



Toolkit & Resources for Bigs (and Families)

We hope this finds you and your family doing well during these unprecedented times.

As our nation responds to the public health crisis posed by COVID-19 (Coronavirus) **BBBS-ETN has made the difficult decision to suspend all face-to-face contacts between Bigs, Littles, Families, and Program Staff until further notice.**

This policy will remain in place until federal and state policies on social distancing are relaxed or lifted.

During this time of change and uncertainty, our agency's commitment to the youth and families we serve remains the same: **To work together in meeting the unmet needs of the youth and families we serve.**

How we do this will look significantly different in the days, weeks, and months to come.

What follows is our **Virtual Mentoring Guide and Toolkit**, which will provide you a wide range of ways you can engage in your Match, even though you will be meeting virtually, rather than in person. We encourage you to review these resources and speak with your Match Support Specialist to help develop a plan on how best to approach your relationship with your Little.



BBBS-ETN's philosophy on serving youth in this community will not change. We will continue to be singularly focused on **partnering with Bigs and parents to meet the needs of the youth that may go unmet in their schools and communities, especially during this crisis.**

As we move forward together, that work will look completely different.

With face-to-face contacts suspended, here's how program will shift:

- **All mentoring will be done virtually** via telephone, smart phone, social platforms, and/or video conferencing solutions.
- Matches will be no longer required to see each other 2-3 times each month during the pandemic, but **Bigs will be encouraged to make weekly contacts with their Littles** throughout the duration of the crisis.
- Our Match Support Staff, who continue to work remotely, will provide on-going case management support just as they always have, but will also be focused on **providing digital resources** to help all Bigs continue supporting the needs of their Little and on **connecting families with essential services.**
- **Bigs are still expected to make monthly contact with Match Support Coordinators!**

Amidst so much turmoil and disruption, one thing is clear: **Our Little Brothers and Sisters needs us now more than ever.** We at Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee are ready and willing to provide you with the tools and resources you need to continue to provide that love, support, and guidance.



Not being able to see your Little face-to-face will present some new challenges to your relationship, but following the tips below will help you navigate through these difficulties while continuing to help your Little reach their highest potential.

- Rely on regular phone calls and text messages, or video chats via [FaceTime](#) or [WhatsApp](#) to stay connected with your Little. Use [this resource from Rockbrook Camp](#) or [this resource from Very Well Family](#) for great conversation starters for kids, and check out [this resource from All-Pro Dad](#) or [this resource from We Have Kids](#) to get chatting with teens!
- [Messenger Kids](#) (from Facebook) is a great way to safely connect with your Little via a social media platform, while keeping their parent looped in. [Here's more on how it works.](#)
- *Snail mail is still a thing!* Write letters to your Little, send postcards, create a homemade card, pass along some print-at-home games (like these [puzzles](#) or these [coloring pages](#)), or send your Little a homemade craft (like these [bracelets](#), or one of [these quick/easy kids crafts](#))
- **STAY CONSISTENT! However you choose to connect, the stability you provide is more important to your Little than ever.** Find days, times, and methods that work best for both of you, create a plan, set a schedule, and stick to it! This will make it easier on you both, while giving you each something to look forward to and depend on.
- **ASK QUESTIONS!** It's no surprise that everyone's day-to-day schedule is experiencing incredible upheaval. Reaching out and chatting with your Little and their parent/guardian about when is best to reach out, what days and time are easiest, and how you can help are questions that will be enormously helpful for you (and your Little!) in staying connected.



We wanted to get you started with a few Match Activity ideas that you can dive into immediately with your Little! We'll continue to post updates related to the Coronavirus at TennesseeBig.org/COVID19, including more Match activities and events.

- Develop a talent, skill, or passion together! There are a ton of experts creating exceptional online content right now that can help you and your Little [learn to draw](#) or [doodle](#), perfect an [in-home workout](#), practice ballet [here](#) or [here](#), [become a scientist](#), [explore the world](#), [become a great cook](#), [learn a second \(or third!\) language](#), [become a yogi](#), or [learn how to dance!](#)
- Don't hesitate to day-dream! Plan future activity ideas you two might do together once safer at home and social distancing restrictions have been lifted.
- Have a Movie night! Plan to watch the same movie ([here are some ideas from Mommy Poppins](#)) and discuss via phone or text message either during or after. Make sure to get movie selection approved by parent/guardian and [here are some great question courtesy of Book Riot](#) (though you'll have to swap the word 'book' for 'movie') to get going.
 - Looking for an educational movie or documentary? There are thousands available on [Kanopy](#) or [Hoopla](#) that are free with a library card!
- Watch a virtual concert together! There are a ton of artists who are hopping on the bandwagon and hosting virtual and free concerts for their fans! [Here's a list from NPR that might be helpful.](#)
- Start a cooperative journal by using a platform like [Story Bird](#) or [Google Docs](#) to document the day-to-day.
- Have a virtual book club! You can read to your Little via FaceTime, WhatsApp, Skype, or Zoom, or plan to read the same book and discuss with each other. Here are [some great book ideas](#) to get started and [here's some tips on how to get the conversation going.](#)

- Have a library card? [Libby](#) is a great resource for accessing downloadable free e-books!
- Schedule an activity to virtually [check out a museum](#) or [visit a zoo \(or two!\)](#) together! Check out [Zoom](#) for an easy way to share your screen and explore together!
- Does your Little like to build things? Purchase duplicate [Lego sets](#) or [jigsaw puzzles](#) and send one to both you and your Little. Share your progress by sending photos via text message and see who can complete their project first!
- Schedule game time! Using app-based games like [Words with Friends](#), [Draw Something](#), [Chess \(click here for the web version\)](#), [Checkers](#), or [Bowling](#) can be great ways to engage and connect with your Little, while enjoying some down time. [Check out this Games Games website \(and this one too via Common Sense Media!\)](#) for great games you and your Little can play on laptops or desktops.
- Does your Little have virtual homework assignments they're trying to tackle? Offer to lend a helping hand! Whether it's a book report, an algebra lesson, or anything else you can be incredibly helpful in assisting your Little in transitioning to digital learning.



