



MHRB and MCPH Offer Tips on Helping Kids Cope with Halloween Changes *Parents encouraged to identify specific disappointments and offer alternatives*

SPRINGFIELD, OH (Oct. 20, 2020) – Halloween is going to look a little different this year and helping kids adjust to those changes begins now. Mental Health Recovery Board of Clark, Greene & Madison Counties (MHRB), along with Madison County Public Health (MCPH), are asking parents to take a proactive approach to planning for Halloween to keep the whole family safe while enjoying traditional holiday activities.

This year, most local neighborhoods are holding traditional Trick-or-Treat nights and asking residents to practice safety precautions while participating.

Madison County Health Commissioner Chris Cook reminds us that it is critical to have a safety plan before participating in any Halloween event, including Beggar's Night. "Just because an activity is being held doesn't mean that it is inherently safe. We are all in charge of implementing our own precautions. Limit activities with other people as much as possible - especially unorganized social gatherings with friends." He also advises people who are high risk for complications of Covid-19 illness or have existing medical conditions to stay home when they can. "I'm asking everyone to wear a mask whenever you are around people you don't live with and socially distance at least six feet away from others," Cook says. "This includes during Halloween events. The phrase 'back up, mask up' is fantastic, simple advice."

MCPH recommends the following practices for staying safe during trick-or-treating:

- If you are participating, understand the level of risk you are undertaking. If you are sick, stay home.
- Only go with members of your own household and stay at least six feet away from others when possible
- Limit the number of houses you visit and stay in one neighborhood
- Carry hand sanitizer and use it often
- If you are passing out candy, do not have children reach into a candy bowl. Consider sliding candy down a tube into treat bags, hanging treats from a fence, or leaving them spaced out on a table for children to grab.
- Children, their supervising adults, and treat-givers should wear a mask that covers the nose and mouth completely
- Wipe the outside of candy wrappers with sanitizing wipes when arriving home

Certain Halloween activities should be completely avoided, such as house parties and bar events. Unstructured large gatherings, especially when indoors, are known to be the highest risk for spread.



Dr. Greta Mayer, CEO of MHRB, offered the following tips for helping children mentally prepare:

- Explain the rules to your children and give them time to ask questions
- Engage with them about their disappointment over cancellations or changes
- Listen closely and help them identify specific things they're disappointed about
- Work with them to think of safer alternatives to those specific disappointments

"Listening to their concerns and identifying what they're feeling gives your children space to cope and find solutions, you can give them a sense of control over the situation," said Dr. Greta Mayer, CEO of MHRB. "Identifying the exact disappointment, like not seeing friends or wearing a costume, can help you to find a substitute, like waving through windows, taking pictures, or doing a virtual costume contest."

Cook also suggests some traditional activities that can be done safely at home with family members, such as pumpkin carving, watching Halloween-themed movies, buying a piñata, or hiding candy around your home for children to find.

"Our kids have dealt with a lot of change this year, from cancelled summer plans and virtual schooling to not seeing friends and family members. It's understandable to want to provide them with some of the happy childhood activities they crave," said Mayer. "But as Covid-19 continues to spread, we must keep our children and other vulnerable members of our community physically safe. By having these conversations early and making a plan, we can protect our community's mental and physical health."

For more information about mental health and substance use resources in Clark, Greene and Madison counties, please visit the MHRB website at www.mhrb.org.

ABOUT MHRB Mental Health Recovery Board of Clark, Greene & Madison Counties (MHRB) assists partners, stakeholders, residents, and anyone at risk of mental health or substance use concerns in our three-county area, providing pathways to mental health and addiction services. In collaboration with more than 20 care providers, the board advocates for the mental health needs and facilitates delivery of quality care for all ages, regardless of income or ability to pay.

ABOUT MCPH Madison County Public Health is the local health department serving Madison County. MCPH is committed to monitoring and responding to their community's health and wellness needs through innovative services, education, collaboration and compassionate care.