

# COVID-19 Outbreaks in Washington State K-12 Schools

Washington State Department of Health

July 30, 2021

## Executive Summary

- This report describes COVID-19 outbreaks in K-12 schools that were reported to the Washington State Department of Health (DOH).
- A total of 310 COVID-19 outbreaks occurred in K-12 schools between August 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.
- 1171 COVID-19 cases were associated with outbreaks in K-12 schools. Seventy one percent of COVID-19 outbreaks involved two or three cases.
- The highest number of outbreaks reported have been in April and May, 2021 with 63 and 57 outbreaks reported respectively so far. This coincides with the [Children and Youth Mental Health Crisis Emergency Proclamation](#) of the Governor requiring in-person education for K-12 schools starting on April 5<sup>th</sup> and April 19<sup>th</sup>.
- Sixty five percent of COVID-19 cases were students aged 18 and under.
- This report will not be updated in August 2021, as K-12 schools will be on summer break. DOH will resume monthly updates to this report at the end of September 2021.

## Methods

This report was created using information from COVID-19 test results, COVID-19 outbreaks reported by local health jurisdictions to DOH, and DOH interviews with K-12 school administrators or COVID-19 coordinators. The investigation of COVID-19 cases to confirm that a cluster meets Washington State's outbreak definition is time intensive, therefore, the number of cases and outbreaks reported by a local health jurisdiction may change over time as outbreak details become available.

## Definition of a COVID-19 Outbreak in Washington State K-12 Schools

A COVID-19 outbreak in a K-12 school is considered when the following criteria have been met:

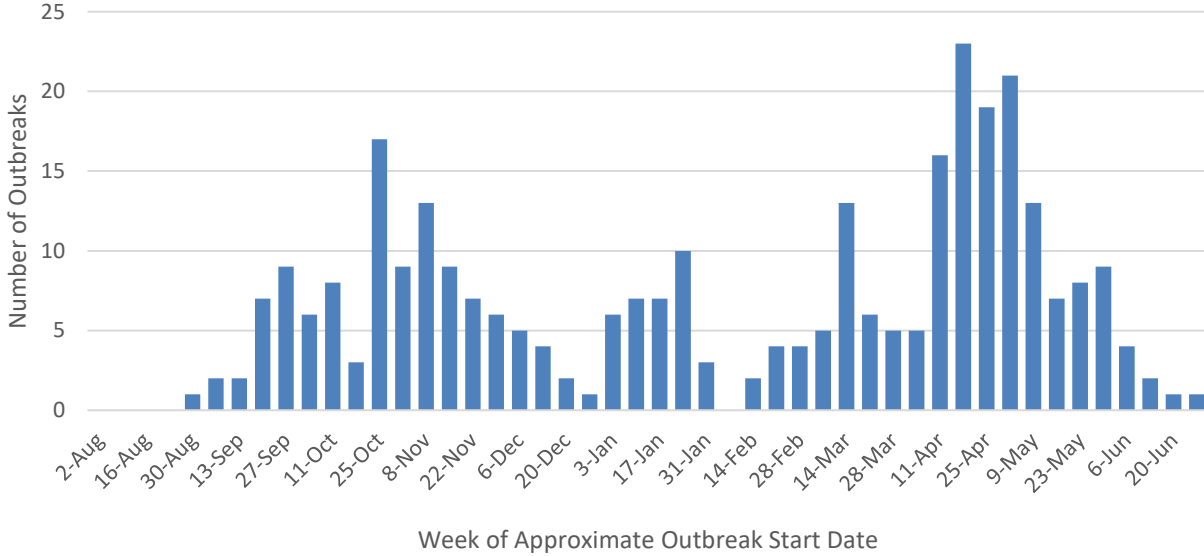
- There are two or more laboratory-positive (PCR or antigen) COVID-19 cases among students or staff.
- The cases have a symptom onset within a 14-day period of each other.
- The cases are epidemiologically linked.
- The cases do not share a household.
- The cases are not identified as close contacts of each other in another setting.

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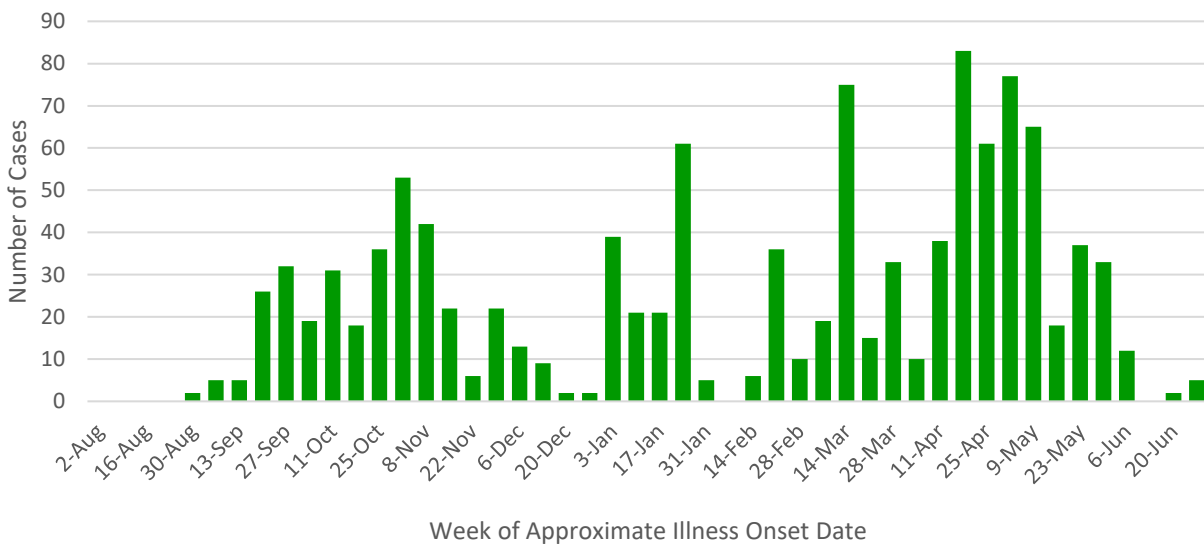
### COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools, by week of approximate outbreak start date

