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Ventura County Public Health Press Release

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Car Graduation Guidance Issued by Public Health

Ventura, CA – On Wednesday, the Public Health Department issued guidance to Ventura County education leaders regarding high school graduation ceremonies amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance, created in collaboration with the Ventura County Office of Education, was issued at the request of superintendents and other school leaders who are making extremely difficult decisions about graduation ceremonies, as the 2019-2020 school year comes to an end.

“As we continue to work to limit the spread of COVID-19, we recognize the need for people to connect and celebrate important milestones like graduating from high school. We understand this is a very challenging time for local families. We hope that the car line protocol will allow for these students to celebrate their accomplishments safely. We appreciate the sacrifice made by so many to social distance in our County. These efforts continue to help stop the spread and they have saved lives,” said Public Health Officer Doctor Robert Levin.

The Ventura County Public Health Department’s protocol for drive through car line ceremonies takes into consideration public health concerns, social distancing recommendations and the state restrictions on social gatherings. The protocol includes the best available guidance to make sure the Class of 2020 can celebrate safely.

“Our thoughts are with the high school seniors and families in our county and others who will be missing out on the traditional graduation and promotion ceremonies that signify an important rite of passage,” said Mike Powers, County Executive Officer. “Graduations will look different this year, but I know the future is very bright as these students move forward. Many of our local students have been instrumental in providing innovative personal protective equipment for medical providers when it has been needed most. As these students embark on their next chapter, we wish them the very best and appreciate the sacrifices they have had to make during this time. We hope this public health guidance will still allow for meaningful graduations to celebrate our local students.”

Gatherings remain prohibited by the state of California therefore traditional in-person graduations are not possible at this time. The protocol allows graduates to briefly exit their vehicles on a timed schedule to receive their diplomas. Diplomas may be distributed using a no-contact pick-up method, maintaining physical distancing of six feet or greater. The protocol allows school personnel to take photos of graduates outside of their vehicles. Family members will be permitted to take photos from inside their vehicles.

“With so many senior year traditions altered or canceled by the coronavirus crisis, we’re grateful that our graduates will have the opportunity to receive their diplomas in person with their families looking on,” said Ventura County Superintendent of Schools Stan Mantooth.
Local school communities must assess their unique needs and capacities, and many variables will impact decisions around graduation celebrations. Many schools are hosting virtual events or postponing the ceremonies, but for those who are planning an in-person event, this guidance addresses important safeguards and considerations for a drive through graduation.

Decisions around whether to host graduation ceremonies will remain at the discretion of local school boards and superintendents and must be conducted in accordance with the Public Health Car Line Celebration Protocol. As we remain in a state of emergency, planners of important events are urged to consider the fact that regulations and recommendations are subject to change, due to the dynamic nature of this situation.