

**To:** Todd Noble, Health Administrator, Linn County Health Services  
Melissa Goff, Superintendent, Greater Albany Public Schools

**Date:** May 7, 2021

**From:** Tom Jeanne, MD, MPH, Deputy Health Officer, OHA Public Health Division  
Colt Gill, Director, Oregon Department of Education

**RE:** Public Health Requirements for Schools

We write to clarify Oregon's public health requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19-related guidance that the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) have released is **binding and enforceable** per the Governor's executive orders. Until the Governor rescinds the executive orders, items noted as *required* in the various guidance documents are **mandatory**. Items noted as recommended or encouraged are *not* mandatory. These documents include [OHA COVID-19 guidance](#) as well as [Ready Schools, Safe Learners](#) and associated school guidance. Businesses, public and private schools, and members of the public must comply with the relevant requirements outlined in these state documents. Local public health authorities and county government do not have discretion to waive these requirements unless so stated in the statewide guidance.

ODE has the authority to address any complaints raised regarding practices that do not conform with the requirements in the school guidance and take other actions. These actions include referring complaints to the Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA) and the potential to withhold State School Fund (SSF) payments if needed and as a means of last resort.

OHA public health guidance is binding and enforceable as noted in [Executive Order 20-66](#) issued on December 2, 2020, which rescinded and replaced previous executive orders.

ODE/OHA school guidance is mandatory for public and private schools with in-person classroom instruction as noted in [Executive Order 21-06](#) issued on March 12, 2021, which rescinded and replaced previous executive orders.

Based on recent discussions, OHA and ODE believe that Linn County Public Health and Greater Albany Public Schools (GAPS) are appropriately acting to carry out vital public health measures to protect people who live or work in Linn County. These include case investigation and contact tracing, quarantine and isolation, and promotion and support of vaccination for all eligible people.

Given increasing cases, hospitalizations, and more transmissible virus variants we are now seeing in Oregon, we urge all schools in Linn County to follow all the health and safety requirements in the [RSSL](#) guidance as closely as possible. Following this guidance is what keeps our schools open and our students and staff safe.

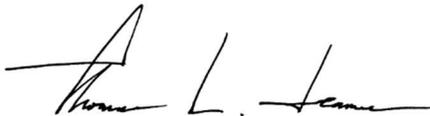
Quarantining is one of the health and safety protocols that prevents COVID-19 from spreading on school campuses. The actions taken by Linn County Public Health and GAPS are ensuring more students have access to in-person instruction. More students on campus can mean more potential exposure and more students and staff impacted by quarantine, but these measures are also helping tremendously to reduce spread and maintain access to school for more students.

We strongly support Linn County's efforts to encourage everyone ages 16 and up to get vaccinated against COVID-19. Vaccines are critical for moving Oregon forward. The overwhelming majority of new COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are occurring in people who have not yet been vaccinated. We are also seeing younger Oregonians in the hospital now, as well as people with no underlying health conditions. Every Oregonian age 16 and older can now sign up to get their vaccine.

We all understand that the numerous requirements and restrictions in place can create significant burdens for students, families, staff, and the public. Continued attention to following public health requirements and recommendations now will help to reduce the impact of COVID-19 on schools and communities, and ultimately help us put the pandemic behind us as soon as possible.

Thank you for your hard work on behalf of the people of Linn County.

Sincerely,



Tom Jeanne, MD, MPH  
Deputy Health Officer  
Oregon Health Authority  
Public Health Division



Colt Gill  
Director  
Oregon Department of Education