



STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF GOVERNOR JAY INSLEE

**PROCLAMATION BY THE GOVERNOR
AMENDING PROCLAMATIONS 20-05, 20-08, and 20-09, et seq.**

20-09.4

K-12 Schools

WHEREAS, on February 29, 2020, I issued Proclamation 20-05, proclaiming a State of Emergency for all counties throughout Washington State as a result of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak in the United States and confirmed person-to-person spread of COVID-19 in Washington State; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the continued worldwide spread of COVID-19, its significant progression in Washington State, and the high risk it poses to our most vulnerable populations, I have subsequently issued several amendatory proclamations, exercising my emergency powers under RCW 43.06.220 by prohibiting certain activities and waiving and suspending specified laws and regulations, including issuance of Emergency Proclamations 20-25, et seq., which limit Washingtonians' ability to participate in certain activities; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 disease, caused by a virus that spreads easily from person to person which may result in serious illness or death and has been classified by the World Health Organization as a worldwide pandemic, has broadly spread throughout Washington State and remains a significant health risk to all of our people, especially members of our most vulnerable populations; and

WHEREAS, during early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, health professionals and epidemiological modeling experts indicated that the spread of COVID-19, if left unchecked, threatened to overwhelm portions of Washington's public and private health-care system; and

WHEREAS, health professionals and epidemiological modeling experts indicated that continued operation of schools could increase the spread of COVID-19 throughout Washington and would increase the threat to our residents and our health system; and

WHEREAS, to counter the threat of COVID-19 spread posed by continued operation of schools, in Emergency Proclamations 20-08, and 20-09, et seq., I prohibited public school districts, charter schools, and private schools from conducting in-person educational, recreational, and other K-12 school programs using school facilities, and also prohibited the Washington Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Youth, the Washington School for the Deaf, and the Washington State School for the Blind from conducting student educational and outreach services; and

WHEREAS, schools are the foundation of Washington's communities, and in addition to traditional classroom education, schools provide a variety of vital services to students, families and communities

that play a vital role in students' ability to succeed, including academic supports, special education supports, health therapies, mental/behavioral supports, access to nutritious food, and other community services; and

WHEREAS, closing our schools was stressful for all Washingtonians, and was particularly difficult for children with heightened social, physical, developmental, or emotional needs, and those who rely on our schools to provide services, structure, and positive social interactions; and

WHEREAS, beyond COVID-19 infections, the pandemic caused other health concerns including an increase in emergency department visits related to mental health crisis for young children and adolescents since the pandemic started; and

WHEREAS, in-person learning has a broad range of benefits for children beyond educational instruction, including the development of social and emotional skills, and the absence of in-person learning may be particularly harmful for children living in poverty, children of color, English language learners, children with diagnosed disabilities, and young children, and can further widen inequities in our society; and

WHEREAS, although parents, students, school teachers, and administrators made tremendous efforts to continue to function through distance learning, and I recognize their extraordinary resilience, strength, adaptability, and courage, all agree that keeping our schools open benefits our children, families and communities; and

WHEREAS, a highly transmissible variant of the coronavirus, known as the "delta variant", is currently causing an increase in cases predominantly among unvaccinated individuals, hospitalizations, and deaths around the country, has infected a few fully vaccinated individuals, and is increasingly the dominant strain of the virus in Washington State; and

WHEREAS on July 27, 2021, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) modified its face mask recommendations and now recommends, among other things, that everyone, including those people who are fully vaccinated, wear a mask indoors in public in locations of substantial or high transmission of the virus and universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools, regardless of vaccination status; and

WHEREAS, safely returning to in-person instruction in the fall 2021 is a priority, and the CDC continues to recommend that K-12 schools should be the last settings to close after all other mitigation measures have been employed, and the first to reopen when they can do so safely; and

WHEREAS, vaccination is the strongest protective measure against COVID-19 available, as demonstrated between February and June 2021, when 97% of COVID-19 cases, 96% of COVID-19 hospitalizations, and 93% of COVID-19 deaths in Washington State were in people not fully vaccinated, however, as of July 24, only 35% of 12-15 year-olds and 44% of 16-17 year-olds in Washington state were fully vaccinated and people under 12 years of age are not old enough to be vaccinated; and

WHEREAS, there is high mixing of vaccinated and unvaccinated people in schools, and vaccines are not available to children younger than 12 years of age;

WHEREAS, the nature of COVID-19 viral transmission, including both asymptomatic and symptomatic spread as well as the relatively high infectious nature, suggests it is appropriate to maintain a careful, flexible, and science-based approach to appropriate safety measures in our schools; and

WHEREAS, schools must continue to be prepared to be flexible to pivot in whole or in part to distance learning if there is a COVID-19 outbreak in their county or within their school community and to follow guidance from the Department of Health, the Department of Labor & Industries, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction to help mitigate risk to students, teachers, and the community; and

WHEREAS, the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and its progression in Washington State continue to threaten the life and health of our people as well as the economy of Washington State, and remain a public disaster affecting life, health, property or the public peace; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Department of Health continues to maintain a Public Health Incident Management Team in coordination with the State Emergency Operations Center and other supporting state agencies to manage the public health aspects of the incident; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Military Department Emergency Management Division, through the State Emergency Operations Center, continues coordinating resources across state government to support the Department of Health and local health officials in alleviating the impacts to people, property, and infrastructure, and continues coordinating with the Department of Health in assessing the impacts and long-term effects of the incident on Washington State and its people; and

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jay Inslee, Governor of the state of Washington, as a result of the above-noted situation, and under Chapters 38.08, 38.52 and 43.06 RCW, do hereby proclaim and order that a State of Emergency continues to exist in all counties of Washington State, that Emergency Proclamation 20-05 and all amendments thereto remain in effect as otherwise amended, and that, to help preserve and maintain life, health, property or the public peace pursuant to RCW 43.06.220(1)(h), Emergency Proclamations 20-08, and 20-09, et seq., are amended to prohibit any public, private, or charter school that provides education at any grade level from kindergarten through twelfth grade from providing in-person learning unless the school complies with the Department of Health's requirements for K-12 schools found [here](#), the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's COVID-19 guidance found [here](#), and the Department of Labor & Industries' requirements and guidance, including, but not limited to, those for preventing COVID-19 found [here](#).

I again direct that the plans and procedures of the *Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan* be implemented throughout state government. State agencies and departments are directed to continue utilizing state resources and doing everything reasonably possible to support implementation of the *Washington State Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan* and to assist affected political subdivisions in an effort to respond to and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

I continue to order into active state service the organized militia of Washington State to include the National Guard and the State Guard, or such part thereof as may be necessary in the opinion of The Adjutant General to address the circumstances described above, to perform such duties as directed by competent authority of the Washington State Military Department in addressing the outbreak.

