



Grays Harbor County
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October 5, 2020

Grays Harbor School Leadership,

In September, Grays Harbor County had around 248 new cases of COVID-19. The County's 14-day case rate has been as high as 227.9/100,000, which occurred during the second and third week of September (9/8/2020-9/21/2020). Most recent data is still pending; however, with the number of cases that we have had in the last week of September, our case rate will be around six times higher than the State goal, which is 25 cases /100,000 population over 14 days. Grays Harbor County's current case rate is well into the **high COVID-19 activity level** (over 75 cases /100,000 population over 14 days) as outlined in Washington Department of Health's *Decision Tree for the Provision of in Person Learning among Public and Private K-12 Students during COVID-19 (Decision Tree)*.

I recommend all K-12 schools follow the guidance listed in Washington Department of Health's *Decision Tree* with regard to educational modality and extracurricular activities. Due to the magnitude of Grays Harbor County's current case rate all K-12 schools should prepare to implement the educational and extracurricular modalities associated with the 'high COVID-19 activity level' for an extended period of time. I recommend schools should consider implementing the educational and extracurricular modalities associated with a lower level of activity (as defined in the *Decision Tree* document) **only after Grays Harbor County's case rate shows a downward epidemiological trend for four consecutive weeks**.

The Grays Harbor Public Health's team and I will continue to provide information about County-level COVID-19 activity trends as it relates to the *Decision Tree* document. For case data, Grays Harbor Public Health will continue to update the local COVID-19 data webpage (<http://www.healthych.org/directory/covid19/casecount>). I encourage school leadership to utilize the Washington State COVID-19 risk assessment dashboard (<https://coronavirus.wa.gov/what-you-need-know/covid-19-risk-assessment-dashboard>) to monitor Grays Harbor County case rates and other key metrics as outlined in the *Decision Tree* document. Schools should review Grays Harbor County-level activity, rather than smaller geographic areas (ie. zip code), as County-level data better reflects the local disease activity levels and transmission. Further, utilization of Grays Harbor County data, rather than State-level data or neighboring county data, aligns with the frameworks established by the State of Washington (ie. Washington Safe Start plan and the *Decision Tree* for K-12 schools).

I understand that schools, families and individuals are facing very difficult decisions in these unprecedented times. As a community, each one of us can take action to reduce disease spread. Everyone should stay home when you are sick, wash your hands with soap and water often, stay at least 6 feet away from people you do not live with, and everyone who can should wear a cloth face covering at all times in public spaces. If we all follow these practices, we can disrupt the current community spread of COVID-19, at which time schools may be able to increase in-person activities.

Sincerely,


Dr. John Bausher
Grays Harbor County Health Officer