



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: CT State Department of Education
CT Department of Public Health

DATE: May 14, 2020

SUBJECT: High School Class of 2020 Graduation Ceremonies During May and June

The purpose of this memo is to provide guidance with respect to the planning of high school graduation ceremonies during May and June of 2020. While we are aware of the significance of honoring our seniors and commemorating this achievement, options available at this time must respect the public health and safety rules in place to protect our students and families.

Due to the significant ongoing public health concerns relating to the coronavirus, the Connecticut State Departments of Education (CSDE) and Public Health (DPH) remind you that any in-person gathering to commemorate student graduation in May or June must be consistent with the applicable Executive Orders restricting social and recreational gatherings (including community events and similar activities) and use of face coverings. Executive Order No. 7X, which is currently in effect, prohibits social and recreational gatherings of more than five people. Any district choosing to hold creative variations of outdoor gatherings for graduations that involve any in-person congregation must receive approval from their local health department.

The CSDE took seriously and shared the sentiments communicated with us by students and families with the Office of the Governor, and also brainstormed with DPH and our public health experts to maximize the options provided here for May and June. Nothing in this guidance would prohibit a delayed graduation ceremony later this summer, although you are encouraged to consider that there may be public health restrictions applicable at that time as well.

Superintendents should also consult with their staff and local Board of Education to weigh current health and safety considerations when making any decision.

As you plan your approach, it will be important to communicate the expectations to all participants in advance, and registration is encouraged so you can properly anticipate the number of students and families to expect and ask them to acknowledge the rules around social distancing. Some creative options that have been shared and follow Executive Order 7X include:

1. **Example 1:** A stage is set up on school property for a school official to call the names of graduates. Graduates and their families are lined up in their cars in front of stage (should be staggered based on size of graduating class). Staff and student speeches are done virtually before the diplomas are distributed. To distribute diplomas, when a graduate's name is called, the student may leave their car to receive their diploma while practicing safe social distancing, have a picture taken, and return to their vehicle. This process is repeated for all graduates. Other than receiving the diploma, no individual should leave a car. Nothing throughout the ceremony should violate EO 7X or the most current guidance regarding gatherings of groups and use of face coverings.

2. **Example 2:** Similar precautions are taken as described in Example 1, except students stay in their vehicles when they receive their diplomas. Students' names are announced as they drive by the person distributing diplomas, and they receive the diploma while practicing safe social distancing (i.e. diploma is placed on table), and have a picture taken. Students and families remain in their vehicle during opening ceremony which may include speeches from students.
3. **Example 3:** Virtual graduations where speeches are broadcast via Zoom or similar platforms; graduate names and photos are displayed in alphabetical order – similar to what was recently done by the University of Connecticut.

Thank you for your attention to this important information.