



# MI Safer High School End-of-Year Events Guidance

Michigan.gov/Coronavirus

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## Executive Summary

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is providing guidance on how to hold safer high school end-of-year events – such as prom, graduation, and year-end parties – during the COVID-19 pandemic. This document provides:

- General guidance for how schools can be safer while holding end-of-year events.
- Guidance for schools that choose to implement an end-of-year school testing program.

Based on the current epidemiology of the virus across the state at this time, **virtual events are safest**, and we encourage schools to choose this option. Schools, families, students, local health departments, and communities should assess the risk versus benefit of participating in school events. Individual circumstances, including underlying health conditions that put participants or household contacts at increased risk of severe disease if they should contract COVID-19, should be considered before participating. The local characteristics of spread of the virus should also be considered. Mitigation efforts can reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19; however, mitigation efforts will not eliminate COVID-19 risk.

At the time of this writing Michigan is experiencing a surge of COVID-19 cases, which includes a rise in cases among those aged 10-19 years. As the epidemiology of COVID-19 around the country and the state of Michigan evolves, MDHHS will continue to review and update this guidance.

## End-of-Year School Events Testing Recommendations:

### 1. Test 25% of in-person student population on a weekly basis.

Schools should test at least 25% of its in-person student body. It is recommended that schools test students who participate in extracurricular activities like sports, band, debate, theater, and other activities that take place outside of school hours as a part of the 25% testing goal.

Counties around the country have faced outbreaks of COVID-19 associated with sports teams. As a result, MDHHS requires all youth ages 13-19 to test as specified in the [MDHHS Interim Guidance for Athletics](#). The social activities surrounding extracurriculars, such as team meals and parties, may be a major factor in this spread.

Outbreaks have the potential to affect not only just a sports team, extracurricular club or group, but jeopardize in-person learning for the entire school and impact the broader community in which the players and coaches reside.

**2. Test any student, staff, volunteer or other attendee who will participate in the end-of-year event within 24 hours of the event.**

Anyone who plans to attend an end-of-year event should obtain a negative COVID-19 rapid antigen test within 24 hours before participating in the event, or a negative Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT - e.g., RT-PCR) within 72 hours of the event.

- Documentation of prior COVID-19 infection in the last 90 days may be used if proof of a NAAT or antigen test can be provided.
- At this current time, COVID-19 vaccination should not permit an exemption to testing.

MDHHS recommends that schools offer on-site rapid antigen testing before an end-of-year event.

**3. Prohibit students, staff, volunteers, or other attendees who test positive for COVID-19 from participating in in-person learning or year-end events for the duration of their infectious period.**

Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 should follow [current CDC guidelines](#) for isolation.

**4. Prohibit students, staff, volunteers, or other attendees who have been "close contacts" of a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 from attending an event that takes place during their quarantine period.**

Anyone with [close contact](#) to a confirmed or probably case of COVID-19 should quarantine according to their local health department requirements. Even if an individual tests negative for COVID-19 by antigen or PCR test, that individual should not participate in in-person learning or in-person year-end activities for the duration of their quarantine period if deemed a "[close contact](#)" with an individual who tested positive for COVID-19.

**5. Prohibit students, staff, volunteers, or other attendees with COVID-19 symptoms from attending the event.**

Even if an individual tests negative for COVID-19 by antigen or PCR test, that individual should not participate in in-person learning or in-person year-end activities while presently exhibiting COVID-19 [symptoms](#).

**Testing Support from MDHHS**

MDHHS will provide training, guidance, and rapid antigen testing materials to schools that sign up and agree to the MI Safe Schools Testing Program requirements. MDHHS will provide:

- **Sufficient testing supplies.** Enroll your school to receive supplies through the program website.
- **Guidance.** The training series for school antigen testing can be found at the program website, including weekly office hours.

More information about the testing program, including how to order supplies and report testing results, can be found [here](#).

Schools may also contract with external vendors to support their testing needs, however MDHHS will not be able to reimburse the cost of those expenses.

## General Guidance for End-of-Year School Events:

### 1. Location

All end-of-year events should be conducted in outdoor spaces to decrease the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Please review the specific capacity limits outlined below for clarification on attendance limitations for non-residential gatherings.

- Barns, tents, and other coverings may be used to provide refuge from inclement weather, as long as doors and/ or tent flaps remain open to increase airflow.

### 2. Cohorting

For social events like prom and year-end parties, cohorting or pods should be implemented to maintain small groups throughout the events. Participants should be cohorted into groups of *six or fewer* in order to do traditional activities. However, if the event is held outside of school grounds and dining is included, each cohort size must be limited to six people, according to the [MDHHS Gatherings and Face Mask Order](#).

The **same cohort** should be maintained for all the examples listed below, and individuals should avoid intermingling with others from outside of their cohort for the duration of the event. Lists of cohort members should be documented for contact tracing purposes.

