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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 8/11/2020

TO: North Central Washington School Districts,
 Private Schools, School Nurses, and School Boards

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT

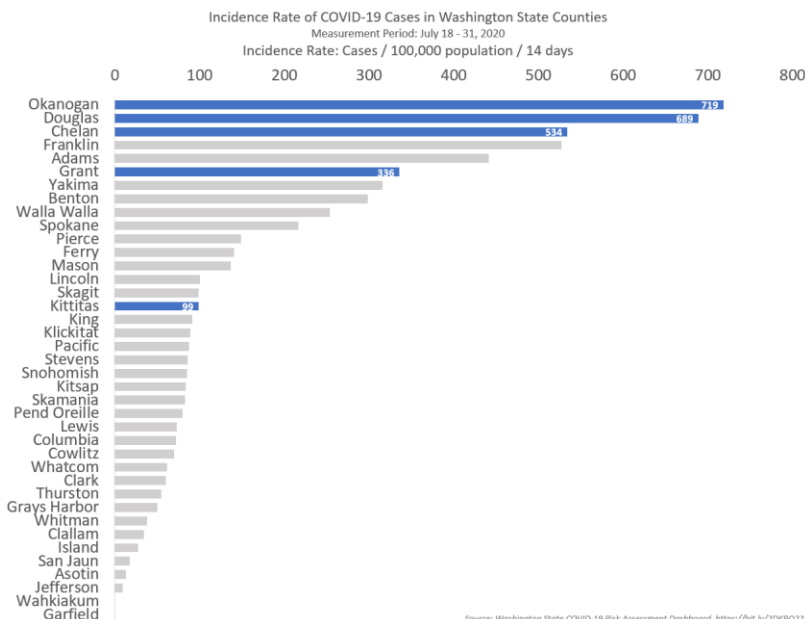
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North Central Washington – On Friday, August 7, 2020 the Health Officers for Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Okanogan, and Kittitas counties, released the Region 7 K-12 Guidance for Reopening to Classroom Instruction. This document outlines the expectations of the Health Officers for in-person instruction. Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases the Health Officers agree that, until the COVID incidence rate decreases, in-person instruction is not safe or recommended in North Central Washington.



Source: Washington State COVID-19 Risk Assessment Dashboard, <https://bit.ly/2DKB022>.

As of this date, based upon best available evidence, the Health Officers of Chelan, Douglas, Grant, Kittitas, and Okanogan counties support the following approach, which reflects Washington State Department of Health guidance:

- Schools and educators must be considered “essential businesses” and “essential workers”
 - Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment must be made available for staff and students to minimize risks during classroom instruction
 - Appropriate funding must be made available for engineering controls to minimize risks during classroom instruction
 - All accommodations made for other essential businesses should be extended to schools and educators, inclusive of remote education continuing through any future stay home orders.
- The county Health Officers do not support a return to in-person classroom instruction when the county’s incidence of COVID-19 is above 75 cases per 100,000 for 2 consecutive weeks (14 days).
- The county Health Officers do support a hybrid approach with K-5 and other educationally high-risk groups in-person in classrooms with COVID precautions when the county’s incidence of COVID-19 is less than 75 cases per 100,000 for 2 consecutive weeks (14 days).
- The county Health Officers support return to in-person classroom instruction for all student populations, with COVID-19 precautions, when the county incidence of COVID-19 is 25 cases per 100,000 for 2 consecutive weeks (14 days).
- School districts may petition the local public health jurisdiction for an exception to these reopening thresholds and other standards. Such petitions should be founded in evidence, on a reasonable basis and with supporting rationale.

The guidance also provides an outline of expectations and response during school COVID-19 outbreaks, positive case management, use of face masks and face coverings, as well as monitoring students and staff health.

The public health agencies in all four jurisdictions cannot stress the importance enough to the residents of our communities the dire need to slow the spread of COVID-19 to our elders, students, friends, and families. Each of them is depending on each of you to choose to protect your community, by limiting your social gatherings such as weddings, BBQs, birthday parties or celebration. Attending these functions without face coverings and social distancing is having an impact on businesses ability to fully open and schools being able to reopen to in school instruction. Our neighboring counties who recently surged with cases were able to flatten their curve, but only after the community changed their social behaviors and masked up. We will once again be able to enjoy our gatherings with friends and family, but for now let’s take a rain check, count the missed hugs, and reschedule them along with the family reunions, large group camping trips, and celebrations for a time when it is safer for all of us and let’s drive down our COVID rates and get our kids and school staff back to school safely.

The full school guidance document is located on the public health web sites <http://granthealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/K12regionalHOGuidance.pdf>.

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