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SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM
GOVERNOR

May 5, 2020

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents and Charter School Leaders
FROM: Ryan Stewart, Ed.L.D.
RE: **2020 High School Graduation Guidance**

Greetings Superintendents and Charter School Leaders:

With graduation season upon us, we recognize the difficult task you are faced with as you balance celebrating the monumental accomplishments of your seniors with health and safety concerns. We offer the following guidance as you plan for graduation ceremonies under these unique circumstances brought about by the current public health crisis.

As you are all aware, activity in our state at this time is governed in part by a series of public health orders issued by the Governor and State public health officials. The statewide public health order dated April 30, 2020 remains in effect through May 15, 2020. Cibola, McKinley and San Juan Counties remain under the more restrictive public health order dated April 11, 2020. Both orders prohibit “mass gatherings,” which are defined as “any public or private gathering that brings together five (5) or more individuals in a single room or connected space, confined outdoor space or an open outdoor space where individuals are within six (6) feet of each other.” Further, both orders advise all New Mexicans to “stay at home and undertake only those outings absolutely necessary for their health, safety, or welfare.”

If you are planning a graduation ceremony to take place on or before May 15, to comply with the current public health orders, that graduation should take place virtually or in a manner that does not provide for mass gatherings nor involve unnecessary outings.

Current information suggests that in the coming days and weeks, the Governor and her team will continue to assess the public health situation in New Mexico to determine how, or if, the current public health orders will be changed. In her April 30th press conference, the Governor addressed a phased-in approach to reopening the state. This approach includes the consideration of the four “gating criteria” shown below, which will factor into decision-making on public health-related restrictions. She specifically emphasized that all four criteria are driven by the social distancing behaviors of New Mexicans.

STATEWIDE PUBLIC HEALTH GATING CRITERIA FOR REOPENING

Criterion	Measure	Initial Gating Value	Predicted Status in 2 Weeks (assuming current social distancing efforts)
Spread of COVID-19	Rate of COVID-19 Transmission	1.15 or less	Approximately 1.15
Testing Capacity: general and targeted populations*	Number of tests per day	3,000 / day	Achievable
Contact Tracing and Isolation Capacity	Time from: -positive test result to isolation recommendation for case	24 hours	Both achievable with expansion of contact tracers
	-quarantine rec. for case contacts	36 hours	
Statewide Health Care System Capacity	Availability of scarce resources: -general beds -ICU beds -ventilators	All 3 sufficient based on modeling	Sufficient
	-PPE	14-day supply	28-day supply

*asymptomatic employees at high-risk sites, vulnerable populations, essential workers, congregate settings

ALL 4 CRITERIA DRIVEN BY SOCIAL DISTANCING BEHAVIORS OF NEW MEXICANS

We are unable to predict whether, or how, the current public health orders will be revised when they expire on May 15, 2020. Even if a succeeding public health order includes fewer restrictions on mass gatherings or unnecessary outings, social distancing protocols will most likely continue. Regardless of how restrictions may change in the future, the health and safety of our staff, students, and communities are the primary concern when graduation plans are developed. To that end, all public health orders in effect at the time of a planned graduation event must be adhered to. We recommend that as you plan graduation events, you incorporate flexibility into your plans to allow for adjustments that ensure compliance with current public health orders.

We are aware that some school districts have decided to hold more traditional graduation ceremonies that include social distancing measures, and are consequently reserving dates later this year in anticipation of relaxed public health-related restrictions. Others are planning for entirely virtual graduation events to allow for timely celebrations, even if restrictive public health measures remain. Still others are considering graduation events in the future that maximize social distancing and are providing information to the community about those future events, but will wait to schedule events until public health-related restrictions have been relaxed. We believe the above approaches, with adherence to the prevailing public health orders, could provide for celebrations that do not compromise health and safety.

As we plan how to celebrate our graduating seniors, it is of utmost importance that we ensure our actions comply with the state's public health orders. All of our efforts contribute to slowing the spread of COVID-19 and keeping our communities safe.

RS/gwp/hm/me