April 30, 2020

During this challenging time, school districts across Montana have worked diligently to keep students and school staff safe. As Montana has entered a phased reopening and understanding the difficulty in overcoming logistical barriers in hosting graduations for our school districts, the partners at the Montana Public Education Center (MT-PEC) have developed the following recommendations to support our public schools in exploring 2020 graduation options:

**What has the Governor said on graduation ceremonies?**

1. No limit on gathering sizes.
2. Suggestions, but not orders (schools “should consider”)
   a. Graduation environments that can meet the social distancing requirements.
   b. Provide a live stream of graduation
   c. Consider limiting spectator attendance
   d. For larger schools, consider grouping graduates or providing multiple ceremonies
   e. Follow social distancing between families

**Potential Logistical Recommendations:**

1. Consider outdoor graduation ceremonies. COVID-19 does not transmit as easily outdoors as it does indoors. If you choose an indoors option, make sure to comply with physical distancing and account for necessary space during ingress and egress.
2. Cite the relevant elements of the Governor’s directives every time the issue comes up.
3. County Health Boards and County Health Officers have the right under law and under the Governor’s reopening plan to impose orders more stringent than the Governor’s reopening plan. If a county chooses to impose a more stringent requirement that is legally enforceable, county departments of health have to act by adopting an order. Guidance, recommendations or other informal expressions of opinion do not have the force of law and members should ask the county departments of health to issue their guidance through formal order. If they are not willing to provide your local public schools with an Order, any informal recommendation, guidance, etc. is a non-binding opinion, and no more.
4. For uniformity and because all high school districts have at least one regulation size football field available for use, we have developed a layout for conducting a graduation ceremony in that setting with physical distancing and buffers incorporated. If using football fields, mark out ingress and egress routes to ensure 6 feet of distance throughout the process. Consider placing 1 student every 5+ yards.
a. This provides for a maximum size graduation group of 160. This should be used as the group size limitations (e.g. if you have a graduating class of 480, three groups of 160). Use the infographics at the end of this guidance and distribute it every time the issue comes up.

b. The implications for use of this format by MHSA athletic classification are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>LAYOUT</th>
<th>GUESTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA and Larger A (see Playbook AA and Larger A)</td>
<td>Note this will require multiple ceremonies for all AA (estimated graduating class size of between 250 in Belgrade and 1,400+ in Billings).&lt;br&gt;1. Starting at the sideline on each side of the field, at the 25 yard line, a person/chair on every 5 yard line.&lt;br&gt;   i. 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 45, 40, 35, 30, 25, 20, 15, 10, 5, touchdown line – total of 16 rows.&lt;br&gt;   ii. Leave endzone in the back open for walk throughs.&lt;br&gt;2. Going toward the center of the field every 5 yards, total of 5 seats on the left and 5 on the right with a 10 yard wide aisle in the middle.&lt;br&gt;3. Overall capacity shows 160 sitting.</td>
<td>Livestream for Guests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average A (see Playbook Average A)</td>
<td>100 graduates for district. Note that although space will be more than sufficient for graduating class size, there will not be enough space for even one guest per graduate.&lt;br&gt;1. Same layout as noted above, with a total of 10 rows (total graduating class size of 100) and remaining 6 rows open for discretionary use</td>
<td>Remaining 6 open rows could include guests of honor graduates, perhaps a lottery to determine 60 guests with no more than one per graduate, note a possible livestream option.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average B (see Playbook Average B)</td>
<td>50 graduates for district.&lt;br&gt;1. Same layout as noted above. First 5 rows for graduates, last 11 rows for guests.</td>
<td>2 guest limit per graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger C (see Playbook Larger C)</td>
<td>25 graduates for district.&lt;br&gt;1. Same layout as noted above. First 2.5 rows for graduates, last 13.5 rows for guests.</td>
<td>5 guest limit per graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller C (see Playbook Smaller C)</td>
<td>10 graduates for district.&lt;br&gt;1. Same layout as above. First row for graduates, last 15 rows for guests.</td>
<td>Significant latitude in layout and guest limit, could allow for double digit guests per graduate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Please see the graphic illustrating graduation seating logistics by MHSA athletic classification on the following pages.
Consider outdoor graduation ceremonies only outside. COVID-19 does not transmit as easily outdoors as it does indoors. If you choose an indoors option, make sure to comply with physical distancing and account for necessary space during ingress and egress.

For uniformity and because all high school districts have at least one regulation size football field available for use, we have developed a layout for conducting a graduation ceremony in that setting with physical distancing and buffers incorporated.

Starting at the sideline on each side of the field, at the 25 yard line, a person/chair on every 5 yard line.

Going toward the center of the field every 5 yards, total of 5 seats on the left and 5 on the right with a 10 yard wide aisle in the middle.

_Overall capacity allows 160 sitting_

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Going toward the center of the field every 5 yards, total of 5 seats on the left and 5 on the right with a 10 yard wide aisle in the middle.

**Overall capacity allows for 100 grads, 60 guests**

Ensure 6 feet of distance throughout the process!

Clearly mark ingress and egress routes to ensure 6 feet of distance.

Leave endzone in the back open for walk throughs.

Remaining 5 open rows could include guests of honor graduates!

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**OVERALL CAPACITY ALLOW 50 GRADS, 110 GUESTS**

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**Overall capacity allows 25 grads, 135 guests**

Ensure 6 feet of distance throughout the process!

Clearly mark ingress and egress routes to ensure 6 feet of distance.

Leave endzone in the back open for walk throughs

Five guest limit per graduate

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**Overall capacity allows 10 grads x 150 guests x**

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