

DESE COVID-19 Safety Standards for K-12 Graduation Ceremonies

Effective as of May 29, 2021

These COVID-19 safety standards are issued to establish minimum standards for K-12 graduation ceremonies for spring 2021, effective May 29, 2021.

I. Capacity Limits and Operations

Capacity Limit:

- Graduations are not subject to a capacity limit based on the venue.
- Distancing and guest limits outlined below must be followed.

Guest and Ticketing Operations:

The following protocols are required for indoor ceremonies and recommended for outdoor ceremonies:

- Guests are limited to no more than 6 guests per graduate.
- Guests must register in advance of the graduation, and only those who register may attend. Registration/ticketing helps ensure attendees have been screened for COVID-19 symptoms.
- Staff must confirm that all guests entering the graduation have complied with registration and ticketing requirements.
- Graduates and guests, as well as staff and speakers, must attest at the time of registration/ticketing that they will not attend the graduation if:
 - They are experiencing any symptoms such as fever (100.0° and above) or chills, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, fatigue, headache, muscle/body aches, runny nose/congestion, new loss of taste or smell, or nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.
 - They have had “close contact” with an individual diagnosed with COVID-19 and have not completed the required quarantine period. “Close contact” means living in the same household as a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, caring for a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, being within 6 feet of a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 for 15 minutes or more, or coming in direct contact with secretions (e.g., sharing utensils, being coughed on) from a person who has tested positive for COVID-19.
 - They are currently required to self-isolate or quarantine by their doctor or a local public health official.
- Districts may also consider implementing contactless registration/ticketing, though it is not required.

Event Operations:

The following protocols are required for indoor ceremonies and recommended for outdoor ceremonies:

- Ceremonies should be kept as brief as possible.
- No food or drink permitted.
- No communal gathering or reception either before or after the commencement.
- Attendance must be limited to staff, speakers, and graduates and their guests only.
- Staff or attendants should monitor entries and exits and limit occupancy in alignment with masking and distancing requirements.
- Graduates may be invited to walk across the stage individually and turn their tassel and directly receive diplomas and awards at indoor and outdoor ceremonies.
- If multiple commencements are occurring in the same location, stagger event times to avoid congregation of guests and graduates in different groups.

Contact Tracing:

The following protocol is required for all ceremonies, whether indoor or outdoor.

- Graduates and guests, including faculty, administrators, and speakers, will be required to disclose

to the school if they test positive for COVID-19 after the graduation for purposes of cleaning/disinfecting and contact tracing.

- If the school is notified of any positive case following the graduation, the school must immediately notify the local Board of Health (LBOH) in the city or town where the school is located and the city or town as well as the facility at which the graduation took place. Schools must assist the LBOH with contact tracing efforts, including advising likely contacts to isolate and self-quarantine. Testing of other guests or graduates may be recommended consistent with guidance and/or at the request of the LBOH.

II. Distancing and Mask Requirements

Distancing and Mask Requirements for Indoor Ceremonies

- If graduating students are indoors, they must be masked and maintain 6 feet of distance.
- If attendees and staff are indoors, they must be masked and maintain 6 feet of distance from individuals not in their household.
- Commencement speakers at indoor ceremonies may remove their face coverings during their remarks only, provided there is at least 6 feet between the speaker and the audience.
- Singing is not allowed at indoor graduation ceremonies.
- If brass or wind instruments are played indoors, they must maintain at least 10 feet of distance between performers and at least 25 feet of distance between performers and the first audience row.

Distancing and Mask Requirements for Outdoor Ceremonies

- If graduating students are outdoors, they do not have to be masked and are encouraged to maintain distance as feasible.
- If attendees and staff are outdoors, they should follow the state masking advisory: Attendees and staff are not required to wear masks and are encouraged to distance from individuals not in their household as feasible. Attendees are encouraged to wear masks if they are not fully vaccinated.
- Individuals are strongly encouraged to maintain distance between households, and seating should be set up to facilitate this.
- Singing and the playing of brass and wind instruments should be distanced as feasible.

III. Hygiene Protocols

- Ensure access to handwashing facilities on site, including soap and running water wherever possible, and encourage frequent handwashing; alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol may be used as an alternative.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60 percent alcohol shall be made available at entrances, exits, and throughout the venue for workers, guests, and graduates.
- Post visible signage throughout the site to remind workers, guests, and graduates of hygiene and safety protocols.

IV. Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Based on CDC guidance and updated information on the low likelihood of surface transmission, facilities only need to clean high touch surfaces (door handles, bus seats, drinking fountains) and shared objects within the school and on school transport vehicles once a day, excluding certain circumstances.
- If the facility is located in an area of high transmission of COVID-19, then they may consider cleaning more frequently, or cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and objects once a day. Similarly, for areas where masks are not worn (i.e., lunch areas), facilities may consider cleaning surfaces between use.
- If a surface or object is visibly soiled, it should be immediately cleaned.
- If someone in the facility in the past 24 hours has been confirmed to have COVID-19, the spaces they were in should be cleaned and disinfected. If disinfecting, ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning products, including storing products securely away from children.