

OCS COVID-19 Holiday Guidance

This document is intended to provide Resource Families / Foster Families with guidance on how to mitigate risks related to contracting or spreading COVID-19 while participating in and enjoying the upcoming holiday season with foster children in your care. The Office of Children's Services (OCS) endorses the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance on risk levels for activities. OCS recognizes that each family has its traditions and celebrations and may not participate in the holidays listed below. The CDC has established guidance on the following celebrations. Still, families can use the risk levels for other holidays and celebrations. For example, families can use Halloween guidance for Dia de los Muertos, Mid-Autumn Festival, and other celebrations.

The CDC has issued guidance on the following holiday activities. OCS supports the well-being of children in custody and supports the foster parents to make Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard (RPPS) decisions for child activities. RPPS can be used for lower-risk activities, and can be decided upon by the foster parents and families. Depending on the child and family, moderate risk activities may be considered high risk in some cases. Approval for medium risk will depend on a case-by-case basis and will include the OCS caseworker in the decision. **OCS does not support high-risk activities for children in care.**

The CDC guidance is continuously evolving, depending on the COVID outlook. Please refer to their [website](#) to get the most up to date activities. The information provided in this guide is up to date as of 10/19/2020. If you have any questions regarding possible activities, please feel free to contact your OCS office or caseworker.

Halloween

Halloween allows for many ways to celebrate in traditional and alternative ways and keep the celebration fun for children and families. COVID does have an impact on certain high-risk activities like trick or treating and handing out candy. However, many other traditions can still be followed. The CDC has released activities and helped to clarify them by risk type. OCS does not allow children in care to participate in high-risk activities due to the impact it may have on future visitation, placement stability, etc.

Examples of **Lower risk** activities:

- Carving or decorating pumpkins with members of your household and displaying them
- Carving or decorating pumpkins outside, at a safe distance, with neighbors or friends
- Decorating your house, apartment, or living space
- Doing a Halloween scavenger hunt where children are given lists of Halloween-themed things to look for while they walk outdoors from house to house, admiring Halloween decorations at a distance
- Having a virtual Halloween costume contest
- Having a Halloween movie night with people you live with
- Having a scavenger hunt-style trick-or-treat search with your household members in or around your home rather than going house to house
- Have fun with a [Halloween Pinata](#)

Examples of **Moderate risk** activities:

- Participating in one-way trick-or-treating where individually wrapped goodie bags are lined up for families to grab and go while continuing to social distance (such as at the end of a driveway or the edge of a yard)
 - If you are preparing goodie bags, [wash your hands](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds before and after preparing the bags.
- Having a small group, outdoor, open-air costume parade where people are distanced more than 6 feet apart
- Attending a costume party held outdoors where protective masks are used, and people can remain more than 6 feet apart

- A costume mask is not a substitute for a cloth mask. A costume mask should not be used unless it is made of two or more breathable fabric layers that cover the mouth and nose and doesn't leave gaps around the face.
- Do not wear a costume mask over a protective cloth mask because it can be dangerous if the costume mask makes it hard to breathe. Instead, consider using a Halloween-themed cloth mask.
- Visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples, wearing masks is encouraged or enforced, and people can maintain social distancing
- Having an outdoor Halloween movie night with local family friends with people spaced at least 6 feet apart
 - If screaming will likely occur, greater distancing is advised—the greater the distance, the lower the risk of spreading a respiratory virus.
 - Lower your risk by following CDC's recommendations on [hosting gatherings or cook-outs](#).

Examples of **High-risk** activities that are not approved by OCS

- Participating in traditional trick-or-treating where treats are handed to children who go door to door
- Having trunk-or-treat where treats are handed out from trunks of cars lined up in large parking lots
- Attending crowded costume parties held indoors
- Going to an indoor haunted house where people may be crowded together and screaming
- Going on hayrides or tractor rides with people who are not in your household
- Using [alcohol or drugs](#), which can cloud judgment and increase risky behaviors

Winter Holiday Celebrations

Winter Holidays are a time when many families celebrate together. [Travel](#) increases the chance of getting and spreading the virus that causes COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others. If you must travel by air or boat, be informed of the [risks involved and the OCS travel restrictions that are in place](#). Please contact the OCS worker before making plans to travel by air or boat.

Examples of **Lower risk** activities:

- Having a small [dinner](#) with only people who live in your household
- Preparing traditional family recipes for family and neighbors, especially those at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and delivering them in a way that doesn't involve contact with others
- Having a virtual dinner and sharing recipes with friends and family
- Shopping online rather than in person on the day after Thanksgiving or the next Monday
- Watching sports events, parades, and movies from home
- Shipping gifts and having a virtual gift exchange

Examples of **Moderate risk** activities:

- Having a small outdoor dinner with family and friends who live in your community
 - Lower your risk by following CDC's recommendations on [hosting gatherings or cook-outs](#).
- Visiting pumpkin patches or orchards where people use hand sanitizer before touching pumpkins or picking apples, wearing masks is encouraged or enforced, and people can maintain social distancing
- Attending a small outdoor sports events with safety precautions in place

Examples of **High-risk** activities that **are not approved** by OCS:

- Going shopping in crowded stores just before, on, or after Thanksgiving
- Participating or being a spectator at a crowded place
- Attending crowded parades
- Using [alcohol or drugs](#), which can cloud judgment and increase risky behaviors
- Attending large indoor gatherings with people from outside of your household