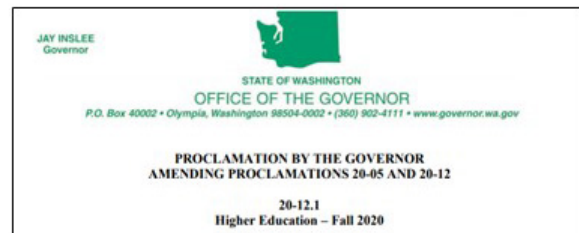


WASHINGTON STATE HIGHER EDUCATION REOPENING PLAN

Gov. Jay Inslee’s Higher Education Reopening Plan took effect Aug. 1, 2020. The plan consists of two documents:

- Health and safety requirements are listed in [Proclamation 20-12.1](#). These are the minimum protocols higher education institutions must follow to resume in-person instruction and services this fall.
- Additional guidance is provided in the [Campus Reopening Guide](#). The guide recommends safety measures for various campus functions: safety, support, food services, transportation and residences.



The plan applies to Washington’s public and private colleges and universities, technical schools and apprenticeship programs. This document answers commonly asked questions about the reopening plan.

What’s the difference between the proclamation and the guidance document?

The [higher education proclamation](#) spells out baseline safety protocols every college must follow. The [guidance document](#) is just that – a set of recommendations for the safe return to campus. The guidance document provides a flexible list of protocols colleges should consider as they bring students, faculty and staff back to campus safely. The words “considerations” and “recommendations” are woven throughout the guidance document.

So, the proclamation sets the mandatory foundation at every college; the guidance document allows each campus to build on that foundation in the way that suits their unique circumstances. Together, the two documents are generally referred to as the “higher education reopening plan.”

What are colleges required to do under the higher education proclamation?

Below is a summary of key mandates colleges and universities must follow under [Proclamation 20-12.1](#).

- Develop a safety plan and modify the plan as needed to keep up-to-date with COVID-19 safety requirements. Communicate the most recent version of the plan to students, faculty and staff and provide contact information for people to report complaints or violations.
- Post signs at entry points that let people know of their shared responsibilities to protect the campus community. Signs should address proper hygiene and sanitation, physical distancing, use of personal protective equipment, and staying home if feeling sick. The signs should include contact information for people who have concerns or questions.
- Require students, faculty and staff to self-certify that they have not experienced COVID-19 symptoms since their last visit to campus.
- Keep a log of people who come to campus, following state guidelines.
- Educate students, faculty and staff on how to detect symptoms and avoid high-risk situations.
- Limit or prohibit visitors.
- Whenever possible, maintain six feet of physical distancing in busy areas like classrooms, dining halls and common areas.
- If 6-foot distancing is not possible:
 - Implement engineering or administrative controls to minimize exposure.
 - As appropriate or required, provide students, faculty and staff with personal protective equipment such as masks gloves, goggles or face shields. (Note: Gov. Inslee issued [a separate proclamation requiring all Washington residents to wear masks](#), including students.)
- Sanitize high-touch surfaces, and, where safe and applicable, use disposable gloves or other personal protective equipment to prevent transmission of the virus.
- Provide equipment and supplies for hand washing and cleaning, and develop policies around those needs.
- Avoid non-essential travel by faculty and staff. School personnel must self-isolate if they undertake any high-risk travel [as defined by the CDC](#).
- Identify alternative arrangements for personnel (including student workers) upon request, including employees who refuse to come to work due to concerns related to campus safety. Educate employees about COVID-19, including how to prevent transmission, and about leave benefits and policies.

- Require the quarantining of students, faculty and staff who have the virus, have been exposed to the virus, or who are showing symptoms of the virus. Those with symptoms must self-isolate until a diagnosis and next steps are clear.
- For colleges that have dorms and student housing, designate a specific area where a resident can self-isolate.
- Develop response protocols for confirmed on-campus cases of COVID-19.
- For campus food services:
 - Follow the [Washington State reopening guidelines for restaurants](#). For all phases, table sizes are limited to five people. If the tables are inside, those five people must be from the same household. Additionally, overall capacity is limited to 50 percent in phase 3 counties and phase 2 counties, and [25 percent in modified phase 1 counties](#). (Restaurants in modified phase 1 counties can bump up to 50 percent capacity if the seating is outdoors.) Given that most students in dining halls don't eat together as "households," SBCTC recommends colleges allow one student per table indoors.
 - Also follow the guidelines in the [higher education proclamation](#): enforce 6-foot distancing, use a clicker to limit capacity, place floor markings to promote physical distancing, and post signs reminding visitors of safety protocols (such as maintaining a 6-foot distance, using a mask, and using hand sanitizer). Require customers to wear cloth face coverings when they're not eating. Routinely sanitize high-touch surfaces and common areas (door handles, points of sale). Accept only credit cards, debit cards or other types of payments that don't require physical contact.

