

Cowlitz County COVID-19 school data Updated 09/28/20

This report provides information that Cowlitz County residents and school superintendents can use to understand COVID-19 activity in our community as it relates to reopening schools. Cowlitz County Health & Human Services (CCHHS) will update these data every Monday, or the following business day if Monday is a holiday. The longer, more complete COVID-19 data report is still published, now every other Wednesday. The most recent COVID-19 data report can be accessed [here](#).

Contact Askcowlitzhealth@co.cowlitz.wa.us with any questions or comments.

School reopening

- Cowlitz County is currently in the **HIGH** level of COVID-19 activity, at **81** cases/100,000 population/14 days from 9/9 – 9/22.
- Between 9/8 - 9/14, **3.6%** of Cowlitz County COVID-19 tests came back positive. This is **below** the level at which DOH recommends caution.
- Cowlitz County was within or below the moderate level of COVID-19 activity for 7 ½ weeks (7/17 – 7/30 through 9/7 – 9/20) and has been in the high level since 9/8 – 9/21.
- **Good news: Our percent positivity rate is low**
The percent of tests that are positive is an important metric to keep an eye on. A low level of percent positivity indicates that we are performing enough tests in our community to identify cases so we can control the spread of COVID-19.
- **Caution warranted: Case are up, and our percent positivity may be trending up as well**
Cowlitz County has re-entered the “high” level of COVID-19 activity. We do not know how high rates will spike, or how long we will remain at the high level.

In addition, [more recent but incomplete data](#) on Cowlitz County’s percent positivity show a dramatic increase in this metric. Incomplete data on percent positivity could provide an estimate that is incorrectly too high or too low. The community should be aware that this metric *may* increase in the near future. Next Monday’s report will give us more conclusive data.

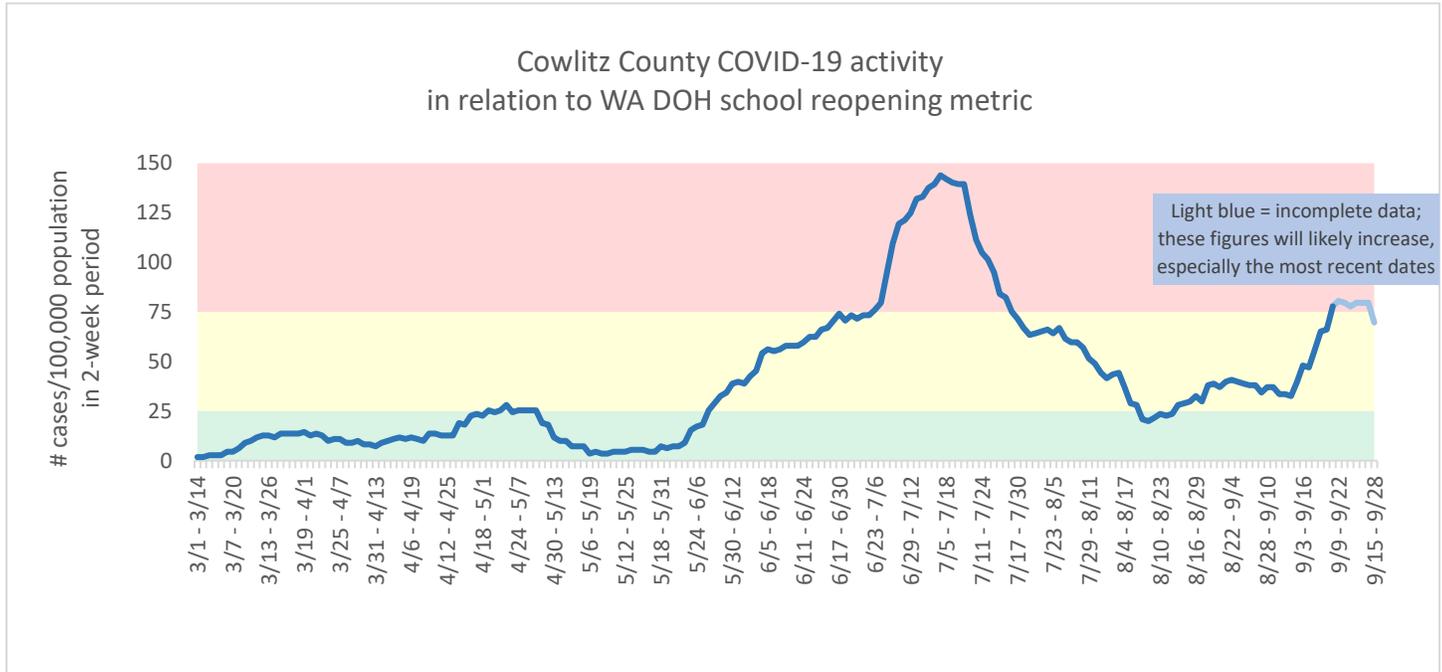
- **CCHHS school reopening recommendation**
With the recent spike in cases, CCHHS recommends school districts approach in-person learning with caution. We support districts considering expanding in-person learning to elementary students as described by the WA Department of Health [Decision Tree](#) with the understanding that if activity rates continue to rise, a switch back to remote learning could be appropriate. If rates remain in the high range for greater than 3 weekly reports or if COVID-19 activity continues to accelerate, we will recommend that all school districts return to remote learning. We acknowledge the difficult balance of weighing the risk of COVID-19 infections in schools with the needs of children and families that in-person school helps address. We also acknowledge that each school district has different circumstances, and support school districts remaining in remote learning while we observe the extent of this spike in cases. We will continue to work closely with school districts to provide individualized guidance as local circumstances warrant.

