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COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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COMMISSIONER

COUNTY OF ORANGE
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

October 21, 2020

Dear Municipalities,

As summer turns to fall the event uppermost in the minds of our children is, of course, Halloween and Trick-or-Treating as well as Día de los Muertos celebrations. Like so many other things, our Halloween celebrations will look different this year.

The local impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic has resulted in 13,129 confirmed cases as well as 503 deaths to date in Orange County. Of those cases, close to 45% have been in individuals 18-44 years of age, with the second largest number of confirmed cases in the 45-64 age group (35%). We continue to see new COVID-19 positive resident cases in Orange County daily, as well as a persistence increase in newly lab confirmed cases. While children account for about 5% of the total cases, this virus is completely new and although some symptoms are common among those suffering from the illness, the complete list of symptoms, as well as long term complications remain unknown.

The CDC deemed traditional trick or treating a high-risk activity. In light of this, the Orange County Department of Health **DOES NOT** recommend traditional trick-or-treating, parades, in person parties/ gatherings, or the traditional trunk-or-treat festivities that are the usual Halloween fare. COVID-19 cases are increasing in Orange County, Rockland County, and parts of New York City and therefore Orange County is recommending more restrictions than the rest New York State. Likewise, traditional festivals and gatherings for Día de los Muertos should be limited to household members only, with the incorporated safety precautions. Always follow all local, state and federal COVID-19 safety guidelines. For further information about the CDC guidelines, and what activities are low, moderate, or high risk, please visit their website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/holidays.html>. Here are some alternatives to consider along with family celebrations.

OCDOH Recommended Activities

Masks

Halloween is the perfect holiday for creative mask wearing. Don't let your costume mask be a substitute for your cloth or surgical mask. Wear your COVID mask and don't wear another mask over that mask. You could purchase Halloween inspired fabrics and make your own masks/face coverings.

Drive Through Trunk-or-Treat:

Trunk-or-treat celebrations may be planned as a drive through where kids hold the candy bags outside the car and participants (fully masked and gloved) place the pre-bagged individual treats into the bag.

Family Party

- Create different themes for rooms throughout your house and send the kids on a scavenger hunt for fun swag. Hide candy, toys and prizes or even make some gift certificates to stay up late, choose the movie or eat an extra piece of candy. Keep the big kids engaged by including QR codes and pic challenges! Find inspiration in Halloween movies, music and more.
- Commemorate this once in a Blue Moon Halloween with some epic porch pictures! Grab your selfie-stick, gear up and get out there for some #halloweenporchpics. Don't forget to show off your Halloween houses, pet costumes and favorite little monsters!
- Don't just wear the costume... become the costume! Plan a Halloween feast for your family with one simple rule... everyone must stay in costume AND in character for the entire meal! Give each participant some time to come up with an accent and a backstory before the night begins then the laughter and the memories will be endless!
- Unleash your imagination and let the kids run amok all through the house, both inside and out! Pull out all the stops with a variety of different candy stations, custom made with your little crew in mind!
- A fun way for the kids to get candy without the spread of germs is to have a Halloween themed piñata. Add some Halloween tunes and turn your evening into a family game night with the piñata as the grand finale!

Virtual Parties

- Go onto your Nextdoor App and help coordinate a neighborhood Zoom party complete with games, scary stories and a costume contest. Goodie bags and candy buckets can be dropped off on doorsteps in advance or porch pickups can be arranged from one location!
- Costume videos can be fun to share, so create a family costume challenge or a fun monster mash dance.
- Try some Halloween Karaoke! Whether you are pulling off a tribute to Thriller or takin' it back to the old school with some Monster Mash, a Halloween hit list for a night of Karaoke is sure to bring the house down. Add a little competition with awards for the best impersonation, funniest choreography or the greatest overall showman!

Grown Up Fun

Dress up in period costumes and try an online murder mystery party. Invite your friends and fam to join in on the fun. Design your own party or sign up for one online.

Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF

UNICEF USA is launching a virtual Trick-or-Treat for UNICEF platform and through the month of October, you can add purpose to Halloween by collecting lifesaving donations for UNICEF virtually. In honor of the 70th anniversary of this iconic American tradition, this year's initiative will be comprised of digital, interactive, fun, and empowering experiences all while teaching children the importance of giving back and helping others. Sign up today at www.trickortreatforunicef.org

OCDOH Does NOT Recommended: Trick-or-Treating, In-Person Parties and Social Gatherings.

Safety Guidelines for:

Trick-or-Treaters

- Stay home if sick.
- Trick-or-treat with people you live with.
- Remain 6 feet apart from people not in your household.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wear a face covering BOTH your mouth and nose.
- Hand sanitize (with sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol) frequently while out, especially during key times like before eating or after coughing/sneezing.
- Wash your hands when returning home and before you enjoy the candy.

Homeowners

- Do not hand out candy if you are sick.
- Wear a face covering over BOTH your mouth and nose.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Consider alternative ways to hand out candy, such as a drive-by or leaving candy spread out on a disinfected table.
- If participating in handing out candy from your front door, consider the following:
 - Use duct tape or chalk to mark 6-foot lines in front of home and leading to driveway/front door.
 - Position a distribution table between yourself and trick or treaters.

**If you are not comfortable handing out candy, consider leaving out individually portioned candy or turn off your lights.

Parents

- Stay home if sick.
- Encourage your neighbors to participate in alternative trick-or-treating (drive-by, car parade).
- Talk with your children about safety and social distancing guidelines and expectations.
- Guide children to stay on the right side of the road always to ensure distance.
- Carry a flashlight at if trick-or-treating after dark.
- Wear a face covering over BOTH your mouth and nose.
- Wash your hands as soon as you return home.
- Encourage your children to unwrap candy, throw out the wrapper, and wash their hands before eating it.

Parties

- Consider alternative gatherings, such as parties on a virtual platform (as per above) or a car parade in your neighborhood.
- If you're hosting an in-person event, please consider the following:
 - Limit the guest list to family and household members only.
 - Wear a face covering over your nose AND mouth.
 - Move the party outside.
- Before and after the party, homeowners should clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces, particularly in bathrooms and food preparation spaces (TV remotes, tables, doorknobs, handrails, telephones, light switches, etc.).
 - If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
 - For disinfection, use EPA-registered household disinfectants and follow the manufacturer's instructions (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).
 - For more information on methods & products:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/clean-disinfect/index.html>
 - <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

Additional Resources

- Halloween and Costume Association & Harvard Global Health Institute, <https://www.halloween2020.org/>
- Orange County, <https://www.orangecountygov.com/1936/Coronavirus>

- New York State, <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- New York State Department of Health Halloween Guidance (attached)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Irina Gelman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end.

Dr. Irina Gelman, DPM, MPH, PhDc
Commissioner of Health