Do colleges have to follow both the Higher Education Proclamation and the Safe Start Washington Plan?

Yes, colleges have to follow both plans.

- Instructional activities (classrooms/labs) are governed by the [higher education proclamation](#).
- Non-instruction activities that have parallel activities out in the community fall under the [Safe Start Washington plan](#) and the [guidance attached to that plan](#).

Are there limits to class sizes and labs?

No, classes are instructional, therefore, they fall solely under the [higher education proclamation](#).

The proclamation places no size limits on classes or associated labs. However, classes and labs are subject to standard safety protocols, which include social distancing, cleaning, and use of masks or other personal protective equipment.

Are colleges required to limit gathering sizes according to county phases?

Yes, all types of gatherings — except direct instruction — are subject to the gathering limits of the county in which the college is located. Those limits are spelled out in the [Safe Start Washington plan](#). As of Sept. 28, 2020, the gathering limit is 10 people for phase 3 counties and five people in phase 2 counties. In modified phase 1 counties, the limit is 5 people and only outdoors.

Can libraries remain open?

College libraries must follow the same safety protocols as public libraries under the Safe Start Washington plan.

- **Phase 3 counties:** [Technically, libraries in phase 3 counties may provide face-to-face service.](#) However, as of Sept. 28, 2020, the Governor's Office had not yet issued library-specific safety protocols for phase 3. A review of several public library websites in phase 3 counties indicates libraries are closed and only offering either curbside pickup or in-person pickup by appointment.
- **Phase 2 and modified phase 1 counties:** [Libraries in phase 2](#) and [modified phase 1](#) counties must remain closed but they are allowed to offer [curbside pickup services](#).

What about computer labs?

Computer labs are considered instructional spaces — even those housed in libraries. As such, they may remain open under the [higher education proclamation](#) and are not subject to county gathering-size limits. (SBCTC recommends sectioning off computer labs in libraries to create a clear distinction between the two areas.)

Computer labs are subject to the other standard safety protocols, which include social distancing, cleaning, and use of masks or other personal protective equipment.

What about choir, band and orchestra?

SBCTC encourages colleges to refrain from holding in-person choir practices, rehearsals or performances in accordance with [Governor Inslee's proclamation on choir practice at religious gatherings](#). For band and orchestra, SBCTC encourages colleges to either refrain from holding in-person practices, rehearsals or performances, or to develop specific safety plans for those activities in consultation with their public health departments. SBCTC will update this FAQ if published guidance becomes available from the Governor's Office and/or the State Department of Health.

Are there limits for campus fitness centers?

Yes, campus fitness centers must follow [the same safety protocols as private indoor fitness centers](#) under the Safe Start Washington Plan. Those protocols mandate 300 square feet of distance between patrons in phase 2 counties and 200 square feet of distance in phase 3 counties. For large fitness centers (defined as 12,000 square feet and larger), occupancy is capped at 25 percent of the facility's occupancy. [Facilities in modified phase 1 counties](#) are allowed to operate under the phase 2 guidance.

May we rent out our conference center?

Several colleges have revenue-generating conference centers that are typically rented for meetings, weddings, wedding receptions, auctions and other events. Colleges in phase 2 and phase 3 counties may rent the facilities according to [Governor Inslee's guidance for miscellaneous venues](#) under the Safe Start Washington plan. The guidance:

- Prohibits receptions (other than for limited weddings and funerals), networking events and live-entertainment in the venue.
- Allows business meetings, training and testing (or substantially similar activity) in the venue, provided the activities cannot be performed virtually.
- Limits indoor capacity in each room or separate building to 30% capacity or 200 people, whichever is less, as long as six feet of physical distance can be maintained by all attendees.

