

## **Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19**

### **Who decides when schools can open?**

The final decision about when and how a school can open is up to the superintendent of that school district. The state and local health departments do set up guidelines for when to consider opening and closing schools that inform those decisions. You can look at the state department of health decision tree for opening and closing schools here:

[https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/DecisionTree-K12schools.pdf?utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery](https://www.doh.wa.gov/Portals/1/Documents/1600/coronavirus/DecisionTree-K12schools.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery)

The specific decisions about which grades open up when are up to that school district and take into account the unique needs of that school district. Your local health officer's primary role when it comes to schools is to develop and communicate guidelines for how to operate schools safely: things like 6 foot distancing, masking, and cohorting. Then if there are cases, the health officer leads the contact tracing effort around those cases.

### **What is a confirmed case?**

A confirmed case is a person who has tested positive for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus which causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in humans.

### **Where do you get your numbers?**

COVID-19 is a communicable disease which by law requires notification to the state health department as well as the local health jurisdiction. For Clallam County, our local health jurisdiction is the Clallam County Public Health office in Port Angeles. This means any hospitals, clinics, doctor offices, and laboratories in Clallam County testing for COVID-19 are required to notify Clallam County Public Health of all COVID-19 positive tests. We receive updates throughout the day, Monday through Sunday. In addition, if one of our county residents tests positive in another county, that county's public health office notifies Clallam County Public Health.

### **What do you do when you are told there is a positive case?**

As soon as we are notified at Clallam County Public Health of a positive case, our team begins investigating. We call the person who has tested positive and review their activities during their contagious period. We advise them and other household members regarding their isolation or quarantine, provide work letters,

and other support services. Our goal is to support the person who has been diagnosed and to find any other people who may have been exposed to the virus. The team calls people who have been in close contact with this person provides quarantine advice, work letters, and other support services. We don't disclose the name of the person who tested positive or any other identifying information about them unless they say it's ok.

### **What is isolation?**

Isolation is the term used for separating a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 from others to prevent infection.

### **What is quarantine?**

Quarantine is the term used for separating people who have been exposed to COVID-19 but have not yet developed the virus from others so that they do not transmit the virus in the days before they develop symptoms.

### **What is a close contact?**

A close contact is a person who has been exposed to COVID-19. To be defined as a close contact, you have to have spent 15 minutes or more within 6 feet of a person who has COVID-19 or engaged in very close contact with that person (kissing, some medical procedures, etc.). Because of the high risk of transmission in outbreaks, we consider all people in outbreaks to be close contacts.

### **What is an outbreak?**

An outbreak is when there are two or more cases at a single location (outside of a household) that are epidemiologically linked, meaning one was infected by the other. Sometimes, there may be two people who worked at the same business who got COVID-19, but not from each other - say they both took plane trips to separate places and contracted the virus there. The reason it only takes 2 cases to make an outbreak is that 2 cases means there is the possibility of quite a bit more transmission. Acting fast to close the area and do contact tracing helps contain outbreaks.

### **How do you know when a case is recovered?**

The time it takes to recover from COVID-19 is really variable. Recovery from COVID-19 is defined as being >10 days from the onset of symptoms and >24 hours since the resolution of fever and improvement in all other symptoms. Most people diagnosed with COVID-19 will recover within about 2 weeks. Some will be ill for months. Some will face long-term disability from their illness, and

unfortunately some will die. We are still learning what the long range implications of COVID-19 infection are for a person.

**How do you determine the “Rate of Cases per 100,000 in the last 14 days”?**

We calculate this number using the date the test was administered, not the date it was reported to the department of health because testing delays in different parts of the county can affect that reporting quite a bit. We calculate this number using tests administered up to 3 days prior to reporting it to allow for these delays. So if today is September 30<sup>th</sup>, we would use data from tests administered between September 14<sup>th</sup> and September 27<sup>th</sup>. Clallam County has approximately 76,000 residents, so in order to get the rate per 100,000 population, you need to divide that number by 0.76. For example, if there are 10 cases in the 14 day period being evaluated, the calculation would be:  $10/0.76=13.157$ . Therefore, our county has had 13 cases per 100,000 in that 14 day period.