

Five counties cleared for 'lower risk' because of vaccination rates

By Mark Miller
Oregon Capital Bureau



Eagle file photo

Rebekah Rand, emergency medical services director with the Blue Mountain Hospital District prepares a vaccine shot at a January vaccine clinic at the Grant County Fairgrounds.

limits gymnasiums and other indoor recreation and fitness establishments to quarter-capacity as well, restricts stores to half-occupancy, and puts a 15% cap on the number of spectators at outdoor sporting events, among other restrictions. Residents of "high risk" counties are also asked not to gather in groups larger than eight people, or six people for indoor gatherings.

"Lower risk" significantly relaxes those limits. Indoor dining and exercise are allowed up to 50% of maximum occupancy, stores can welcome up to 75% of their normal maximum occupancy, and outdoor venues like Ron Tonkin Field

in Hillsboro can fill up to half of their available seats.

Businesses under "high risk" are also asked to recommend that employees work remotely when possible. That's not the case under the "lower risk" designation.

Data released by the Oregon Health Authority showed Deschutes, Lincoln and Washington counties were a little short of the 65% threshold Brown set earlier this month for COVID-19 restrictions to be relaxed. But Brown said once the state factored in vaccine doses administered at federal facilities and vaccination events, those three counties cleared the bar.

Multnomah County is also at the 65% threshold, Oregon Health Authority data shows. But the county has not yet submitted an equity plan. Portland-based Willamette Week reported Monday, May 17, that the state's most populous county plans to wait at least one more week before it applies to move to "lower risk."

Multnomah County Chair Deborah Kafoury said last week that it will take time for the county to develop an equity plan and submit it to the Brown administration for approval.

Oregon Employment Department to reinstate work search rules

State does not plan to stop supplemental benefits early

By Peter Wong
Oregon Capital Bureau

Work search requirements will resume in stages for more than 100,000 Oregon workers who receive unemployment benefits, now that the economic downturn triggered by the coronavirus pandemic is easing.

But unlike more than 20 states — all of them with Republican governors — Oregon has no plans to stop supplemental federal unemployment benefits before their scheduled end on Sept. 4.

"The pandemic-related federal programs have created a lifeline for people whose livelihoods were affected by COVID-19," said David Gerstenfeld, acting director of the Oregon Employment Department, in a weekly conference call with reporters.

"We do not want those who need those benefits to lose access to them before the programs end. While we are watching current economic conditions, we do not have any plans to end the federal benefit plans early."

The supplemental federal benefit amounts to \$300 per week. It is in addition to regular benefits drawn from the state unemployment trust fund, which comes from employer contributions, and special federal benefit programs created during the pandemic.

Some states will start opting out of the federal benefits as soon as June 12.

At the onset of the pandemic, when they received an avalanche of claims, Oregon and other states did suspend legal requirements for people to search for work, be available for work and register with state workforce agencies as conditions for receiving benefits.

The pandemic emergency declared by Gov. Kate Brown almost 15 months ago, renewed every 60 days, is scheduled to expire June 28. Although Republican minorities want the Oregon Legislature to repeal her orders now — Democratic majorities have declined so far to take any steps to do so — Brown has said "I fully intend to reopen our economy" by the next deadline.

As her benchmark for dropping most pandemic restrictions, Brown has set 70% of Oregon's population age 16 and older getting at least one vaccination. She says she thinks that goal is achievable by June.

Oregon's statewide vaccination rate against COVID-19 for eligible people was 62.7% as of Thursday, May 20. But the rate varies from a low of 32.5% in Lake County to a high of 67.6% in Benton County. Multnomah and Washington counties have met or exceeded 65%; Clackamas County trails at 58.5%.

Gerstenfeld said, in advance of any potential action, people receiving unemployment benefits will be notified about registering with the agency's iMatchSkills system for jobs and meeting either face to face or virtually with staff from WorkSource Oregon. The latter is a partnership of public and private agencies serving individuals and businesses.

"These requirements are

starting back up again, and people will need to meet those requirements by designated dates to be eligible to continue receiving benefits," he said.

"This will be a new experience for some people currently receiving unemployment benefits. We want to make sure everyone receiving benefits understands what the requirements are and knows what to do to continue receiving benefits. As the pandemic begins to fade and the economy changes, we are still focused on how we can help fuel economic recovery and help Oregonians overcome challenges related to employment."

Gerstenfeld has said supplemental federal benefits are not a factor in deterring people from returning to work.

Among factors that the agency will consider in reemployment, he said, are a lack of child care available for workers, lingering fear of COVID infection via jobs that require close contact with the public and inadequate skills required for people to take new jobs.

Gerstenfeld did not specify what will happen with self-employed and gig workers who receive federal benefits known as Pandemic Unemployment Assistance. Many were not covered by unemployment benefits until Congress approved the new program as part of the CARES Act in March 2020.

Although Oregon has regained about 60% of the jobs lost since the low point of the pandemic in April 2020 — and the state's latest economic forecast projects far more in tax collections and a \$1.4 billion rebate to taxpayers next year — state economist Mark McMullen also says Oregon will return to prepandemic employment levels by the fourth quarter of 2022.

According to the most recent report by the Employment Department, permanent job losses now account for the largest group of unemployed workers. The number of workers without jobs for at least one year, the long-term unemployed, is at its highest point in nine years.

BUSINESS MANAGER—GRANT COUNTY ESD

Grant County ESD is seeking a Business Manager/Deputy Clerk. The business manager directs the operations of the Fiscal Services Department to provide effective and efficient business services to schools and the ESD and to assist the superintendents in providing the best possible administrative services to constituent district employees and ESD personnel with the financial and human resources available.

