

Jan. 19, 2020

A Message from the COVID Safety Team

Dear staff,

As part of our ongoing work to keep you informed about COVID safety practices and protocols we will be sharing regular updates. Each update will include the latest information from local and regional agencies as well as stories and resources within our district.

Vaccine Updates/FAQ

- We are currently working with our vaccine providers and the Whatcom County Health Department to help district staff identified as eligible access vaccines. Washington State is currently in Phase 1B-Tier 1 of vaccine distribution.
 - Our state released a tool called [Phase Finder](#) to help individuals determine their COVID-19 vaccine eligibility.
 - Tier 1B-1 age eligibility has changed from 70 to 65 years and older. We have entered phase 1B-1.
 - Tiers 1B-2 through 1B-4 have become one eligibility category. This means that all educators working in a congregate setting will be eligible no matter what age.

Our state is getting about 100,000 vaccines a week and the goal is to vaccinate 45,000 people a day. The hope is that the supply coming into the state will increase. [The governor has shared broad details about the vaccine plan and distribution.](#)

- [FAQ re: vaccines from the Whatcom County Health Department](#)

From PeaceHealth regarding vaccines: We are adhering to state guidelines, and we will expand our outreach based on supply. We ask that people do not call or email their doctor's office directly. PeaceHealth will notify patients in each category when it is their turn, based on vaccine supply. Thank you for your patience!

From the Whatcom County Health Department (WCHD) re: vaccines: Vaccine is a federal asset that is first allocated by CDC to state health departments. The Washington State Department of Health then decides how much vaccine is allocated to each enrolled healthcare provider or pharmacy. The timeline for vaccine phases (as of right now) is also solely controlled by DOH, and we do not determine when we move into future phases.

Whatcom County is still prioritizing Phase 1A workers. Some counties in Washington with smaller populations have been able to complete vaccinations of their Phase 1A groups and are ready to move onto Phase 1B. In Whatcom County, there has only been enough vaccine shipped to vaccinate about 50-60% of the top priority Phase 1A workers so far, so Phase 1A individuals are still the priority currently.

If you are in **Phase 1B Tier 1**, keep in mind that your healthcare provider probably isn't yet offering vaccines to people eligible in Phase 1B.

- Check your healthcare provider's website for updates about vaccine availability.
- Pay attention to email or text updates from your provider.

- Please be patient. Know that your provider is likely getting many calls from people with questions about vaccines.
- Additionally, the state will allow providers flexibility for Phase 1B tier 2 through tier 4 eligible individuals to allow for easier administration of the vaccine in congregate settings and workplaces to help increase the throughout.

See the WCHD [vaccine update from Jan. 14](#) or [newsflash](#) from Jan.18. For regular updates from WCHD on vaccine distributions, sign up at whatcomcounty.us/signup. Enter your email and select Sign In, then scroll down to the News Flash section, and select “Health – Vaccine Updates for Schools.”

Whatcom County data and updates

Cases are rising across all of Whatcom County, with the biggest increases in Lynden and Nooksack Valley. The preliminary rate for Jan. 16 is 521 per 100,000 residents. The majority of cases are linked to social events within households. The WCHD is asking everyone to wear masks, keep physical distance, wash hands frequently and to not attend or host social gatherings of any size with non-household members.

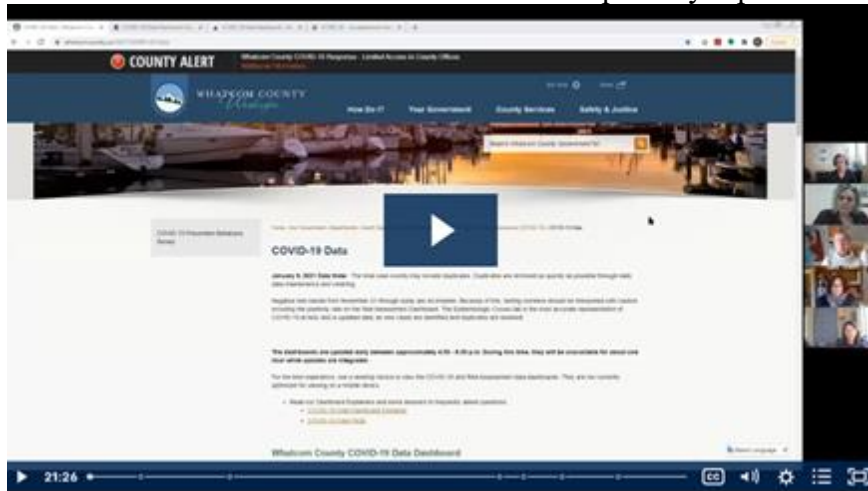
[WCHD News Flash: Jan. 13](#)

[Whatcom County Health Department Data Dashboard](#)

[Whatcom County COVID-19 testing information](#)

The Whatcom County Health Department made a video! [WATCH our COVID safety coordinator Jenny Lawrence ask local health representatives questions we’re hearing from staff.](#)

You’ll notice that the video is divided into chapters by topic.



Bellingham Public Schools links

- Message from Dr. Baker Jan. 14: [Focus on youngest learners, COVID cases rising in Whatcom County](#)
- [Bellingham Public Schools COVID dashboard](#)
- [Important resources and information for staff returning to our schools](#)