Examples include:

- **Outdoor dining within a cohort:** If dining is included in the event and it is (1) held outside of school grounds and/or (2) it is open to non-school attendees, the cohort size must be limited to a maximum of *six people*, according to the [MDHHS Gatherings and Face Mask Order](#). Individuals may temporarily remove their masks for the purposes of dining outdoors while seated with their cohort.
  - Tables should be placed six feet apart and individuals should have assigned seating with one cohort of six people seated per table.
  - The consumption of food or beverages is permitted only while seated in designated areas.
- **Dancing within a cohort:** Individuals may dance with members of their own cohort without social distancing, but face masks must be worn at all times (per the MDHHS Gatherings and Face Mask Order). Six feet of distance should be maintained between each cohort, cohorts may not intermingle, and face masks must be worn at all times.
- **Activities and games within a cohort:** Individuals may play games with members of their cohort without social distancing while wearing masks. Six feet of distance should be

maintained between each cohort, cohorts may not intermingle, and face masks must be worn at all times.

- **Transportation with a cohort:** Party buses or limousines may be used to transport members of a single cohort. Face masks must be worn at all times.

### 3. Face Masks

Face masks are required at all times and must cover each person's nose and mouth, per the MDHHS Gatherings and Face Mask Order. However, face masks may be temporarily removed when eating or drinking while seated in a designated area and where at least six feet of distance can be maintained from individuals outside of one's cohort.

### 4. Physical Distancing

Students, staff, and volunteers should stay six feet apart from other individuals outside of their cohort.

- Students may dance, play games, or otherwise socialize without practicing physical distancing within their cohort, so long as students remain masked and at least six feet from other cohorts.

### 5. Clean and Disinfect Often

- Use FDA approved cleaning supplies that are listed [here](#).
- Have hand sanitizing and cleaning supplies stations easily and plentifully available for use.
- Do not share items that are difficult to clean, sanitize or disinfect (such as props in photo booths).

### 6. Additional Considerations

- Consider scheduling students in staggered time slots for the event (e.g., 100 students each time slot).
- Consider decreasing the duration of the event. Longer events increase the chance of transmission.
- Be prepared if someone gets sick during or after the event. Implement contact tracing and follow recommendations from local health departments.
- Review the [CDCs Readiness and Planning Tool to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 Events and Gatherings](#) to determine the level of readiness to implement mitigation measures and other safety measures.

## Specific Guidance for Prom and other End-of-Year Parties

1. Capacity limits for end-of-year events, whether on school grounds or at an entertainment/recreational venue, must be in accordance with the [MDHHS Gatherings and Face Mask Order](#) as follows:
  - a. Outdoors: 300 people
  - b. Indoors: 25 people

2. Capacity limits include all participants in attendance at the event, including students, guests, staff, and volunteers.
3. Inviting outside guests increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
4. MDHHS recommends testing every participant attending prom or end-of-year events with a rapid antigen test within 24 hours prior to the event.
5. Encourage cohorting of groups of six (maximum), and document names of participants within cohorts such that contact tracing can be performed if a case is detected after the events.
6. Consider strategies to reduce density at the event (staggered time slots for attendees)
7. Consider alternate activities to dancing. If dancing is planned, then consider strategies to reduce density on the dance floor. Consider several smaller dance floors around the venue.

### Specific Guidance for Graduation Ceremonies

1. Capacity limits for graduation ceremonies as required by the [MDHHS Gatherings and Face Mask Order](#): the number of guests is limited based on the type of venue, provided that all groups maintain six feet of distance at all times. The number of students, faculty, and staff members allowed in a space is limited by the social distancing rules, and overall occupancy of all attendees (including students, staff, faculty, and guests) must not exceed 50% of the total capacity limits established by the fire marshal.
  - a. Entertainment/Recreational Facility (including school facilities):
    - i. Indoors: up to 300 guests
    - ii. Outdoors: up to 1,000 guests
  - b. Stadiums/Arenas:
    - i. Indoors (5,000+ fixed seats): 375 guests
    - ii. Indoors (10,000+ fixed seats): 750 guests
    - iii. Outdoor (5,000+ fixed seats): up to 1,000 guests
    - iv. Outdoor – Enhanced Guidance (5,000+ fixed seats): if an outdoor stadium complies with the [Outdoor Stadium and Arena Guidance](#), the number of students, faculty, staff, and guests may not exceed 20% of fixed seating capacity.
2. Family members or spectators who attend year-end events, such as graduation, are encouraged to cohort in groups of six or fewer. Cohorts should remain six feet apart from individuals in other cohorts at all times.
3. We encourage testing of every participant attending graduation—including family members and guests—with a rapid antigen test within 24 hours prior to the event.
4. For graduation ceremonies, consider fist bumps, elbow bumps, or air high fives in lieu of traditional handshakes.

### Further Information

- [MDHHS Antigen Test FAQ and Guideline](#)
- [MDHHS Testing for School Programs](#)
- [CDC Readiness and Planning Tool to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 Events and Gatherings](#)
- [CDC: Events and Gatherings Readiness and Planning Tool](#)