The Business Manager/Deputy Clerk will often work beyond an eight-hour day and a five-day week to take care of daily work, attend meetings, conferences and district/school activities. The business manager must have extensive knowledge of GAAP, budget laws and regulations, demonstrated knowledge of the audit process. Must have excellent communication, problem-solving and small-group process skills. Must frequently make decisions; use independent judgment and/or independent action; mentor, use discretion; and analyze problems. Ability to verbally respond to common inquiries from various people. Frequently present and teach or train. Must have the ability to read and interpret documents, write routine reports and correspondence. Confidentiality is crucial. Workloads are heavy and timelines can be unreasonably short and inflexible. Requests and issues are often received which require immediate attention and conflict with other priorities.

Position reports to the superintendent, supervises the fiscal services personnel, and is ultimately responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Fiscal Services Department.

PERFORMANCE RESPONSIBILITIES

- Enforces district accounting practices and policies to affirm that all financial records are maintained in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP), Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB), district policies, and federal, state, and local laws or regulations.
- Researches, interprets, and understands current and proposed regulations, accounting principles, and other statutory requirements.
- Provides management and oversight or performs the following accounting services and activities: accounts payable, accounts receivable, cash receipts, contracts, fixed assets, general ledger, payroll, purchasing, grant accounting, student body funds, debt management, ADM student reporting and accounting, and treasury.
- Provides counsel, expertise, and guidance to the superintendent, the boards, district staff, administrators, in financial and human resource matters.
- Oversees grant accounting including expenditure reporting and auditing of expenditures to submitted budgets
- Oversee and manage the software accounting system for district revenues and expenditures and cash management in accordance with generally accepted government accounting principles and district policy.
- Assists, leads and directs the budget process in accordance with Local Budget Law; coordinates, plans, and oversees the development of the district budget; monitors budget expenditures to ensure compliance and a positive financial status, in accordance with District, State and Federal Guidelines, and GASB Standards
- Performs a variety of revenue forecasts and cash flow analysis; prepares revenue and expenditure projections; invests funds for safety of principal, liquidity, and for maximum return.
- Attends all school board meetings; take minutes, prepare and present reports/responses related to the financial status of the district and other matters under their responsibility.
- Communicates effectively with customers at all levels (management, clerical support, regulatory officials, and component district personnel) to clearly ascertain the concerns raised and respond courteously, promptly, and accurately.
- Maintain general ledger; generate reconciled monthly financial statements, prepare journal entries as needed.
- Manage, report, and draw down funds for all district state and federal grants.
- Oversee internal auditing system to ensure accurate tracking of financial information in preparation for yearly external audit.
- Maintain records required by district policy and state statute, including bid files, contract, etc. Prepare and submit reports and records required by state and federal agencies and district superintendents.
- Responsible for monthly payments of employee insurance premiums and payments to savings plan(s) as selected by the employee.
- Responsible for monthly PERS payments and reconciliation of the account.
- Responsible for maintenance of current and accurate files on all active and inactive employees as related to payroll records, insurance, PERS, and leave reporting.
- Provide Human Resource services for all employees, including assisting with health insurance options, PERS, life insurance, etc.
- Responsible for accurate monthly payroll. Prepare payroll checks and direct deposition stubs for distribution and maintain payroll records, prepare ACH for bank, ensure all payroll liabilities (including federal and state taxes) are correct and paid timely. Prepare all quarterly and annual payroll reports.
- Perform other tasks and work-related duties as requested by the superintendent.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Bachelor's Degree in accounting or a comparable field or evidence of equivalent knowledge of accounting principles, data processing, accounts payable, accounts receivable, and payroll procedures.
- Knowledge of Generally Accepted Government Accounting Standards with five years of progressively responsible governmental fund accounting, preferably in a public school or educational institution.
- Demonstrated skills in accounting software, data processing, spreadsheets, and word processing (such as Visions Fund Accounting system, MS Word, and Excel).
- Ability to operate standard office equipment with 10-key proficiency.
- Excellent written and oral communication skills with a high degree of accuracy.
- Ability to exercise judgment and integrity on the job with confidentiality, tact, and diplomacy.
- Ability to work independently prioritizing tasks to meet deadlines while maintaining a high degree of accuracy and attention to detail.
- Ability to maintain confidentiality of sensitive and confidential information related to personnel, employee contracts, and legal matters affecting the district(s).
- Must be bondable and never been refused a bond.

COMPENSATION: The position is full-time and year round. The compensation package is competitive with similarly sized districts and negotiable based on experience. Candidates must possess, or be able to obtain, an Oregon Driver's license and pass a background check including fingerprints

Timeline: Applications will be accepted immediately and duties will begin as soon as the successful applicant is available.

APPLICATION PACKET CONTENTS:

- A completed application form from Grant County ESD (<http://www.grantesda.k12.or.us/employment.html>)
- A resume including three current references

All Application materials will be sent to:

Grant County ESD
attn: Robert Waltenburg, Superintendent
835A S. Canyon Blvd.
John Day, OR 97845

Applications may also be dropped off at the above location during regular business hours.

Grant County Education Service District is an equal opportunity employer and complies with all applicable state and federal statutes and regulations in employment and district programs. Equal employment opportunity and treatment shall be provided in recruiting, hiring, retaining, transferring, promoting, and training of all employees regardless of the individual's race, religion, color, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, marital status, age, or disability.

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Virginia L. McMillan, DDS, PC

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