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Considerations for Graduation Ceremonies and Other End-of-Year School Events 2020-2021

While the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact school district operations, the New Jersey Department of Education (Department) recognizes the importance of celebrating the accomplishments of students and educators. This guidance is intended to assist Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) in planning graduation ceremonies and other end-of-year events, such as proms and awards ceremonies, that adhere to current health and safety requirements. Event planning should continue to be informed by the latest public health data and the Department recommends that plans be developed in consultation with local law enforcement and local public health officials.

The following sections outline the current requirements and recommendations for end-of-year school events. LEAs should closely monitor the issuance of new Executive Orders that may affect planning for graduation ceremonies and other end-of-year events. For the most up-to-date gathering limitation information, please visit the NJ COVID-19 Information Hub FAQ "[How can people safely get together](#)".

LEAs should also be mindful of the CDC's recommendations for vaccinated and unvaccinated travelers at the time of the event. For the most up-to-date information regarding travel, please visit the NJ COVID-19 Information Hub FAQ "[Are there travel restrictions to or from New Jersey?](#)"

Requirements and considerations for awards and graduation ceremonies:

- For in-person ceremonies, **LEAs must limit the number of attendees based on state gathering rules effective on the date of the**
 - Effective June 4, 2021, there is no longer a numerical limit on indoor gatherings, regardless of the size of the venue. There is also currently no limit on outdoor gatherings. For the most up-to-date indoor and outdoor gathering limits, visit the NJ COVID-19 Information Hub FAQ "[How can people safely get together](#)".
 - Indoor venues, regardless of size, may operate at full capacity starting June 4, 2021. Outdoor venues are also currently permitted to operate at full capacity.
- Effective Friday, May 28, 2021, individuals in indoor public spaces are not required to wear masks, however, LEAs are strongly encouraged to continue to implement health and safety protocols, such as having a mask policy.
 - Per CDC guidance, individuals who are not fully vaccinated - defined as two weeks after receiving the second shot of a two-dose vaccination or two weeks after receiving a single-dose vaccination - are strongly encouraged to continue masking and social distancing.
- LEAs should continue **monitoring local and state health information**.
- LEAs are expected to **prioritize the health and safety** of students, staff, faculty, visitors, and other community members, including abiding by the most current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance.
 - This includes notifying and keeping local emergency management, law enforcement, first responders, local elected officials, and local health agencies informed of the LEA's planned ceremonies.
- LEAs should **be proactive and clear in communicating** event guidelines to those planning to attend. Information could be displayed on digital screens or distributed via e-mail in advance of the ceremony, for example. Individuals who are sick should be discouraged from attending – see [CDC guidelines](#) for what individuals should do if they are sick and to see a list of possible COVID-19 symptoms. Prospective attendees should be advised to consider current guidelines from the NJDOH and CDC regarding high-risk categories and necessary precautions.
- LEAs should provide approved sanitization materials for employees, students, and visitors at all ceremonies and coordinate the provision with the hosting venue when events occur off of LEA grounds.

General Health and Safety Guidelines

LEAs must prioritize the health and safety of students, staff, and other community members, which involves notifying and keeping local emergency management, law enforcement, first responders, local elected officials, and local health agencies informed of the planned events. LEAs should confer with local health officials to determine the applicability of any other rules or restrictions in addition to those outlined above that might be necessary to ensure the public's health. Additionally, LEAs should ensure that ceremonies are inclusive and accessible for *all* students and families. Consider making livestreams available for those individuals who are unable to attend the event and consider equity issues which may impact participation.

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