

ED CLIPS!

Graduation Ceremony Plans for Rural School Districts

As we discussed in the recorded TREA webinar, the Texas Education Agency (“TEA”) approved virtual graduation ceremonies. On the same date, TEA indicated that it has a superintendent task force studying in person graduations. It also indicated that it will be publishing guidelines related to in person graduation ceremonies. However, at present no such guidelines are available.

Our recommendation to school district considering either an in-person graduation ceremony or a hybrid ceremony involving elements of an in-person ceremony is to always use common sense. In deciding whether to proceed with any form of an in-person ceremony, consider the available COVID-19 statistics in the county in which the district is located as well as statewide, follow CDC and state guidelines, and comply with all state and local orders.

Additionally, you may wish to consider the following checklist:

- Provide notice to the graduates and parents participating in an in-person graduation ceremony is voluntary;
- Provide advance notice to graduates and guests to stay away from the ceremony if they are ill or have a fever;
- Have staff prepared to check the temperature of graduates and guests as they arrive;
- Have an emergency plan for any graduates or guests who are not in compliance;
- Have a plan to repeatedly disinfect any touch points exposed to graduates and guests;
- Provide sufficient number of employees to assist with the graduation ceremony;
- Have a protocol in place for health checks for employees assisting in the ceremony;
- Have the ceremony plan reviewed and approved by local health officials;
- Have the ceremony plan reviewed and approved by the local county judge;
- Consult with law-enforcement authorities concerning the ceremony;
- Determine if the ceremony is consistent with the district’s emergency operation plan; and
- Confirm that the ceremony will accommodate disabled graduates or guests.

Carefully document the steps above. The objective is to be able to demonstrate that, prior to offering the ceremony, the school district acted responsibly and in the interest of the health and safety of its graduates, guests, and all employees.