

COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Are colleges still required to follow the higher education proclamation?

Yes, colleges must continue to follow the [higher education proclamation](#) until it [ends on Oct. 31, 2022](#). Until then, all requirements remain in effect.

Will the Department of Health higher education guidance still be in effect?

The Department of Health will issue new guidance on Nov. 1, 2022. The document will remain a guidance document, not a mandate. It will, however, provide helpful links to requirements that exist outside of the [higher education proclamation](#). Please visit the [Department of Health](#) guidance document on, or around, Nov. 1.

What does the rescission of the higher education proclamation mean for colleges?

When the [higher education proclamation](#) ends on Oct. 31, 2022, so too will the requirements it contains. For example, requirements around student vaccination verification, student exemptions/accommodations, daily health attestations, signage and facility sanitation will go away. Colleges will no longer have to follow separate rules depending on whether they require students to be vaccinated. However, colleges may still make local decisions about COVID-19 safety precautions.

Colleges must, however, continue to follow other requirements that exist outside of the higher education proclamation, including requirements from the state Department of Labor & Industries aimed at protecting employees, and rules about cooperating with local health jurisdictions. Please check the [Department of Labor & Industries](#) website regularly for updates and also check the [Department of Health's higher education guidance document](#) on, or around, Nov. 1.

SBCTC will update this issue brief as more information becomes available.

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Will vaccination requirements for higher education employees also end on Oct. 31, 2022?

Yes and no. The [higher education proclamation](#) and [vaccination proclamation](#) will both end on Oct. 31, 2022, because they are based on Governor Inslee's [emergency declaration, which is also ending that day](#). As a result, there will not be state-mandated vaccination requirements for higher education employees, for volunteers who come to campus, or for contractors who work inside a campus building.

At 14 community colleges, the vaccination requirement will go back into effect on July 1, 2023 for classified staff represented by the Washington Public Employees Association (WPEA) due to a contract agreement reached between the union and the State Labor Relations Section (LRO) of the Office of Financial Management.

The 2023-2025 WPEA contract will apply to the following community colleges: Bellevue, Big Bend, Cascadia, Clark, Columbia Basin, Edmonds, Grays Harbor, Olympic, Pierce Fort Steilacoom, Pierce Puyallup, Skagit Valley, Tacoma, Walla Walla and Wenatchee. At these colleges, classified staff represented by WPEA will either need to be fully vaccinated or have an exemption based on medical or religious reasons.

(Note: At the time this issue brief was published, there was no memorandum of understanding to continue the vaccination requirement between the [Oct. 31, 2022 end of the emergency order](#) and the July 1, 2023 start of the new collective bargaining agreement. SBCTC will update this publication if the situation changes.)

Will boosters be required of higher education employees?

No, boosters will not be required of any higher education employees, including classified staff represented by WPEA. However, WPEA-represented classified staff will receive a \$1,000 incentive if they meet booster criteria between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023. Payments will start no earlier than July 25, 2023 and will be available until Dec. 31, 2023 (for payment in January 2024).

What about state employees at non-higher ed agencies?

Even though the [vaccination proclamation](#) is ending Oct. 31, 2022, a different [vaccination directive](#) for state employees who work at "[cabinet](#)" and "[small-cabinet](#)" agencies may remain in effect. Unlike the vaccination proclamation, the agency directive is not tied to the State of Emergency and therefore will not automatically end on Oct. 31, 2022. This directive does not affect higher education employees, though. At the time this publication went to press, the future status of the directive was unclear.

Can colleges still require students and/or staff to be vaccinated?

Yes. After the [vaccination proclamation](#) ends on Oct. 31, 2022, colleges may still make a local decision to require vaccinations for students and/or staff.

Must health care students be vaccinated?

[Vaccination requirements for health care and education workers will end Oct. 31, 2022](#), but employers will be able to require them if they choose. Health care students who have clinical rotations must follow the vaccination requirements of the health care institution where they will be working.

Are any mask mandates still in effect?

Statewide mask mandates were lifted for most places on March 12. [Masks are still required in health care settings](#) – such as hospitals, dental offices and long-term care facilities – and in correctional facilities.

Are there new L&I rules colleges should follow?

At the time this publication was produced, the Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) had not yet updated its requirements for employers. Please check the [L&I website regularly for updates](#).

Whom should I call at SBCTC if I have questions?

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