What are the rules for campus food services?

Please see page 3 for rules around campus food services.

What are the rules for resuming sports?

Please talk to your athletic director about the [NWAC's \(Northwest Athletic Conference\) return-to-play guidelines](#).

Are colleges still required to have a COVID-19 safety supervisor with designees in each learning space?

Unlike the original phase 1 and phase 2 safety protocols, the [higher education proclamation](#) does not require COVID-19 safety supervisors. The guidance document does, however, recommend identifying people in charge of COVID-19 safety.

Are temperature checks still required before people come to campus?

Unlike the original phase 1 and phase 2 safety protocols, the [higher education proclamation](#) does not require temperature checks before people come to campus. The proclamation does, however, require colleges to have their students, faculty and staff self-certify that they have not experienced COVID-19 symptoms since their last campus visit. Many colleges are choosing to enforce temperature-checks either at home or on campus.

Must students, faculty and staff still self-quarantine for 14 days if they're visiting, or returning to, Washington after visiting a state other than Oregon or Idaho?

Unlike the original phase 1 and phase 2 safety protocols, the [higher education proclamation](#) does not include a requirement for 14-day quarantine for domestic travelers coming from states other than Oregon or Idaho.

Where can I find more information?

COVID-19 safety rules

Visit the following websites for more COVID-19 safety information.

[Higher education proclamation](https://bit.ly/30goKKc): <https://bit.ly/30goKKc>

[Campus Reopening Guide](https://bit.ly/33djVU5): <https://bit.ly/33djVU5>

[Gov. Inslee's Safe Start Plan \(includes the phased reopening chart\)](https://bit.ly/39IHMN1): <https://bit.ly/39IHMN1>

- [Phased reopening guidance under Gov. Inslee's Safe Start Plan](https://bit.ly/33dP2Pp): <https://bit.ly/33dP2Pp>

[Gov. Inslee's face mask requirement](https://bit.ly/2YxGRuS): <https://bit.ly/2YxGRuS>

[CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting](https://bit.ly/31k5JYX): <https://bit.ly/31k5JYX>

[COVID-19 – risk assessment dashboard \(illustrates phases by county\)](https://bit.ly/2BgiokK): <https://bit.ly/2BgiokK>

Requirements for colleges as employers

As employers, colleges must follow all of the employee safety rules that existed before the COVID-19 pandemic plus new requirements specific to COVID-19.

Begin by reviewing:

- The employee section of the [higher education proclamation](https://bit.ly/30goKKc): <https://bit.ly/30goKKc>
- [Gov. Inslee's Safe Start Plan](https://bit.ly/39IHMN1) for businesses and the general public (page 6): <https://bit.ly/39IHMN1>

Then follow more specific guidance from the Department of Labor & Industries:

[Labor & Industries General Requirements and Prevention Ideas for Workplaces](https://bit.ly/2VnWPFM):

<https://bit.ly/2VnWPFM>

[Department of Health Workplace and Employer Resources and Recommendations](https://bit.ly/2VhEg6c):

<https://bit.ly/2VhEg6c>

[Gov. Inslee's face mask requirement for employees](https://bit.ly/2YxGRuS): <https://bit.ly/2YxGRuS>

- [Clarification that employees should wear face masks – not shields](https://bit.ly/3k2aVXh) – unless they have a medical accommodation: <https://bit.ly/3k2aVXh>

[Labor & Industries guidance for employee masks, "Which Mask for Which Task?":](https://bit.ly/31nTn1N)

<https://bit.ly/31nTn1N>

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Common Questions Regarding Worker Face Covering and Mask](https://bit.ly/32b9zn8)

[Requirements](https://bit.ly/32b9zn8): <https://bit.ly/32b9zn8>

[Labor & Industries risk-assessment guide for employers](https://bit.ly/3dBlyLZ): <https://bit.ly/3dBlyLZ>

- [Example risk assessment used by UW](https://bit.ly/2VIQ3k0): <https://bit.ly/2VIQ3k0>

Also feel free to [email Carli Schiffner, SBCTC's deputy executive director of education](mailto:cschiffner@sbctc.edu), at cschiffner@sbctc.edu.