



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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June 2, 2020

Dear Local Board of Health Members:

We want to begin with a huge shout out to the work our local and state health department employees have been doing to respond to COVID-19, alongside our many, many partners. As we write this, the Snohomish Health District, which had the first Washington case, and the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) have been in COVID-19 response for 134 days. Prior to that, many of us were in preparation mode for weeks. A lot has happened over these days, and we can be proud of Washington achieving our initial goals of decreasing the peak and spreading out cases in a way that didn't overwhelm our health care delivery system.

As we move forward to reopen our economy and keep it open, it is going to take all of our leadership to suppress this virus. To do that, your local health jurisdiction employees and we at DOH need your assistance.

First, it will be important we all message that this crisis is not over. There is much recovery that must happen, and recovery depends upon all of us continuing to take personal protective measures so we don't go backward. This includes:

- Promoting the continued need to keep physical distance of at least 6 feet whenever possible;
- Washing our hands thoroughly and often;
- Wearing an appropriate face covering when we can't keep our distance;
- Regularly sanitizing high-touch surfaces;
- Staying home when we feel ill and getting a COVID-19 test if we have symptoms suggestive of COVID; and
- Remembering that it is safer at home, especially for those 65+ years of age and those with chronic underlying health issues.

Second, be a role model to your community by wearing a mask and following physical distancing practices in public settings.

Third, decreasing the peak and gaining the necessary time to better prepare our systems to respond was critical. And this is where the lift for public health is very large and where your role as a Local Board of Health member is so crucial.

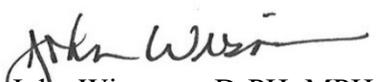
**To continue to suppress this virus, performance of the public health system is going to be absolutely essential to moving the economy forward and protecting the health of the folks we all serve.** We know that like all things, it starts locally, which is why it is absolutely critical that together we ensure:

1. **Abundant COVID-19 testing** in our communities and ensuring everyone who needs it has quick access. This means taking additional steps to ensure our marginalized and most vulnerable communities have ready access to testing sites that meet their needs.
2. **Ample case and contact tracing staff, seven days a week, in our state and local health departments, and that they are implementing standardized protocols and measuring their performance daily.** Washington, Oregon, and California health officials are setting the minimum number of staff to do this work at 15 for every 100,000 population. This work is crucial. It is imperative that these staff:
  - Make contact with reported cases within 24 hours of a positive lab test and ensure they can safely isolate themselves (either at home or in local community facilities) and get the support they need to be successful in isolating;
  - Make contact with all the close contacts of these cases within 48 hours and ensure they can safely quarantine themselves (either at home or in local community facilities) and get the support they need to be successful in that effort; and
  - Make daily contact, through a combination of human touch (phone calls) and electronic touch (e.g., text/email) with the cases and contacts to make sure they are getting any support they need to stay isolated/quarantined for the appropriate amount of time, getting any referrals they may need to medical care, getting their questions/concerns answered about COVID, and that they can know when it is safe for them to return to work or other activities outside their home.
3. Our health departments are able to **quickly identify outbreaks, arrange for testing, and contain the outbreak, seven days a week**, in congregate living situations (nursing and assisted living facilities, jails, youth detention centers, etc.), workplaces (food processing facilities, agricultural work places, office environments, etc.), and schools when they reopen.
4. **Ensure your businesses and other entities are following the safe reopening guidance** put forth by the state.

We all know the public health system has long been under-resourced. Together we have been working to shore it up through efforts we call foundational public health services. We must take the opportunity of the CARES act funding to ensure the critical services noted above are funded and that our local health department staff are supported in rising to the greatest challenge of our careers.

Your local leadership and support of your health department is urgently needed. Through our collective action, we can do this for the long haul.

Sincerely,

  
John Wiesman, DrPH, MPH  
Secretary of Health

  
Kathy Lofy, MD  
State Health Officer/Chief Science Officer