



Ninth graders during their first day of school at West Salem High School. BRIAN HAYES / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Protocols loosened for schools

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The Oregon Department of Education has issued new COVID-19 guidance for schools, making significant changes to what schools will be required to do.

Beyond the initial game-changer of leaving decisions on masking to schools and districts, the new guidance loosens most pandemic-era requirements, doing away starting March 12 with things like contact tracing and quarantining and continuing to make isolation optional or “strongly advised.”

It encourages schools to lean on their communicable disease plans with local public health agencies, as they did before the pandemic.

“This can feel like it’s signaling the end of the pandemic, and I want to be clear that that’s not the intention here,” ODE director Colt Gill said during a news conference Wednesday. “Each shift over the last two years has been in response to a new stage of the pandemic and its impacts as well as our experience and learning about the effectiveness of various mitigation efforts. The shift we’re discussing today signals just that: a new stage of the pandemic, and one where, for at least the next few months, our state has some built-in immunity.”

ODE’s new guidance includes some smaller changes in line with new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations. It also includes some weaker language, such as masks no longer being needed on school buses, and changing physical distancing of three feet from a requirement to something schools should “strive for.”

There are a few more significant changes, including that K-12 students and staff are no longer required to quarantine if they’ve been exposed, which impacts schools’ Test to Stay protocol.

The CDC updated its guidance Monday to say universal case investigation and contact tracing are no longer recommended outside of high-risk settings. So, effective March 12, Oregon will pause contact tracing and quarantine for the general population, including K-12 settings.

“In lieu of contact tracing, schools are strongly encouraged to provide cohort notifications when an exposure occurs,” Gill said. “A cohort could be a classroom, could be a school bus population, could be a lunch group. But these notifications will allow individuals and families to take additional precautions and make use of state and local resources to meet their individual needs.”

Because quarantine protocol is no longer required, regardless of vaccination status, the state’s Test to Stay protocol will shift from a form of modified

quarantine to an enhanced exposure testing, according to Gill.

“Schools would offer this enhanced exposure testing to individuals who are at increased risk of severe illness, so this could include cohorts of medically fragile students,” he said.

The Test to Stay program previously used rapid antigen tests for real-time answers in schools if a student had been exposed to COVID-19. Now, these tests will be primarily reserved for high-risk students. Schools will continue to offer diagnostic testing for students and staff as well as screening testing through the state’s opt-in program to do weekly PCR take-home tests.

Gill and OHA’s state health officer Dr. Dean Sidelinger said this decision was due to declining hospitalization rates, and a belief that there is wider community immunity right now due to how many people contracted the omicron variant and greater availability of at-home tests and tests at schools.

Schools are still “strongly encouraged” to notify families if there’s been an exposure. If a student has been exposed to someone with COVID-19, it’s now up to that individual person or family to seek out a test and decide whether it is OK to send their child to school.

“We feel like it’s a safe time for this transition back to the local decision-making and individual decision-making (of parents and families),” Gill said. “This is very similar to the way schools have operated around communicable disease for years and years.

“We do hope that people take advantage of the ready supply of tests that the Oregon Health Authority has provided to schools and if they do have COVID-19 symptoms that they seek out a test and then they do follow the protocols for isolating for five days to help prevent spread in that school setting.”

Isolation is not required if a student tests positive, only “strongly advised” for at least five days. This language is not new to this latest state guidance, but still has impact given the changes by the CDC around quarantining and other local decision-making.

“Giving individuals and communities the information and tools to lower the risk of getting COVID-19 will continue to be a part of our lives,” Sidelinger said. “We will remain vigilant and ready to respond to changes but (COVID-19) should no longer control our lives.”

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Students wait on the bus as they arrive at school for one of the first days back for grades two and three after closures due to the coronavirus, at Hoover Elementary School on Tuesday, March 9, 2021. BRIAN HAYES / STATESMAN JOURNAL

Kim Huong Restaurant, Coin Jam, Half Penny Bar & Grill

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ABOUT RESTAURANT INSPECTIONS

This is a snapshot of the inspections conducted by the Marion and Polk county health departments.

Twice annually, licensed restaurants receive unannounced inspections that focus on food temperatures, food preparation practices, worker hygiene, dish-washing and sanitizing, and equipment and facility cleanliness.

Violations: Restaurant scores are based on a 100-point scale. Priority violations deduct 5 points, and priority foundation violations deduct 3 points. Violations recorded on consecutive inspections result in point deductions being doubled.

Scoring: Scores of 70 or higher are considered compliant. Restaurants scoring below 70 must be re-inspected within 30 days or face closure or other administrative action. Restaurants display a placard by the entrance to indicate whether they have passed their last inspection.

At the beginning of 2022, health inspections have moved from their former website and the latest are now viewable here.

