



COVID-19 Guidance: Use of School Facilities

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide general principles that apply to facilities that are related to school districts or accredited nonpublic schools. This guidance is necessary in light of [Governor Reynolds's April 27, 2020 disaster proclamation](#), her [May 6, 2020 disaster proclamation](#), her [May 13, 2020 disaster proclamation](#), her [May 20, 2020 disaster proclamation](#), her [May 26, 2020 disaster proclamation](#), and any subsequent proclamations, which allow facilities in certain areas to open under certain circumstances and permit a limited resumption of summer school activities.

Principles

First, until the expiration of all relevant COVID-19 disaster proclamations, a school's facility may only be reopened or used for interscholastic athletics (such as competitions, practices, or workout sessions) or other school-sponsored activities (such as extracurricular activities, intramural sports or activities, student club meetings, in-person voluntary instruction), if such use is consistent with the governor's disaster proclamations, guidance of the Iowa Department of Education (Department), and (as applicable) guidance of the Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) ~~and~~, Iowa Girls High School Athletic Union (IGHSAU), or other governing body. In general, the Department defers to local districts, public health, the IHSAA, IGHSAU, and other associations that support school activities to determine when and how activities will resume. The Department continues to exercise general supervision over and provide guidance about the use of school facilities in accordance with Iowa Code and Governor Reynolds's proclamations. To the extent that the school's facility is a community benefit or an enterprise and not school-related (such as child care, religious services operated by a nonpublic school's governing body, religious services in a space leased from a public school), it may permissibly reopen in a manner consistent with Governor Reynolds's disaster proclamations.

Second, the use must be consistent with decisions made or authorized by the school's governing organization. For public school districts, the use must be consistent with and authorized by Iowa Code section 297.9.¹ For nonpublic schools, the use must be consistent with decisions made by the authorities that govern the nonpublic school.

Third, except as otherwise permitted for school-sponsored activities, if a facility associated with a school is permitted to open, members of the school community (students, teachers, other employees) shall not be permitted to use the facility unless they have a right to use the facility independent of their relationship with the school (such as residing in the community allowed to access the facility for no charge, paying dues to the

¹ The board of directors of any school district may authorize the use of any schoolhouse and its grounds within such district for the purpose of meetings of granges, lodges, agricultural societies, and similar societies, for parent-teacher associations, for community recreational activities, community education programs, election purposes, other meetings of public interest, public forums and similar community purposes; provided that such use shall in no way interfere with school activities; such use to be for such compensation and upon such terms and conditions as may be fixed by said board for the proper protection of the schoolhouse and the property belonging therein, including that of pupils, except that in the case of community education programs, any compensation necessary for programs provided specifically by community education and not those provided through community education by other agencies or organizations shall be compensated from the funding provided for community education programs.

facility, belonging to a religious organization that operates a nonpublic school, or as a benefit of employment).

Fourth, if a facility associated with a school is permitted to open or be used, the school (as well as any partners) needs to have a clear policy or procedure describing who is responsible for maintaining compliance with Governor Reynolds's current or future orders allowing facilities to open including: supervision of required capacity limits, supervision of required group size limits, supervision of required social distancing practices, and sanitization and hygiene requirements. All uses under this document must be consistent with those orders.

Fifth, a school district or nonpublic school that jointly owns or manages a facility with another entity may consider temporarily revising that agreement to facilitate community access to the facility.

Sixth, if the facility is permitted to reopen, access to the remainder of the school building is not permitted unless otherwise permitted by Governor Reynolds's current or future disaster proclamations.

Seventh, previously issued guidance on graduation ceremonies remains applicable and is set forth below:

A graduation ceremony is just that - a ceremony. It has no legal significance, it is not required by Iowa Code, and the Iowa Department of Education does not heavily regulate such ceremonies other than to ensure that students are not charged inappropriate fees. Holding a ceremony is largely a matter of local governance and compliance with the governor's proclamations. While the Department's approval is not needed, districts and schools should confer with local public health and public safety officials before gathering. We also encourage districts to consider scheduling ceremonies in June, since proclamations and public health conditions may change by that time.

Questions and Additional Guidance

For more information on this topic, please contact [Thomas Mayes](#) at the Iowa Department of Education. For additional COVID-19 guidance and information, please visit the Department's [COVID-19 webpage](#).