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Olympia, WA 98504-7200



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

k12.wa.us

August 12, 2021

The Honorable Jay Inslee, Governor of Washington
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Re: Request for Executive Action to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in Schools

Dear Governor Inslee:

Over the past 18 months as we have navigated the COVID-19 pandemic, you and I have shared the values of protecting the health and safety of our school communities and ensuring our students have continued access to the high-quality learning and social-emotional supports provided by our schools. I have appreciated your leadership and your commitment to making decisions grounded in science and in what is best for our students, school employees, and their families.

With that in mind, I am strongly encouraging you to issue an executive order requiring all employees working in public K–12 schools to get their vaccination against COVID-19 as a condition of employment, consistent with the order you issued on August 9 for state employees and licensed healthcare providers.

With the continued increase in cases of COVID-19 across our state due to the highly contagious Delta variant, students losing precious time learning in-person with their educators and peers because of quarantine or, potentially, school building closures is a real threat. Especially after a year and a half of remote and hybrid learning, a continuity of in-person instruction will be more important this year than ever.

In consulting with several of our partners and stakeholders in K–12 education, I was told unequivocally that if you are going to make the decision to require the vaccine for school employees, it will make a significant difference if that decision is made as soon as possible. Our school districts are making staffing decisions for fall and negotiating agreements with their labor partners now. Providing districts with as much notice as possible will help to ensure a smoother implementation of the order for districts and school employees.

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Consistent with your order requiring the vaccine for state employees and licensed healthcare providers, should you choose to issue an order related to school employees, I encourage you to include the fact that any school employee who chooses not to receive their vaccination by the specified date will be subject to *non-disciplinary dismissal* from employment. I also encourage exemptions for school employees out of medical and religious necessity, consistent with your August 9 order.

In addition, school employees will need time before the date in your order to (1) provide proof of their vaccination if they are already vaccinated, or (2) make appointments, receive both or their only dose of the vaccine, and wait two weeks following their final dose to officially be fully vaccinated.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, which I firmly believe will make our schools safer and reduce the possibility of harmful disruptions in learning. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with questions.

Sincerely,



Chris Reykdal
Superintendent of
Public Instruction