 feet of Distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) easily maintained	X – with 6 feet of distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) mostly maintained	
Health/Isolation Room		X – whether nurse or other staff (provide an FDA approved mask for nursing activities)	X – if near health/isolation room, sustained close contact

Scenario	Low Transmission Risk	Medium Transmission Risk	High Transmission Risk
Band (for teacher/staff only. All others refer to DOH guidance)	X – classroom instruction with 6-foot distancing between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) without instruments.	X –; with 6 feet of distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) mostly maintained.	X—workers directly assisting students while playing wind instruments.
Choir (requirements for teacher/staff only. All others refer to DOH guidance)	X – classroom instruction with 6-foot distancing between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) and activities using conversational voice levels, not singing.	X –with 6 feet of distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) mostly maintained.	X—workers approaching students while singing
Drama, Theater, Dance, Movement, Speech, Debate (for teacher/staff only. All others refer to DOH guidance)	X – classroom instruction with 6-foot distancing between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) and activities using conversational voice levels.	X – with 6 feet of distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) mostly maintained when elevated voice or singing is used.	X—workers approaching students while using an elevated voice or singing
Physical Education (Outdoor)	X – with 6 feet of distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s); cloth face covering worn at all times.		
Physical Education (Indoor)		X – with 6 feet of distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) mostly maintained; cloth face covering worn at all times	
Distribution Centers	X – with 6 feet of distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s) easily maintained	X – without 6 feet of distance between worker(s) and between worker(s) and student(s)	