

Senior Celebration Updates – Outdoor Ceremonies

5/26/2020

Overview:

Districts and charter schools across Delaware have worked diligently to develop senior celebrations to properly honor their Class of 2020 graduates during the stay-at-home orders. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, indoor ceremonies remain prohibited. However, as the state enters Phase One, schools may elect to conduct outdoor in-person graduation ceremonies. These ceremonies must abide by certain rules, found in this document.

Districts/charters must post signage at each public entrance that states the following:

- Do not enter if you have a cough, high fever, shortness of breath, or if you have been exposed to anyone who has tested positive with COVID-19 in the past fourteen (14) days.
- Individuals age 13 and up are required to wear a cloth face covering to enter and remain inside (a cloth face covering is recommended but not required for children ages 2-12).
- At all times, individuals who are not part of the same household should maximize physical distance from others and remain at least six feet apart – there should be no physical contact between members of different households (handshaking, hugging, etc.).
- Proper hand washing and frequent use of hand sanitizers are encouraged.
- Templates for signage may be found at: [Communication Resources](#).

COVID-19 continues to pose a serious threat to our communities. Districts and charters should encourage all vulnerable individuals at high risk of contracting COVID-19 to remain at home. Other guidance includes:

- If multiple ceremonies are held, they must be staggered to allow for a thorough cleaning according to [CDC guidelines](#) of any public spaces before the next ceremony.
- Districts/charters should stagger arrival times for graduates, which may include but are not limited to the following methods: alphabetical order of graduates and/or permitting those who need assistance or special seating to enter at a designated time prior to the start of the service.
- Districts/charters shall restrict seating (in fixed bleachers or other seating) to comply with the six feet social distancing requirements, except that members of the same household may sit together. Standing along a fence line or perimeter is prohibited.
- There should be a six-foot radius around individual household units.
- Signage and physical indicators (e.g. tape, runners, ropes or ribbon) should be used, if necessary, to ensure social distancing rules are followed, with distances measured in six foot increments and marked accordingly.
- Children should remain with their parent/guardian at all times.
- While music and singing are permitted, bands and choral groups should not be utilized during the ceremony. Districts/charters may utilize single musicians/singers or duos if social distancing of six feet between the singers can be observed, and they are able to wear a face covering or face shield. If face coverings or face shields are not available or cannot be used, strategies such as not

having the musician/singer directly facing the graduates or increasing the distance between the musician/singer and the graduates should be employed.

- To the extent practicable, programs should be provided in a format other than paper – either projected on a screen and/or offered online for graduates and families to view from their personal handheld devices.
- Concessions sales are strongly discouraged. If selling pre-packaged food, districts/charters must ensure social distancing in lines, use contactless transaction or deliver food directly to seated customers. Buffet, family style, and any other self-service food is prohibited.

Cleaning and Sanitizing Requirements

- All surfaces touched by graduates/participants, including doors, seating, and restrooms, must be disinfected using an [approved disinfectant](#) every 15 minutes to two hours.
- Hand sanitizing stations should be supplied at all entrances, including those used by staff only. Hand sanitizer must be composed of at least 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol.
- Hand sanitizer must be used by district/charter facilitators at frequent intervals during the ceremony, including at a minimum before contact with surfaces that will be touched by others.
- If districts/charters are able to clean and disinfect restrooms using a recommended disinfectant every 15 minutes to two hours and social distancing can be maintained in school facilities, they may consider opening a limited number of restrooms on site. If these conditions cannot be met, districts/charters should communicate to attendees that no restrooms will be available on site and consider the duration of the ceremony accordingly.

Cloth Face Coverings

- District/charter leaders, keynote speakers, and musicians/singers may address the graduates from a podium as long as social distancing of six feet between them and the graduates can be observed, and they are able to wear a face covering or face shield. If face coverings or face shields are not available or cannot be used, strategies such as having leaders, keynote speakers, and musicians/singers not directly facing the graduates or increasing the distance between them and the graduates should be employed. The speaker or singer must put the face covering back on and use hand sanitizer immediately after speaking, playing, or singing.
- Cloth face coverings must comply with the Thirteenth Modification of the State of Emergency and must always be worn except where doing so would inhibit an individual's health or under the following limited circumstances: [de.gov/coronavirus](https://www.de.gov/coronavirus).
- No participants shall remove their cloth face covering during the singing of music.
- Handheld microphones may not be passed between individuals. Sharing microphones is prohibited. All microphones, whether they be self-standing in holders, handheld, or lapel style must be sanitized after each use.
- The exchange of materials (i.e. diplomas) from person to person of any kind is strongly discouraged. Districts/charters may mail diplomas before or after the ceremony, put on a table for

pick-up as students enter the ceremony, or have diplomas available on a table as the students walk across the stage.

Plans

- Interstate travel restrictions and the fourteen (14) day self-quarantine requirements of the State of Emergency Orders remain in place through June 1.
- Districts/charters planning an outdoor gatherings of more than two hundred and fifty (250) people may apply to host a large gathering or event by submitting a plan to Secretary of Education Susan Bunting at susan.bunting@doe.k12.de.us at least seven (7) days prior to the anticipated event. Plan approval is subject to the discretion of the Department of Education, which in consultation with the Division of Public Health, will consider how to prevent, reduce the spread of, and suppress COVID-19 in relation to any gathering or event permitted under this order.
- At a minimum, the plan must meet the following requirements:
 - a. The plan must comply with all other applicable state, county and local laws for gatherings and events.
 - b. The plan must consider information regarding the density of attendees within a confined area. Based on what is currently known about the virus, spread from person-to-person happens most frequently among close contacts (within six (6) feet for ten (10) minutes).
 - d. The plan must contain information regarding enforcement of social distancing.
 - e. The plan must consider information regarding the level of transmission in the local community and the level of transmission in the areas from which attendees will travel.
 - f. The plan must consider local traffic patterns and parking capacity needs.
 - g. The plan must maintain proper access to the property for all emergency services.

This guidance does not account for every scenario and districts/charters are encouraged to reach out to Secretary Bunting for guidance while adapting current or creating new graduation plans.