

Frequently Asked Questions for the 2021-2022 COVID MOU

Below are questions we anticipate employees having related to the MOU. It is important to read the full MOU as there are details there that may not be covered here.

1. What are the physical distancing requirements for students and adults this year?

The guidance from the DOH for the 2021-2022 is less specific than last year related to physical distancing. The guidance recommends that districts make an effort to provide 3 feet of social distancing between students during class and during meals. The guidance is clear however, that full time, in person learning will be offered in all schools regardless of physical distancing capabilities.

Labor and Industries suggest a 6 feet physical distancing space between adults and students where possible. We know that when teaching, it is difficult to remain 6 feet from students. It will be important that staff are masked when less than 6 feet from students. Staff are permitted to wear face shields rather than masks when teaching from the front of the room.

When adults are interacting together, every effort should be made to remain 6 feet apart.

2. What are the in-person meeting requirements for staff?

Only essential meetings, those that really require in person attendance, will be held in person as long as 6 feet physical distancing can be maintained. Non-essential meetings, and meetings in which 6-foot physical distancing cannot be maintained, will have a virtual option for attendance. It is important to note that attendance at any virtual meeting during the workday should be attended from the worksite.

3. What are the requirements for facial coverings?

At the time of the writing of this FAQ, there is a mask mandate put in place by the governor. This mandate requires that everyone, students, staff, visitors, volunteers, must wear a face covering while indoors. Vaccinated employees working alone in a workspace or travelling alone in a vehicle may remove their face covering but must replace it if a person comes into the workspace or vehicle. Unvaccinated staff must wear a mask in the workplace at all times. As we have seen in the last year, the guidelines from the Department of Health and Labor and Industries related to face coverings change. Please look for updated guidance through District employee communications systems and in INK.

The district will provide employees masks and face shields with a drape as needed. The drape is required in the guidance. They will also provide transparent masks for staff who work with students who need to see mouth movement.

4. What can be expected for safety protections at open houses?

The only open houses that should be occurring this year in person are those where students are being oriented to the school. Attendees should be physically distanced during the event with

mitigating measures in place, like staggered start times, that helps to limit the number of people in spaces. Masks are required if inside and doors and windows should be open to keep rooms and hallways ventilated. Other types of Open House events that are for parents only or are not designed to orient students to the school should be held virtually or not at all.

5. I work with small groups in which I have to work closely with individual or limited number of students. What protections are there for me?

In addition to the appropriate face coverings, the portable plexi-glass barriers are still available for use.

6. What are the expectations for sanitizing desks, materials and high touch areas. this year?

- Under the DOH guidelines, desks are only required to be cleaned at the end of every day. Teachers/Specialists are responsible for cleaning the desks at the end of the day.
- There is no requirement in the guidance this year that students have their own, individually used manipulatives and supplies. These may now be shared.
- Custodians will be sanitizing high touch areas throughout the school as part of their workload.
- The district will continue to supply cleaning supplies to all areas in which sanitization must occur.
- There are some specific guidelines outlined in the MOU for SPED programs for sanitizing.

7. What leaves will be available if I get COVID or am quarantined due to exposure?

- Employees always have access to their accrued sick leave.
- In addition, there are 5 days of COVID leave for workplace exposures. Like last year, the district will have contact tracers who will investigate each COVID exposure, employee who is exhibiting symptoms, and those who have contracted the illness. Following the guidelines of the Department of Health, the contract tracers will determine if an employee cannot return to work and for how long. While making this determination, like last year, the contract tracers will be asking questions about where exposures took place, if you are vaccinated, and the like.
- To the advantage of many education employees, but to complicate matters, a new law was passed in Washington State that indicates frontline workers who contract COVID should be considered to have gotten it on the worksite. The vast majority of education employees are considered frontline workers in this new law. There are mitigating circumstances that will be considered like a person gets COVID but they have been on vacation for the last 2 weeks. That person would not have gotten COVID at the workplace.
- The advantage this new law is that if it is determined that COVID was contracted at the workplace, the employee can qualify L&I. With the qualification of L&I, our collective bargaining agreements provide 30 days of security leave that will now be available for

employees. This security leave offsets the loss of wages while on L&I as this benefit only covers a portion of lost income. Each time an employee needs to be gone for a workplace exposure, an employee can apply for L&I, if approved, a new 30 days of security leave will start. These 30 days of security leave is unique to Spokane. It was bargained many years ago. We never expected to have to use it this way, but it serves a huge benefit to our members in these COVID times.

- L&I starts after the 3rd day an employee is off work, the 5 days we have bargained above for workplace exposures, can fill this gap. It is important to note, there are only 5 days of this “gap” leave in total for the 2021-22 school year. It does not renew with each COVID exposure.

8. Can I be expected to teach in person and virtual?

NO.

9. Do schools have to enforce cohorting of students this year?

No. Cohorting is not part of the guidance from the DOH this year.

