Guidance for Schools Planning Graduation Ceremonies Under Safer At Home Orders

Graduation ceremonies are an important milestone for many students, and Tri-County Health Department (TCHD) supports schools in finding innovative ways to safely recognize these students’ achievements. While traditional, in-person graduation ceremonies are not safe or legal during this public health crisis, there are several creative options for holding graduation ceremonies that follow social distancing requirements under the state-wide Safer at Home Order. If ceremonies comply with the guidance below, no formal approval from TCHD is required.

**Virtual or Live-Streaming Ceremonies**

- An educational institution may choose to provide a virtual ceremony by live-streaming to the graduate’s homes.
- Ceremonies may be broadcast with a group of 10 or fewer people, following all social/physical distancing requirements:
  - Direct those having symptoms of COVID-19, as well as people who have had close contact with a person who has symptoms, to refrain from participating in any aspect of in-person ceremonies.
  - People must be at least 6 feet apart at all times, whether seated or standing.
  - Those at greater risk, including people over age 65 and anyone with pre-existing immune or respiratory conditions are urged to remain home.
  - Provide hand sanitizer in convenient locations and access to hand washing, if possible.
  - Ensure attendees wear face coverings over their mouth and nose.
  - Take the temperatures of all limited in-person facilitators and ask about signs of illness before allowing participation. Disallow individuals with elevated temperatures or signs of illness.
- Follow [these guidelines](#) to disinfect all surfaces before and after any in-person gathering.

**Drive-In or Vehicle Parade Ceremonies**

- An education institution may choose to provide a drive-in ceremony, where households gather in vehicles at a designated location.
- Event plans, including social distancing requirements and reminders, should be clearly communicated to all participants in advance of the ceremony.
- All social/physical distancing requirements described in the previous section must be followed.
- Use electronics inside the car or a radio channel to broadcast audio and/or video
If you will be providing devices, ensure they are cleaned and sanitized before and after use for the ceremony.

It is preferable for attendees to use their own, personal devices.

- Attendees must stay in their vehicles and not socialize through their vehicle windows.
- Public restrooms must be cleaned and have signage posted that they should be used by only one person at a time.
- There should be no other opportunity for in-person interaction. Do not have a central space for taking pictures. Do not make gathering spaces available at the location for attendees to gather outside of their vehicles.
- The serving of food or beverages at the site is prohibited.
- Have attendees turn off their vehicles to avoid idling and protect everyone’s health.

**Considerations for Choosing Which Type of Graduation Ceremony to Conduct**

When choosing what type of graduation ceremony to conduct, consider the following:

- **Virtual Ceremonies**
  - Internet access for school staff and for students/families
  - Social distancing requirements for speakers
- **Drive-In Ceremonies**
  - Weather conditions
  - Projection screens and/or sound equipment
  - Students/families who may not have vehicles
  - Length of ceremony and availability of sufficient restrooms