Gov. Jay Inslee today announced a vaccine requirement for employees working in K-12, most childcare and early learning, and higher education, as well as an expansion of the statewide mask mandate to all individuals, regardless of vaccination status. The governor was joined for the announcement by Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal and Secretary of Health Dr. Umair A. Shah.

K-12 educators, school staff, coaches, bus drivers, school volunteers and others working in school facilities will have until October 18 to be fully vaccinated as a condition of employment. The requirement includes public, private and charter schools, and comes as schools across the state prepare to return for the 2021-2022 school year amid rapidly increasing case and hospitalization numbers. This does not impact students, regardless of age.

"It has been a long pandemic, and our students and teachers have borne their own unique burdens throughout," Inslee said. "This virus is increasingly impacting young people, and those under the age of 12 still can't get the vaccine for themselves. We won't gamble with the health of our children, our educators and school staff, nor the health of the communities they serve."

Inslee also announced a vaccine requirement for employees in Washington's higher education institutions, as well as for most childcare and early learning providers who serve children from multiple households.