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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
November 18, 2020

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## Celebrating Thanksgiving Safely During COVID-19

BEAUMONT, Texas -The following information from the Southeast Texas Regional Health Departments addresses how residents of Chambers, Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, Newton, Orange, and Tyler Counties, including the City of Beaumont and City of Port Arthur, can safely celebrate Thanksgiving during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like you, we in Public Health are tired of the COVID virus. We don't like the changes any more than you do. But over the last 8 months we have learned some things about this virus.

- It is shared person to person, as we do life together. It is shared when we gather to celebrate or eat meals. We share it with our co-workers, or when we gather for worship. It is shared as we practice and play sports or work out (even in the home gyms).
- Everyone responds differently to the virus. Many people only complain of 'sinus symptoms' or 'allergy symptoms'. 30% or more do not have a fever of 100.0° or higher. Most people, about 80%, have mild to moderate symptoms and don't need any help. But 20% are more severe and need some medical intervention of medication, oxygen or hospitalization. And, although the death rate is only 2-3% overall, it is up to 30% or higher the older you get and the more medical problems you have.

## **Please Make the Holidays Safer:**

As the Holidays approach we are asking everyone to do things a bit differently. The larger the family gathering, the higher your chances of being exposed to the virus. Try to keep your family gatherings to those that already live in your household or just the people you already interact with and already do life with.

If you are ill or have any symptoms, do NOT attend any gathering or be around other people. If you have COVID and have not met CDC criteria for release from isolation, or you have been around anyone with COVID, or who has been ill in the previous 14 days, do NOT attend any gathering or be around other people.

If you do plan to be with others outside your household, then:

- Stay at least 6 feet (2 arm lengths) away from the other people and wear a mask.
- Wear a face covering or mask that is at least 2 layers of cloth and covers your nose and your mouth. It should fit snugly against the sides of your face and should wrap under your chin. This is about protecting others from your germs.
- Wash your hands often, with soap and water for 20 seconds. If water is not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Wash or sanitize your hands before you touch your face or remove your mask.

If you are attending a gathering, please consider the following:

- Have the gathering outside. If it is inside, open windows and leave doors open to keep air moving.
- Bring your own food, drinks, plates, cups and silverware.
- Wear a mask. Wear the mask when dishing food. Keep the mask safely stored (not laying on the table) when you are eating or drinking.
- Consider using disposable items such as paper plates and glasses, and single serving condiments like ketchup, salt and pepper.
- Avoid food preparation areas - It is not the preparing of the foods, it is the talking, visiting and closeness as we prepare the foods that helps spread the virus.
- If you choose to share food, have 1 person serving that is wearing gloves and a mask.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces often (door handles, counter tops, backs of chairs).

## **After the Gathering:**

Consider staying in quarantine for 14 days, particularly if you have traveled, or have been around travelers, or were around others not from your household. At a minimum, be vigilant about keeping your distance from others and wearing a mask properly. Everyone should monitor themselves for symptoms for 2 weeks after the gathering. If anyone does get ill, even mild illness, please let the others at the gathering know and consider getting tested.

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