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State of California—Health and Human Services Agency **California Department of Public Health**

October 13, 2020

TO: All Californians

SUBJECT: Guidance for Safer Halloween and Día de los Muertos Celebrations during COVID-19

Summary

This guidance outlines safer alternative ways to celebrate Halloween and Día de los Muertos during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 continues to pose a severe risk to communities and requires all Californians to follow necessary precautions in light of this ongoing risk.

Some of the traditional holiday activities promote congregating and mixing of households, which increase the risk of transmitting COVID-19. For this reason, CDPH recommends that you choose a safer alternative way to celebrate Halloween and Día de los Muertos, and strongly discourages trick-or-treating. It is important to plan early and identify safer options.

Your local health department may have additional restrictions; check with your local public health department for information about Halloween in your community.

This guidance may be modified based on the changing conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Safer Alternatives for Halloween

The safest way to celebrate Halloween is to spend time with people in the same household or to celebrate virtually. Some specific alternatives that are low risk but still capture the holiday fun include:

- Creating a haunted house or candy scavenger hunt in your home
- Having a scary movie night and Halloween-themed activities (pumpkin carving, face painting) at home
- Participating in online parties/contests (e.g. costume or pumpkin carvings)
- Attending car-based outings where people do not leave their car including drive-in events or contests or movies; driving through an area with Halloween displays
- Eating a Halloween-themed meal with your household (alone or with up to 2 other households, not including your own, for a meal outside following all other gathering guidelines)
- Enjoying a Halloween-themed art installation at an outdoor museum with your household

- Dressing up homes and yards with Halloween-themed decorations
- Giving treats at home only to those in your household.
- Send a curated playlist and/or themed treats (or tricks) to your friends ahead of time.
- Designing face masks that reflect your child/ren's Halloween costumes
- Prepare a Halloween basket for your children or Halloween hunt in your backyard

Safer Alternatives for Día de los Muertos

The safest way to celebrate Día de los Muertos is to spend time with people in the same household or to celebrate virtually. Some specific alternatives that are low risk but still capture the cultural celebration include:

- **Altars:** Consider placing and creating your altar in a front window or outside so others can view from a safe social distance.
- **Virtual Altar:** Create a virtual space to honor lost loved ones. Share with family and friends via email or social media.
- **Cemetery Visits:** If you visit the cemetery, only visit with those you live with, wear masks and maintain appropriate social distancing. Limit time spent to minimum necessary.

Trick-or-Treating

In general, the **more people from different households** with whom a person interacts, the **closer** the physical interaction is, and the **longer** the interaction lasts, the higher the risk that a person with COVID-19 infection –symptomatic or asymptomatic -- may spread it to others. Trick-or-treating without necessary modifications promotes congregating and mixing of many households, particularly on crowded doorsteps, which can increase the spread of COVID-19. That type of mixing is not currently permitted in California. Additionally, if there is a positive case discovered, it is very challenging to do appropriate contact tracing to identify all those who have been potentially exposed.

To protect yourself and your community, you should not go trick-or-treating or mix with others outside allowed private gatherings this Halloween season.

Personal Protection Measures:

Regardless of how you choose to celebrate Halloween or Día de los Muertos it is important to keep the following in mind:

1. **Face Coverings:** Face coverings must be worn in accordance with the [CDPH Guidance on the Use of Face Coverings](#), unless an exemption is applicable. Please note plastic, rubber, vinyl and other Halloween costume masks are not an acceptable substitute for cloth face-coverings for the prevention of COVID-19 spread.
2. **Practice Social Distancing:** Avoid confined spaces, especially indoors. Stay least 6 feet away (3 or more adult steps) from all other people who are not part of your own household, especially while talking, eating, drinking, and singing.
3. **Good Hygiene:** Wash or sanitize your hands often. Clean frequently touched items regularly.
4. **Minimize Mixing:** Plan activities to limit mixing between different households. Currently gatherings of more than three households are prohibited in California. Californians are permitted to gather with a maximum of two other households. This means that on Halloween, if you are spending time with others, you must stick with a maximum of three households (including your own), and not mingle with others.
5. **Stay Home if You are Sick or You are in a High Risk Group:** If you are sick, or you have been in contact with someone who is sick with COVID-19 or has symptoms of COVID-19 stay

home, and away from others. People at higher risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19 (such as older adults, people with chronic medical conditions) are strongly urged to stay home.

1. If you are sick or in a high risk group, you should discourage trick-or-treaters from coming to your door by turning off your porch light and other Halloween decoration lights on Halloween night.

Please respect your neighbors and your community: Everyone is navigating the COVID-19 pandemic to the best of their abilities and has different comfort levels about what is safe to do. Your local community or your neighbors may be more restrictive than these CDPH guidelines, and we ask that you respect your neighbors' wishes and concerns.

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