



KLICKITAT COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH: ERINN QUINN, ARNP
HEALTH OFFICER: DR. AMY PERSON

August 6, 2020

Dear Klickitat County School Superintendents,

School reopening for in person learning is closely tied to community transmission rates of COVID-19. Even the American Academy of Pediatrics, a strong advocate for returning children to school, acknowledges that areas with high rates of community transmission should not be compelled to reopen. On August 5, 2020, Washington State Department of Health released guidance for provision of in person learning. In communities where COVID-19 activity is high (>75 cases/100,000/14days) distance learning with limited in person learning in small groups is recommended.

Klickitat County, like the majority of counties in Washington State has high COVID-19 activity. The distribution of cases and level of community transmission, however, is not uniform across the county, with more rural areas being at lower risk. For this reason, Klickitat County Public Health recommends that Goldendale and White Salmon Valley school districts begin the year with distance learning. School districts in the less densely populated, rural areas, can safely re-open with some level of in person learning. All school districts should have plans that address the health and safety needs of students and staff. Face coverings, physical separation between students and measures to quickly identify and isolate children or staff who become ill are critical for all schools to operate safely.

Klickitat County Public Health will continue to work with local school districts in the coming days and weeks to ensure that all schools are prepared to operate safely in the COVID-19 pandemic. We would like to ask that local school districts join us in promoting public health messages regarding reopening and adherence to state and local guidelines.

Klickitat County residents can also play a vital role in reducing community transmission by wearing face coverings, maintaining physical distancing, avoiding large gatherings and staying home if sick or a close contact with someone with COVID-19. If COVID-19 disease activity can be dropped to moderate or low levels, all schools could safely offer in person learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy D. Person MD".

Amy D. Person, M.D.

Health Officer, Klickitat County Public Health