



May 11, 2020

Re: DCHHS Graduation Ceremony Recommendations

Dear Dallas County Superintendents:

Graduation is an important milestone in a student's academic journey and deserves to be celebrated. With graduation season upon us, schools are seeking clarification and guidance on how they can safely observe and honor the occasion in alignment with public health guidance to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Based on local assessment of the risk of the current situation regarding COVID-19 in Dallas County, and reviewing the recommendations from the CDC and the Texas Department of State Health Services, we recommend that graduation ceremonies should follow the following guidelines to ensure the safety of students and staff:

- **Indoor graduations and ceremonies held outside in stadiums and footballs fields are strongly discouraged.** In-person social gatherings with people from multiple households, even in situations where ample space between attendees could be accommodated, does not comply with social distancing practices and increases the potential for massive spread of COVID-19. Additionally, hosting an event encourages people in high-risk groups (particularly older adults and people with underlying health conditions) or ill individuals to come out rather than stay at home.
- **Honor graduates virtually.** The Dallas County Health and Human Services Department strongly encourages the use of virtual graduation ceremony. Consider real-time or pre-recorded interactive webinar events in which individuals are recognized while students, faculty, and friends join on their computers using audio and webcam to be part of the ceremony. Consider including pre-recorded speeches from commencement speakers, students, and faculty members.

Also, given our current level of COVID-19 activity, we do not recommend vehicle ceremonies.

The safety and well-being of Dallas County students and their families, as well as school staff, is our number one priority. We know how much students in the class of 2020 have sacrificed this year, and how disappointing it is not to participate in the milestones or traditions they had imagined. These guidelines were made with public health protection in mind, and adhering to them is how we will both celebrate our students and move safely through this challenge together.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Philip Huang".

Philip Huang, MD, MPH

Director | Health Authority

Dallas County Health and Human Services