

Austin Public Health

Recommendations for Pre-K—12 Graduation Ceremonies

April 27, 2022

Purpose

Austin Public Health is excited that our COVID-19 [Community Level](#) have remained low allowing for graduation ceremonies to be held in person. As these events approach, Austin Public Health would like to provide some COVID-19 safety recommendations that are intended to help planners keep their events and attendees safe. These safety standards are minimum recommendations only and are not exclusive or exhaustive. The public health data for disease prevention that inform these guidelines can and do change. If the COVID-19 Community Level increases to medium or high, schools should be prepared to increase mitigation measures for graduation ceremonies.

Public Messaging Ahead of Graduation Ceremonies

Schools should set COVID-19 expectations, policies, and guidelines in advance of the ceremony. Ensure all students and families are aware of the COVID-19 measures that graduates, staff, and guests are expected to follow based on the COVID-19 Community Level at the time of the event.

Schools should convey the following information to graduates, staff, and guests before the ceremony:

Vaccines

- Graduates, staff, and guests are strongly encouraged to get [up-to date on COVID-19 vaccines](#) at least 2 weeks prior to the ceremony.

Testing

- APH recommends that all graduates, staff, and guests take a COVID-19 test within 24 hours of attending graduation ceremonies. Those who test positive should not attend in person.

Attendance

- Anyone in the following situations should not attend the ceremony in person:
 - Those who have recently tested positive for COVID-19 and have not yet met the criteria to end isolation (use the [CDC quarantine and isolation calculator](#) to determine when to end isolation)
 - Those who are quarantining because they were recently in close contact with someone who is COVID-positive (use the [CDC quarantine and isolation calculator](#) to determine when to end quarantine)
 - Those who have COVID-like symptoms

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Masks

- Ceremony attendees who recently had COVID-19 or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 10 days, should wear a mask.
- Per the [CDC](#) “At all levels, people can wear a mask based on personal preference, informed by personal level of risk.” APH recommends that those who are at higher risk mask indoors when the COVID-19 Community Level is medium.
- If the COVID-19 Community Level is high, everyone aged 2+ is required to mask indoors.

How to Report COVID-19 Cases after Graduation

- Anyone who develops COVID-19 symptoms and/or tests positive for COVID-19 in the 72 hours after attending the ceremony in person should immediately notify the school. (Ensure attendees are aware of the best way to report the case to the school.)

Venue Logistics and Mitigation Measures

At all community levels, APH recommends schools do the following:

- Maximize ventilation in spaces where graduation ceremonies are held. The CDC offers [tools and tips to improve ventilation](#) in buildings.
- Consider providing a virtual live stream option so that those who are immunocompromised or at high risk as well as those who may not be able attend due to quarantine, isolation, or symptoms, to participate.
- At venue entrances, make masks available to those who may want them but have not brought their own. Ensure access to handwashing facilities on site and make alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol available throughout the venue.
Post visible signage throughout the venue to remind workers, guests, and graduates of hygiene and safety protocols.

The following table includes additional recommendations for graduation ceremonies that are based on the COVID-19 Community Level related to masking, physical distancing, and indoor and outdoor events. APH urges schools to follow the additional recommendations when planning graduation ceremonies to be held when the COVID-19 Community Level is medium or high.

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Additional Recommendations for Graduation Ceremonies based on COVID-19 Community Level	
LOW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks optional
MEDIUM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masks optional but recommended indoors when physical distancing of 6 feet is not possible • Consider implementing physical distancing of 6ft between people of different households, including between graduates, faculty, guests, and presenters
HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require universal indoor masking for all people ages 2 and older, regardless of vaccination status • Implement physical distancing of 6ft between people of different households, including between graduates, faculty, guests, and presenters • Hold the event outdoors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If it is not possible to hold the event outdoors, to allow 6 feet of distancing between people from different households either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Use a larger venue, or ▪ Divide up the graduating class and hold multiple smaller graduation ceremonies. • Encourage groups that congregate to socialize after the ceremony to move outside • Avoid serving refreshments and food indoors so that people can remain masked

Reporting

- As with all school-related COVID-19 cases, schools should immediately report any cases linked to graduation ceremonies to APH.