The following epidemiologic curve shows the weekly count of the 310 COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools between August 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021.



### Cases associated with COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools, by week of approximate illness onset date

The following epidemiologic curve shows the week of approximate illness onset of the 1171 COVID-19 cases that were associated with outbreaks in K-12 schools. The approximate illness onset date is defined as the date when a case’s COVID-19 symptoms began. If the case was asymptomatic, or the symptom start date is unknown, the illness onset date is when the case was tested for COVID-19. Cases from a specific outbreak can be spread out over time, so the cases reported in a given week may not all be associated with the outbreaks reported in the same week.



## COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools, by county

Local health jurisdictions reported 310 COVID-19 outbreaks that occurred in K-12 schools across twenty-two counties between August 1, 2020 and April 30, 2021. The number of outbreaks by county ranged from 1 to 67. A total of 1171 COVID-19 cases were associated with these outbreaks. The median number of cases per outbreak was two. Seventy one percent of all outbreaks involved two or three cases. The smallest outbreak involved two cases, and the largest involved 36.

In April, all students were required to be offered a hybrid option to return to school, per the [Children and Youth Mental Health Crisis Emergency Proclamation of the Governor](#). This went into effect on April 5<sup>th</sup> for all students in kindergarten through fifth or sixth grade, and on April 19<sup>th</sup> for all remaining K-12 students. Prior to April, school districts were in different phases of re-opening, and there was significant variation in the number of schools open and the proportion of students receiving in-person instruction by jurisdiction. These differences will account for some of the variation in the number of outbreaks reported by local health jurisdictions. Information on school re-opening by district is collected by the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and can be found [here](#).

County	Number of Outbreaks	Number of Associated Cases	Median Cases Per Outbreak
Benton	9	28	2
Chelan	3	4	2
Clark	14	33	2
Cowlitz	9	22	2
Franklin	10	26	2
Grant	6	17	3
Grays Harbor	5	35	2
King	67	256	2
Kitsap	11	63	3
Lincoln	4	69	18
Okanogan	1	7	7
Pierce	46	114	2
San Juan	1	8	8
Skagit	3	7	2
Snohomish	38	132	3
Spokane	43	236	5
Stevens	2	4	2
Thurston	8	27	3
Walla Walla	3	7	2
Whatcom	9	33	3
Whitman	2	9	5
Yakima	15	34	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>1171</b>	<b>2</b>

## Characteristics of Washington State K-12 schools

Among the 310 K-12 schools that experienced a COVID-19 outbreak, 71 (23%) were private, and 239 (77%) were public. At the time of their outbreak, five schools reported a fully remote instructional model; 20 schools were teaching fully in-person; 36 schools were using a hybrid instructional model; and 19 schools were primarily remote with exceptions for some groups of students, such as those with special learning needs. A hybrid model includes schools that were alternating in-person learning with remote learning, using phased in grade levels, or some combination of both. The remaining 230 outbreaks either reported another learning modality or data on their learning modality was unavailable.

	N	%
<b>Public/Private</b>		
Public	239	77
Private	71	23
<b>Learning Modality</b>		
In Person	20	7
Hybrid	36	12
Remote	5	2
Remote with exceptions*	19	6
Other/Unknown	230	73

\* Exceptions include in person learning for students with special learning needs

## Characteristics of cases associated with COVID-19 outbreaks in Washington State K-12 schools

Among the 1171 COVID-19 cases that were linked to outbreaks in K-12 schools, the median age was 16 years. Forty six percent of COVID-19 cases were Non-Hispanic White, and 53% were female. Eleven COVID-19 cases were hospitalized overnight, and there were zero reported deaths. Of the hospitalized cases, all were among adult staff. Hospitalizations are reported if the case was hospitalized at least overnight and are reported to DOH through LHJ reporting and the WA DOH hospital surveillance system.

	N	%
<b>Median Age</b>	16	-
<b>Age Group</b>		
5 - 9	158	14
10 - 14	208	18
15 - 19	402	34
20 - 29	52	4
30 - 39	79	7
40 - 49	120	10
50 - 59	91	8
60+	60	5
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
Hispanic	103	9
Non-Hispanic White	534	46
Other	112	10
Unknown	421	36
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	593	53
Male	536	47
<b>Hospitalization overnight</b>	11	1
<b>Deaths</b>	0	0