Marion County Health Inspections

Fey Asian

Location: 210 E Washington St Stayton

Date: February 14, 2022

Score: 79

Priority violations:

Food employees do not use the proper cleaning procedure for washing their hands, specifically: Observed employee wipe hands on cloth after touching head before returning to work with food. Observed employee using hand sanitizer after taking order without washing hands before returning to work with food. **Point deduction: 5.**

Raw or ready-to eat food is not properly protected from cross contamination, specifically: Raw chicken thawing under running water above raw pork in the compartment sink. **Point deduction: 5.**

Food-contact surfaces are not clean, specifically: Stored food probe thermometer soiled with food debris. **Point deduction: 3.**

Refrigerated, ready-to-eat, potentially hazardous food has not been consumed within the required time period or is not properly date-marked, specifically: Prepared egg foo yong and other fried foods prepared yesterday are not properly dated in the walk-in. **Point deduction: 5.**

A test kit is not provided or is not accurate enough to measure the concentration of sanitizing solutions, specifically: Chlorine test strips not provided. **Point deduction: 3.**

Silver Inn Tavern

Location: 3788 Silverton Rd NE

Date: February 14, 2022

Score: 100

No priority violations.

Kim Huong Restaurant

Location: 2950 Silverton Road NE

Date: February 14, 2022

Score: 100

No priority violations.

Brewski's 1

Location: 1720 Shaff Road Stayton

Date: February 14, 2022

Score: 100

No priority violations.

NW Senior & Disability Services

Location: 400 W Virginia St Stayton

Date: February 14, 2022

Score: 95

Priority violations:

Chemical sanitizers are not approved, specifically: Measured >400 PPM QUAT in three compartment sink and wiping cloth bucket. **Point deduction: 5.**

Sizzling Tandoori Hut

Location: 12271 Melinda Lane NE Aurora (mobile unit)

Date: February 14, 2022

Score: 100

No priority violations.

Champions Bar and Grill

Location: 2930 Silverton Road NE

Date: February 14, 2022

Score: 100

No priority violations.

Los Toreros Mexican Food

Location: 479 Court St NE

Date: February 11, 2022

Score: 100

No priority violations.

Tamalex y Mas

Location: 4792 Silverton Rd NE (mobile unit)

Date: February 11, 2022

Score: 100

No priority violations.

Taproot Trolley

Location: 2315 25th Street SE (mobile unit)

Date: February 11, 2022

Score: 95

Priority violations:

Food employees are not washing their hands as often as necessary, specifically: Food employee returned to mobile unit and donned gloves without washing hands. **Point deduction: 5.**

The Coin Jam

Location: 439 Court St

Date: February 11, 2022

Score: 100

No priority violations.

Subway #584

Location: 12334 Ehlen Rd Aurora

Date: February 10, 2022

Score: 100

No priority violations.

Domino's Pizza

Location: 1080 1st Street N Stayton

Date: February 10, 2022

Score: 97

Priority violations:

Hand towels or a hand drying device is not provided at the handwashing sink, specifically: Handwashing sink next to walk-in is missing paper towels. **Point deduction: 3.**

Cinnabon

Location: 1001 N Arney Rd #818 Woodburn

Date: February 10, 2022

Score: 97

Priority violations:

Hand towels or a hand drying device is not provided at the handwashing sink, specifically: No paper towels are provided at the back hand washing sink. **Point deduction: 3.**

The Half Penny Bar & Grill

Location: 3743 Commercial St SE

Date: February 10, 2022

Score: 78

Priority violations:

A handwashing sink is not accessible for employee use at all times, is used for purposes other than handwashing or is not operated properly, specifically: Upon arrival, handwashing sink blocked with strainer of pasta. Observed employee later use sink to wash probe monitor. **Point deduction: 3.**

Convenient handwashing lavatories are not provided or are not adequate in number, specifically: Outside handwashing station set-up not provided at outside portable smoker in use during time of inspection. **Point deduction: 3.**

The chlorine sanitizer concentration, pH, or temperature is not adequate, specifically: Bar dish machine is dispensing 0 PPM chlorine. **Point deduction: 5.**

Potentially hazardous food is not maintained at proper hot or cold holding temperatures, specifically: Chicken taco soup prepared 2/6 is measuring between 48-51 F in the walk-in. **Point deduction: 5.**

A consumer advisory is not provided, is not presented in the correct format, or does not contain the required information, specifically: Asterisks linking eggs, burgers, and steaks to printed consumer advisory on menu are not provided. **Point deduction: 3.**

Bento Box

Location: 3284 Lancaster Dr NE Ste A

Date: February 10, 2022

Score: 92

Priority violations:

Food is in contact with surfaces of equipment and utensils that are not properly cleaned and sanitized, specifically: Observed repackaged bag of raw beef in contact with cooked and cooled soba noodles in prep cooler. **Point deduction: 5.**

Temperature measuring devices are not provided or readily accessible for checking food temperatures, specifically: A probe thermometer capable of reading cold-holding and cooking temperatures was not available during today's inspection. A re-inspection is necessary for this violation. **Point deduction: 3.**

Flying J Travel Plaza #584

Location: 12334 Ehlen Rd Aurora

Date: February 10, 2022

Score: 100

No priority violations.

Em Chan covers food and dining at the Statesman Journal. You can reach her at echan@statesmanjournal.com, follow her on Twitter @catchuptoemily or see what she's eating on Instagram @sikfanmei.ah.