

Responsible RestartOhio

Graduation Ceremonies



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continues to recommend that large gatherings be avoided, particularly if social distancing cannot be maintained. The below guidance is intended for schools that are planning large events, such as commencement ceremonies. All events must adhere to requirements in relevant Ohio Department of Health orders.

Attendance

- Before holding an event, consider the extent of COVID-19 spread in your community. Consider virtual options as part of a backup plan, particularly where community spread is high.
- Any attendee (student, staff, or guest) who has COVID-19 symptoms or has been recently exposed to someone with COVID-19 should stay home.
 - Anyone exposed to someone with COVID-19 should refer to guidance on Quarantine Following Possible COVID-19 Exposure and K-12 School Quarantine Guidelines before deciding to attend any event.
 - Anyone who is sick with confirmed or suspected COVID-19, should follow isolation guidance before deciding to attend any event.
- If an attendee is found to be sick at an event, immediately isolate the sick person and seek appropriate medical care. Contact the local health district about suspected cases or exposures, and refer to additional requirements outlined in the “Director’s Order for Social Distancing, Facial Coverings and Non-Congregating.”
- Attendees should monitor for COVID-19 symptoms for 14 days after the event and seek testing or medical care if they develop. Watch for fever (100.4 F or higher), cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms. If possible, attendees should stay away from others, especially people who are at higher risk for getting very sick from COVID-19, for 14 days.
- Offer online attendance options in addition to in-person attendance to help reduce the number of attendees and allow attendance by people who must or choose to stay home.
- Limit attendance or seating capacity to allow for social distancing, or hold multiple, smaller events in larger spaces.
- Limit the number of guests in any indoor venue with fixed seating to 25% of capacity. This capacity requirement does not apply to the graduating students, as long as appropriate distancing protocols are followed.
- If seating is limited, ensure family members of student participants are given priority.

Location and Sanitation

- Hold the event outdoors if possible.
- If held indoors, maximize ventilation by opening doors and windows and through other means. (Indoor facilities are expected to employ filtration of MERV 13 or higher as soon as practicably possible.)
- Choose a location that limits seating and allows for social distancing to keep groups of students and staff at least 3 feet apart and groups of guests at least 6 feet apart.
- Use touchless ticketing/access methods. If not possible, install physical barriers between attendees and door staff.
- Develop a pathway that allows for physical distancing when attendees move from parking, to the door, and to their seats, or from place to place during the event.
- Require attendees to wash or sanitize hands when entering the venue and provide hand-washing and/or sanitizing stations throughout venue. Ensure sanitizer products meet guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
 - Guidelines are available under ““When cleaning” on the CDC’s COVID-19 “Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility.”
- Post clearly visible signage at all entrances stating that all attendees are required to wear a mask and maintain distance while on the grounds or premises. Signage is available for download on the Posters and Signs page at coronavirus.ohio.gov. Any entity requiring assistance printing signage should contact the Ohio Department of Health Call Center at 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).
- Communicate safety protocols with attendees before the event, post additional signage throughout the venue to reinforce safety requirements, and communicate reminders through public announcements throughout the event.
- If it has been used or occupied within the previous 14 days, clean and disinfect the venue before the event. Pay close attention to frequently touched surfaces, such as door handles, sink handles, drinking fountains, grab bars, or seat backs.
- Sanitize microphones after each speaker/user.

Social Distancing

- Social distancing must be maintained whenever possible.
- Discourage people from standing or sitting close together before, during, or after the event.
- Seat attendees in groups of no more than 10, with at least 3 feet between groups of students and school staff, and at least 6 feet between groups of guests.
- Seat attendees in staggered rows and sections.
- Block off rows or sections of seating to space groups of students and staff at least 3 feet apart and groups of guests at least 6 feet apart.
- Use multiple entrances and exits and discourage crowded waiting areas.
- Eliminate lines/queues if possible and encourage people to stay at least 6 feet apart by providing signs or other visual cues such as tape or chalk marks.
- Where possible, provide for one-way traffic in buildings or other areas to help attendees maintain social distancing.
- Available restrooms should have one-way entry and exit. Consider limiting the number of people who occupy restrooms at one time to allow for social distancing.

Masking

- All attendees who can safely do so should wear a mask.
Note: A mask should never be placed on anyone younger than 2 or anyone who cannot remove it themselves.
 - Some exemptions to state masking requirements include:
 - Anyone younger than 10.
 - People with medical conditions, including respiratory conditions that restrict breathing, mental health conditions, and disabilities, that make it dangerous to wear a facial covering.
 - Anyone communicating with someone who is hearing impaired or has another disability that requires the ability to see the mouth for communication.
 - Anyone actively participating in broadcast communications.
 - Officiants of religious services.

For a full list of exemptions, see the ["Director's Order for Social Distancing, Facial Coverings and Non-Congregating."](#)