School reopening

These data illustrate how COVID-19 activity in our community compares to the metrics identified by the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Health for use in deciding when and how to reopen schools.

The calculation for Cowlitz County's most recent rate is:

$$(89 \text{ total cases between } 9/9 \text{ and } 9/22) / (110,500 \text{ population}) * (100,000 \text{ multiplier}) = 81 \text{ cases}/100,000 \text{ population}/2 \text{ weeks}$$



Note on incomplete data

Data in this graph are based on the date when the test was performed and include all cases reported to CCHS by 8:30am on the date of this report. Cases are typically reported to CCHHS one or more days after the date of the test; the vast majority of positive test results are reported to CCHHS within six days of the test date. To account for this lag in reporting, the date range ending in the sixth day before the date of this report is considered the most recent complete figure. More recent data points are considered incomplete and are color-coded light blue. Figures in light blue will likely increase in future reports once all tests performed on these dates have been reported to CCHHS.

High COVID-19 activity: DOH recommends distance learning with the option for limited in-person learning who need it most – such as children with disabilities. Sports and extracurricular activities should remain on pause.

Moderate COVID-19 activity: DOH recommends distance learning as described above, with gradual expansion of in-person education, beginning with elementary students. Younger students under the age of 10 benefit the most from in-person learning while also posing less risk for transmitting COVID-19 than older students. Most sports and extracurricular activities should remain on pause.

Low COVID-19 activity: DOH recommends full-time in-person learning for all elementary students and hybrid learning for middle and high school, eventually moving to in-person for middle and high school.

Helpful links & community context to understand school reopening

Cowlitz County school reopening recommendation considerations

In general, CCHHS will consider recommending expanded in-person learning, beginning with the youngest students, after COVID-19 activity remains in the moderate range for at least three consecutive weeks. After each expansion, COVID-19 activity will again need to remain in the moderate range for at least three consecutive weeks before recommending additional groups of students for in-person learning.

For community members tracking the daily number of cases reported by CCHHS

If Cowlitz County has fewer than about 2 cases per day, we will be in the LOW range for school reopening. Cowlitz County will be in the MODERATE range if we have between 2 and just under 6 cases per day, and the HIGH range if we identify 6 or more cases per day. Please note that the school metric is based on test date, while case counts are updated as they are reported to CCHHS, so daily-reported counts will not line up exactly.

WA DOH school reopening guidance

School reopening plans will vary by district. The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) have developed [guidance](#) for local health officials and school superintendents around health and safety recommendations. In addition, DOH has produced a [Decision Tree](#) to aid communities in reopening schools. The last page of the Decision Tree document includes an organized diagram outlining the factors and metrics to consider during this process.

The Decision Tree also recommends considering the percent positivity rate for tests. DOH recommends caution if this figure is above 5%. This indicator is provided in this report.

Clark County

School districts in Clark and Cowlitz Counties are coordinating their school reopening plans within the two-county region. Information about COVID-19 activity in Clark County can be found [here](#).

Indicator definitions

Percent positivity rate

This indicator is the number of positive test results received each week, divided by the total number of tests performed that week. It is based on the specimen collection date. Note that these data include multiple negative test results for one individual, while all positive test results after an individual's first positive result are excluded.

Data source: Test data obtained from the WA DOH [COVID-19 risk assessment dashboard](#), under "Testing Capacity". Data are typically downloaded on the date of this report. Population denominator obtained from Washington State Office of Financial Management [Population Estimates for 2020](#).

School reopening

This indicator can be used to understand how COVID-19 activity in Cowlitz County compares to the metrics outlined in the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) and DOH's Decision Tree for reopening schools. It is a population rate as opposed to a count. The numerator is the total number of cases over a two-week time period, based on the specimen collection date. The denominator is the April 1, 2020 Cowlitz County population estimate provided by the Washington State Office of Financial Management. Our last step is multiplying this figure by 100,000 to give us a rate per 100,000. Because of reporting lags, the last 6 days of data are considered incomplete. The reported figure is for the two-week time period ending on the 6th day prior to this report date. DOH COVID-19 activity level groups are color-coded for reference.

Data sources: CCHHS case log, including cases reported to CCHHS as of 8:30am on the "Updated" date on the first page of this report. Population denominator obtained from Washington State Office of Financial Management [Population Estimates for 2020](#).

Note: Our interpretations of time trends are based on the current graph and related statistical analysis (not shown in report). Trend interpretation and other findings may change as we have more data in the future.