

PTA Council of Howard County
Meeting Guidance
August 17, 2020

On August 14, 2020, The Howard County Public School System granted access to the PTACHC and all PTA/PTSA local entities to use OUTDOOR HCPSS property to conduct in-person meetings necessary to conduct official business of the PTA. PTACHC would like to thank BOE member Christina Delmont-Small, Bruce Gist, Scott Washington, and Superintendent Dr. Michael Martirano for working together to provide a solution for Howard County PTA members. Presidents can schedule outdoor events at all HCPSS schools with the express provision that they are responsible for ensuring social distancing and safety of their attendees. This comes at a sensitive time when many are scrutinizing what activities are allowed and what is restricted both indoors and outdoors at public schools. Please take this into consideration and reinforce the reputation of PTA as a responsible organization capable of performing these functions with the least risk. The following guidelines will assist each PTA that needs to perform in-person activities, such as elections, with proper notice.

GUIDELINES

Follow national, state, local, HCPSS and PTA organization safety guidelines. These can change rapidly, and every reasonable effort should be made to check for updates to current conditions before proceeding.

- Contact with HCPSS is not required, but as a courtesy, might be appropriate to the Principal administrator at the school with date, time, location, and potential rain dates.
- Meetings must follow by-laws procedures for notice. Please include rain dates in notice if local notice bylaws allow, otherwise postponements for weather will require proper full notice of the change.
- Face masks should be worn during the gathering, especially by handlers of ballots or shared items.
- Provide hand sanitizer for guests. Be mindful of shared items such as pens or ballots.
- Plan agendas to minimize exposure time. Offload as many items of business and procedures as practicable that do not require physical gatherings.
- Vehicle movement – Park cars, avoid “drive-through” events and parking lot events where vehicle-pedestrian incidents could occur. Plan gathering across shoulders away from moving vehicles.
- Least contact – accommodate parents with needs, but encourage children to remain at home with supervision if possible.
- Contact Tracing – Keep a log of attendees to provide for contact tracing if necessary.
- Barrier Free – Ensure gathering location selected has appropriate handicapped access or accommodations.
- An outdoor event may be ideal to also exercise a pet, but please do not bring unnecessary pets other than service animals to the gathering.
- Seating, tables, lawn chairs, umbrellas, tents – should be allowed to accommodate those who cannot stand for an extended period, or have severe reactions to exposure but should be minimized to avoid longer setups, securing from wind gusts and potential close-contact crowding if used in a rain event.
- Facilities – The use of HCPSS restrooms and accommodations is not to be expected. Attendees should be made aware of this from the outset and holders of functions should take every effort to conduct the meeting expeditiously for this reason.
- Weather – Use the same criteria as you would for any outdoor PTA event. Summertime thunderstorm “Pool rules” are appropriate. Have a plan for weather cancellation notice prepared ahead of time.
- Disruptions – Outdoor events in public locations have a likelihood of external interruption. Halt proceedings temporarily or reconvene later if necessary. Do not intervene if outside groups in public space are causing disruptions.
- Conclusion of meeting (or meetings) – Update roster positions and contacts with State and PTACHC office.