10. Why do Elementary students have to eat in my classroom again this year with the relaxed guidance from DOH?

Put simply: safety for students and staff. If eating in the cafeteria, there would be many students eating in a small place with ventilation, but not like outside. Limiting the number of students to the classroom setting will provide less potential exposure. In addition, most schools as part of their SEL work, have teachers interacting with their students during lunch. It is much safer for teachers to do this in the classroom with their assigned students they see all day than in a cafeteria full of unmasked students from several different classes.

11. Why do students have to go get their lunch from the cafeteria? This is going to be a huge mess. Why couldn't we just have the food dropped to the rooms like we did before?

There were lengthy conversations about this. The federal government has returned to their pre-COVID requirement that students have a choice for fruits and vegetables at lunch. It is impossible for Nutrition Services staff to provide individualized lunches at each school site to meet this requirement.

12. Why do secondary students have no changes to their lunch? Why is this fair?

Secondary teachers have their duty-free lunch when students are eating. Elementary teachers get their lunch when the students go to recess. Students cannot eat in classrooms as they would be unsupervised. Schools are taking more precautions to spread students out when eating. In addition, these grade levels have more students that have been vaccinated.

13. Will there be any training around COVID protocols?

Yes, the first week staff are back in buildings, training will occur on the following:

- current COVID-19 protocols and the use of mitigation measures to combat the spread
- sanitization of high touch areas.
- appropriate PPE for those who must perform tasks that cannot be accomplished with physical distancing, such as diapering, toileting, feeding etc.
- Specific training to performing arts employees on the COVID-19 protocols which have very specific DOH protocols that apply only these classes and activities.
- Training extra extracurricular athletic and activities employees on the COVID-19 protocols specific for employees involved in these activities and sports.

14. What will happen if schools are shut down again by the state?

If the entire district is closed, we plan to revert to the remote model that was in place for last year. The bargaining teams will meet within 24 hours to discuss any additional working conditions issues that cannot be predicted in advance.

15. What is the purpose of the COVID workplace safety committees outlined in the MOU?

We intend for these committees to be the front line of defense for problem-solving employee concerns related to COVID safety. We have allowed for each school's existing safety committees to be expanded in membership with the added responsibility of COVID safety protocols, and have provided pay in the event the meetings are outside the workday for the member, classified or certificated. Employees should take issues of safety to this committee or the COVID supervisor so that it may be addressed.

If issues are not resolved at the safety committee, they should be reported to the District and SEA. While employees have the right to report to L&I places where COVID safety protocols are not being followed, a quicker response can be garnered within the district.

16. Will there still be a place that I can anonymously ask questions and share concerns with the district?

Yes. While the hotline will not longer be available, there will be an anonymous online form that can be submitted to the district.

17. What about students who refuse to wear their mask or who are intentionally putting students at risk?

Like in the last MOU, the district will ensure that students that are behaving in a manner that will put students and staff at risk will be taken seriously and addressed by administration. The discipline laws do not allow for a prescribed consequence of exclusion for instances such as this, but one option could be to remove the student from the learning environment.

An addition to last year's MOU, we know that we likely have more students unwilling to wear their masks. For students that fail to follow staff directives to remain masked will be treated as defiant behavior. Again, we cannot prescribe a discipline outcome, but removal from the learning environment in one option.

17. There is a lot here about instructional staff, but what about everyone else?

Much about the safety protocols apply to everyone. There are some additional protections and working condition issues that apply specifically to classified units.

- NS: Plexiglass can be installed between the ceiling and sneeze guard on the meal line to ensure greater protection for staff while distributing food.
- Mosaic Secretaries can request a plexiglass barrier be provided around them for greater protection during meal service.
- Nurses will return to normal duties. There is no expectation for nurses to be the supervisor of the isolation rooms. In addition, the nursing corps will be back to normal nursing responsibilities (to include those exacerbated by COVID) and will not be splitting duties as contract tracers. The district is hiring specific employees for contract tracing.
- For the secretarial staff, the district is ensuring there is a clear process for single point of entry. Other safety protocols from last year like the plexiglass on the front counter will remain.
- In the information technology groups, ITSC, PPE will still be provided, and employees will only be expected to support and work on equipment that is district property. We have continued indoor air quality and ventilation concerns for employees in the unit that work in the basement of the district office. The district will allow them to work remotely until a complete assessment of the indoor air quality in the basement. Unrelated to COVID, the district is assessing the work location for these employees in the future. Once the indoor air quality work is done the district and association will review the results and discuss next step.
- Due to the increase in workload related to COVID for the custodial staff, over time will be approved to meet these responsibilities. There will be additional training related to cleaning protocols specific for custodians.
- For those that work at the FROC, the district will provide individual staff cubicles to ensure 6 feet social distancing and plexiglass. Families will be scheduled.