

SIBLING ACTIVITY KITS

What is it?

Volunteers put together activity kits for siblings so they have something fun to do while the rest of the family focuses on bonding with their new baby in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

HOW YOU CAN DO IT:

- 1. Assign a lead:** Assign one or members to lead this engagement and to liaison with March of Dimes and your volunteers.
- 2. Get connected:** Connect with your March of Dimes staff contact listed at the bottom of this page to let them know your interested in providing sibling activity kits to a NICU/hospital partner and **signup at [March for Babies – Days of Movement](#)**.
 - Your March of Dimes staff contact will reach out to the March of Dimes NICU Family Support Team/Market Staff to choose a hospital in your area that your chapter can partner with. **It's important to connect with the March of Dimes staff contact first.** Depending on the relationship with the site, your chapter might work directly with a contact at the hospital or through the local MOD staff contact.
- 3. Make a plan:** Once you have a contact, check out the volunteer checklist on the back and with your primary contact start answering the first set of questions with your group of volunteers. You can use the second set of questions to get more information from the NICU/hospital staff. Feel free to add your own questions, too!
- 4. Do it:** Use the kit ideas list on the back, information from the NICU/hospital staff and create your sibling kits/gift bags. You could host a collection or drive with family, friends and local contacts too!
- 5. Celebrate:** Each time you or your group does this activity, send out thank you emails/notes to the members that participated and to the staff who supported at the hospital.
- 6. Be counted:** Let us know you've taken this action and give us feedback by [fill out this form](#).

Please note that each NICU/hospital partner has different requirements of volunteers. Some hospitals might require volunteer training to access the facility.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Big brother and/or big sister have been a part of this journey to the NICU. Parents want each child to feel cared for and special. These activity kits go a long way in helping with just that, and when siblings come to the hospital they get their own little surprise!

TOOLS (ON BACK)

- Volunteer Checklist
- Activity Kit Ideas
- Surprise and delight ideas

VOLUNTEER CHECK LIST

Please walk through the checklist with your primary contact as you plan this engagement and determine with your group what is feasible.

Questions to figure with your volunteers and March of Dimes primary contact:

- How often and when does your group plan to provide sibling activities/kits- each month, a few times a year or simply one time?
- Will volunteers be purchasing items, collecting donations, or making donations (i.e. coloring books, sticker activity books, etc.)? Who will store items?
- If a donation, who do you intend to ask?
- Who will drop off the completed kits?

Questions to ask the NICU/hospital site:

- Are volunteers able to bring the kits to the hospital?
- Can volunteers interact with the families? If so, what's the best timing? Is there a location onsite to set-up, and help with the sibling program (if applicable)?
- Does the Hospital have restrictions on volunteers?
 - Be very specific in what is feasible for volunteer engagement at the site. Often, NICU's don't allow visitors into the NICU during COVID, flu and cold season, or keep volunteer activities separate to protect the babies.
- How many sibling activity kits (approx.) are needed for this site?
 - Is it possible to know how many big sisters and big brothers?

ACTIVITY KIT IDEAS:

Check with your NICU/hospital contact to see what they might already have and what is most needed for sibling activities. Each site differs and could restrict donations.

- Coloring books
- Crayons/Colored Pencils
- Activity books
- Age appropriate books
- T-shirts (big brother/big sister)
- Toys
- Snacks – goldfish, graham crackers, etc.
- Water, juice
- Create “mini-adventures” to explore the hospital (gift shop, courtyards, cafeteria)

SURPRISES & DELIGHT

If you or your volunteers are interested in adding a surprise to the kit or for the NICU/hospital partner, here are some ideas:

- Connect the activity to holidays, seasons, and/or special days (birthdays, etc.).
- Write a note of encouragement to the siblings. These should be reviewed by the primary contact prior to ensure to ensure appropriate and sensitive language is used.
- Write thank you notes to the NICU staff for all their support of moms and babies.
- Make/purchase gifts as keepsakes for families (birth stone jewelry, etc.).

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Centralsupport@marchofdimes.org

800-906-3463

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DONATION FORM

ITEM DONATION FORM – INDIVIDUAL

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Email the donation form to **Patty Gentry** at **PGentry@MarchofDimes.org**.
Please include a printed copy of donation form in your shipment as well.

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