

# WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

**Date:** August 11, 2021

**To:** Washington State Board of Health Members

**From:** Dr. Thomas Pendergrass, MD, Board Vice Chair

**Subject:** Chapter 246-760 WAC, Auditory and Visual Standards – School Districts

## Background and Summary:

The Washington State Board of Health, under RCW 28A.210.020, sets standards in chapter 246-760 WAC for the auditory and visual screening of children attending schools in Washington. The purpose of this requirement is to screen for and identify students in Washington who may be experiencing auditory or visual impairments and refer for care by an appropriate healthcare provider. These annual screenings are conducted once per academic year, and are conducted for children in kindergarten, first, second, third, fifth, and seventh grade.

The 2020-2021 academic year experienced changes due to the ongoing public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 virus. On December 16, 2020 Governor Jay Inslee issued Proclamation 20-09.3 related to Phased Reopening of K-12 Schools that prohibited school districts from conducting in-person learning unless specific standards are met. In addition, the Department of Health issued guidance, *Tools to Prepare for Provision of In Person Learning among K-12 Students at Public and Private Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic*, that provides recommendations on COVID-19 health metric trends to determine modes of learning.

Following inquiries in December 2020 related to the Board's rules regarding auditory and visual screenings, staff worked with subject matter experts at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to draft guidance for complying with this rule during the 2020-2021 academic year. Recognizing the importance of keeping students, staff, and their families safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic, the guidance provided information for school districts on how to prioritize and provide auditory and vision screenings. The Board adopted the draft guidance, effective for the 2020-2021 school year, at its January 13, 2021 meeting.

In May 2021, the Department of Health issued updated guidance for the summer session and the 2021-2022 school year. This Department's updated guidance indicates that schools must plan to provide full-time in-person learning for the upcoming academic year.

I have invited Samantha Pskowski, Board Staff, to provide an update on the Board's guidance and information regarding auditory and vision screenings for the upcoming 2021-2022 school year. There is no action the Board needs to take today.

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Samantha Pskowski

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