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Sensational Halloween for Kids with Sensory Processing Disorder

Columbus, OH - October 2010 - Most kids love Halloween because it means playing dress up and eating candy. But for kids with sensory processing issues, Halloween could be a nightmare.

Children typically develop motor planning abilities that enable them to adapt and respond to the sights, sounds, smells and other sensations around them. Children with sensory processing disorder (SPD) react differently to sensory information and are often overwhelmed by this information.

With Halloween, often comes colored strobe lights, eerie sounds and face paint, which can be quite frightening to a child who struggles with sensory issues.

Here are some tips to help sensory kids have a sensational Halloween:

- Store-purchased costumes may feel too scratchy, too slippery or too tight. Try adding a tail to a pair of soft sweatpants and attaching ears to the hood of a sweatshirt to make a dog, cat or bunny costume.
- Encourage the child to practice wearing the costume and trick-or-treating in advance to make sure they are comfortable.
- Don't expect the child to pull the guts out of the pumpkin when carving jack o'lanterns. Instead have them paint a face on the outside of a pumpkin or decorate with stickers or markers.
- Consider trick-or-treating down a quiet street or only at homes of family and friends. Limit the number of houses and end early, before the child gets overloaded.
- Some children may prefer handing out candy rather than trick-or-treating.
- Don't push it. If the child doesn't want to dress up, doesn't want to bob for apples or doesn't want to touch the slime, it's OK. Halloween is meant to be fun!

October is National Sensory Awareness Month to raise awareness of sensory integration dysfunction/sensory processing disorders among parents, educators and other professionals who work with children. If you have questions about SPD, contact Columbus Speech & Hearing Center at 614.261.5151.

Columbus Speech & Hearing Center, founded in 1923, is a non-profit United Way organization serving over 10,000 people annually. Services include hearing evaluations, hearing aids, speech therapy for children and adults, occupational therapy and treatment, and vocational services for the Hard-of-Hearing, Deaf and Deaf-Blind through the Comprehensive Program for the Deaf and Ohio Deaf-Blind Outreach Program. Generous charitable giving from the community help offset

the cost of the Center's valued services for low-income families. For more information, www.columbusspeech.org.