

Updated language from Commissioner's Memo LS-20-089:

<http://adecm.arkansas.gov/ViewApprovedMemo.aspx?Id=4328>

Updates to COVID-19 GUIDANCE (UPDATED 4-27-2020)

On April 25, Governor Hutchinson and Secretary Key announced requirements for districts to follow in planning for high school graduation ceremonies. Traditional high school graduation ceremonies are restricted until July 1 at the earliest. DESE will consult with ADH to review data and re-evaluate the situation as we approach July 1 and continue to make decisions based on current public health data.

DESE encourages schools to delay their graduation ceremonies; however, if a high school desires to hold a non-traditional graduation ceremony prior to July 1, this can be considered as long as the plans adhere to the current health emergency directives regarding social distancing and limits to the number of people in a congregate setting. Any non-traditional graduation plan must be submitted to the Department of Education. The plan will be reviewed, in consultation with the Department of Health, for adherence to established public health guidelines. Plans should be emailed to ADE.HighSchoolGraduation@arkansas.gov.

Plans should be submitted by the school district superintendent and should include the superintendent's email, phone number, and the proposed date(s) of activities associated with a non-traditional ceremony. The review of the plan will be looking for adherence to health guidelines.

In addition to the overall description of the non-traditional ceremony, plans should include, at a minimum, the following details:

- Information regarding Personal Protective Equipment: What PPE will be used and by whom?
- Precautions to ensure there is not a social gathering (more than 10 people) before, during, and after the ceremony.
- Social distancing plans.
- Safety precautions when handling diplomas, awards, etc.
- Parking and exiting vehicles (no more than 10 people out of vehicles at any time). School/district staff, board members, graduate and family members, photographer and/or videographer are included in the count of no more than 10 people outside of vehicles.

Plans will be reviewed as quickly as possible, and records will be kept to document plans that meet health guidelines.

DESE also has received questions about the possibility of athletic practices resuming if privately-owned gyms/fitness centers are allowed to reopen. Please be reminded that the Arkansas Activities Association extended the athletic dead period through May 30 to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. During this dead period, teams aren't allowed to practice, lift weights together, play games, or travel to competition. School athletic facilities will remain closed until May 30, at which time the AAA, working with the ADH, will re-evaluate the situation.