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[CDE Communications Division](#)

News Release

CDE offers graduation ceremony guidance during COVID-19

Many schools offering safe alternatives to commemorate Class of 2020

DENVER – The Colorado Department of Education, working with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, today released guidance for communities considering how to honor their graduating high school seniors during the coronavirus pandemic.

“I understand how incredibly disappointing it is to students, teachers and families to miss out on milestones like graduation ceremonies,” said Colorado Education Commissioner Katy Anthes. “Unfortunately, traditional graduation ceremonies will not be safe for some time, but thanks to the creativity and ingenuity of our teachers, parents and school leaders, we are seeing some really thoughtful and meaningful alternative celebrations around the state.”

Graduation ceremony guidelines

[Colorado Gov. Jared Polis' Safer at Home Public Health Order 20-28](#) mandates specific restrictions for public events, like graduation ceremonies.

Communities and schools should work closely with their local public health agency on plans for graduation ceremonies that work for their local community while keeping everyone safe.

- Gatherings larger than 10 people are not permitted.
- Vulnerable people at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 and sick people must remain at home.

- All participants should be screened for fever and symptoms before entering the gathering.
- All participants, including graduates, administrators, guests or family members, must always remain at least six feet apart.
- Six-foot sections should be marked on the floor. Use small flags, tape, balloons, etc. to indicate the distance.
- To comply with the six-foot spacing, handshaking and hugs should not occur.
- If chairs are provided, they must be disinfected before and after use by school staff using proper protocol.
- All participants must always wear cloth face coverings.
- Ceremonies must be held outside; inside ceremonies cannot occur.
- Diplomas, awards, medals, programs, etc. must not be handed out.
- Sharing or exchanging materials of any kind poses an increased risk for transmission/spread of COVID-19 and must not occur. (Throwing graduation caps, “sign-in” practices, gifts, flowers, etc).

Ideas for alternative graduation ceremonies

CDE understands the importance of human connections, especially during these stressful times, and that honoring graduates with families and community members adds meaning. Below are some ideas that may be feasible depending on your local context. All events must comply with state and local public health orders.

- Districts are hosting virtual graduation ceremonies, in which the staff films speeches, dedications and other festivities and students add videos.
- Video recordings of a live ceremony involving fewer than 10 graduates could be broadcast on local public access television, local radio or streamed for families on Facebook Live or YouTube.
- Small communities are planning “Car Parades” with support from the local health department and police.
- Drive-in graduations could be held at drive-in movie theaters, where families and graduates stay in cars for the ceremonies.

- Very small communities with only a few graduates may be able to hold ceremonies on football fields or other outdoor locations. Outdoor ceremonies could feature graduates walking on a stage with their families watching in their cars and listening to the event via local radio.
- Some districts are delaying their ceremonies. However, postponing ceremonies could be challenging because of the evolving nature of COVID-19. Because circumstances may not change much over the next few months, it could lead to additional disappointment if mass gathering restrictions are still in place.

Don't forget about emotional support

Even if the ceremony will not be the same, it is still important to recognize the accomplishment, said Colorado state nurse consultant Sarah Blumenthal.

“Take this time to create your own family’s ceremony,” she said. “Commemorate the great achievement of your graduate and mark this important step in his or her journey.”

For those struggling with the loss of time-honored traditions or are having any emotional or psychological difficulty during this trying time, the Colorado Crisis Services has 24/7 support: 1-844-TALK (8255) or Text “TALK” to 38255.

More information about graduation ceremony guidelines can be found here: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/guidancegraduationceremonies>.

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