



Alameda County Health Care Services Agency

Public Health Department

Colleen Chawla, Director

Kimi Watkins-Tartt, Director

Erica Pan, MD, Interim Health Officer

Alameda County Public Health Department COVID-19 Guidance for Graduation & Diploma Pick-Up Updated: May 26, 2020¹

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for spring 2020 school graduation ceremonies in light of the current Alameda County Shelter in Place Order. To slow and decrease the spread of COVID-19, Alameda County² joined Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, San Mateo, and Santa Clara counties and the City of Berkeley to issue a legal order directing their respective residents to shelter at home. The order prohibits gatherings and limits activity, travel, and business functions to only the most essential needs. The current Shelter in Place Order for Alameda County is effective through May 31, 2020.

We recognize the need for people to connect and celebrate, during this time of graduation, however gatherings are a major contributor to the spread of COVID-19. **We strongly encourage organizers to consider “virtual” graduations that can be held online.** Please see Alameda County Office of Education’s Guidelines for Virtual Graduations [here](#).

If virtual graduations are not possible, below are guidelines for other options that might be considered for students to pick up their diplomas **outdoors**:

Social Distancing Graduation Event/Diploma Pickup:

A graduation event to provide students, accompanied by their families, the opportunity to receive a diploma/certificate at the school campus or alternate location. The following guidelines are recommended:

- Depending on the size of the group and the ability to social distance, it may require holding multiple events for multiple groups of students.
- Limit the number of people accompanying the student to the site, allowing only parents/caregivers and siblings who are currently living in the student’s household to attend, ideally a group of no more than 4-6 attendees.
- Limit approaches to a graduation table/station where their student would receive a diploma to one family at a time.
- Stagger families so they can practice social distancing and be spaced 6 feet apart, at a minimum. The more space the better.
- Ensure that school staff are also practicing social distancing and are spaced 6 feet apart.
- **Ensure that events don’t result in congregation of spectators/observers on streets, in parking lots, or in areas surrounding the event location.**

¹ This guidance was updated on 5/26/2020 to clarify that it applies only to outdoor ceremonies, which has always been the intent. Indoor gatherings of any kind remain prohibited, except for the limited purposes expressly provided for in the Health Officer Order.



Alameda County Health Care Services Agency

Public Health Department

Colleen Chawla, Director

Kimi Watkins-Tartt, Director

Erica Pan, MD, Interim Health Officer

- Ensure families and staff are wearing [cloth face coverings](#).
- Ensure there are ample handwashing stations on site and/or hand sanitizing stations accessible so students and staff are able to wash their hands upon entering and exiting the ceremony.
- Inform families and students that they must leave the school campus after receiving their diploma.
- If families drive their cars to the graduation site, ask that families park and wait to be called forward. Ensure they do not leave their car until called.
- Students and staff should be reminded to NOT participate in the ceremony if they are sick (if they have a new cough, complaints of sore throat, or shortness of breath, or have a fever of 100°F or above).
- **Consult with local law enforcement, particularly for a large group of cars heading to one destination at one time; following any guidance provided by local law enforcement.**
- If families walk or bike to the walk-up graduation site, be sure to have a safe staging area where groups can social distance while they wait to be called. Use chalk, chairs, and/or tape to designate spaces for families to wait.
- Time the event appropriately to ensure families aren't waiting in their cars or in the staging area for long periods of time, which might encourage congregating.

Small-group Social Distancing Graduation Event Scenario: (This type of event is permissible with children aged 13 or older and a group size of 25 students or less).

A graduation ceremony that would provide students the opportunity to pick up their diploma/certificate on the school campus or alternative location. This ceremony would not include the parents/caregivers of the students or their extended families, but it could be filmed for them to view it at a later time.

- Set up chairs so they are spaced six feet apart, at a minimum.
- Handout diplomas to one student at a time with appropriate timing to enable at least 6 feet apart between each student.
- Ensure that students and staff are wearing [cloth face coverings](#).
- When students are waiting in line, before entering the graduation space, ensure there is at least 6 feet distance between each student. Use tape or chalk to designate where students should wait before they sit down.
- Time the sign-in/entrance process appropriately to ensure students aren't waiting for long periods of time, which might encourage congregating.
- Be sure that school staff are also practicing social distancing and are spaced 6 feet apart.
- Do a health check at the entrance of the ceremony space. If a staff member or children shows signs of respiratory illness (a new cough, complaints of sore throat, or shortness of breath), a fever of 100°F or above, they should enter a separate room, or be safely isolated with a staff member, and be sent home as soon as possible.
- Seek medical care immediately if symptoms, such as a high fever or difficulty breathing, become more severe.