With schools closed across the area, we know many Bigs and parents will be focused on stemming the tide of learning loss while their Littles are at home. Check out the resources below to help your Little stay sharp and continue to focus on their academics from home.

- [Khan Academy](#) offers a free library of trusted, standards-aligned practice. Lessons cover math (K-12 through early college), grammar, science, history, AP, SAT, and more. They are also offering [daily learning schedules](#) for kids throughout the crisis.

- Common Sense has a bunch of wonderful (and free!) education websites and apps that kids can access (with parent permission, of course) to help prevent learning loss. [Check out their website more info](#) and find what resource might be best for your Little!
- Visit [Class Central](#) for a list of free online classes that range from computer science and business, to arts/design and engineering. This is best for middle/high-school age Littles. Feeling ambitious and want to turn this into a Match Activity? Take the class alongside your Little!
- Is your Little interested in coding? [Scratch](#) was designed for children ages 8-16 and uses easy-to-use programming language to let kids build almost anything they can dream of. There are no obscure lines of code here; instead, arrange and snap together Scratch blocks as if they are virtual Legos! Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Use Scratch right alongside your Little and venture through their online lessons together!
- Has there ever been a better time for podcasts? [Check out the Mommy Poppins website](#) to access funny, smart, and scientific podcasts that keep kids engaged. Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Pick a podcast you both enjoy and listen along together! Then, after each episode, connect and discuss using slightly revised, [book-club style questions](#).
- Do you have a teenager interested in public health or psychology? [Here is a laundry list of resources](#) that they can explore! Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Pick a resource and explore it together. Or, have your Little review a specific resource they might be excited about and teach you about what they learned!
- Looking for a virtual lesson your Little (and you!) might find interesting? Check out the [TakeLessons YouTube channel](#) for lessons on singing, learning Spanish, learning sign language, playing piano, and much more! Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Take the lesson right alongside your Little and learn together!
- Looking for online classes that mirror what your Little might be missing in school? [PBS SoCal](#) has prepared [broadcast programming and online lessons](#) that adhere to California's K12 state curriculum, which - though not Tennessee - would still be helpful, informative, and fun! Want to turn this into a Match Activity? Take the lesson right alongside your Little and learn together!
- Our friends at Scholastic offer [day-by-day projects to keep kids in grades K-9 reading, thinking, and growing](#). These are updated each day and present four separate learning experiences, each built around a thrilling, meaningful story or video. Kids can do them on their own, with their families, or with their teachers. Just find your grade level and let the learning begin!
- Is your Little interested in writing? [BoomWriter](#) inspires children to write and develop important literacy skills, and their parent app will keep you in the loop with your Littles' progress.

- Can't find something you like on the list above? [Check out this website for a full list of educational companies offering free subscriptions.](#)



Many of our parents are feeling the stress of supporting and providing for their children over the weeks and months to come. As a Big, know that the BBBS-ETN Match Support team will be increasing its wellness calls **providing resources for those affected by loss of income, food insecurity, lack of healthcare, and anxiety due to the uncertainties related to COVID-19.**

We also count on you to be a resource for families. Below is information that may come in handy should families turn to you for support. Of course, you can always direct them to your Match Support Specialist as well. We have another great guide we are adding to almost daily that can be found at [here!](#)

Talking with Youth About COVID-19

- NPR coming through in the clutch (as always!) with [this helpful, interactive guide](#) for how to chat with kids about COVID-19.
- Comcast is offering two free months of their [Internet Essentials Plan](#) (typically \$9.95/month) to support vulnerable families. This can be a great way for families to stay connect with loved ones (including you!).
 - Spectrum has a [similar offer](#) for students as well.
- Our friends over at [Common Sense](#) have some great videos and other resources that can help families to better understand what's going in the news and how to react to it, as well as stay calm and learn at home.

- Harvard Health put together a [great article on how to talk to teenagers](#) about COVID-19.
- The Child Mind Institute outline [some great resources and approaches](#) on how to talk with younger kids about COVID-19. Here's another [great article too from PBS](#).

Mental Health and Mindfulness

- Need some family mindfulness amidst all the disruption? Ten Percent Happier has [a bevy of resources and daily updates](#) for families struggling to cope.
- Looking for activities? [Here are 50 easy/cheap indoor activities to keep kids busy](#).
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#) offers an incredible COVID-19 Coping Guide with specific strategies and recommendations for each age group.

Food Insecurity

- [Food pantry options](#) for families throughout East Tennessee.
- Knox County's Meal distribution [schedule](#) based on your Little's school
- Knoxville businesses like Brown Bag, Yassin's, Wings Over, and Sonic are offering free or discounted meals to children and families. Check with your Match Support Specialist for details.

Financial and Other Assistance

- [Financial Assistance](#) for families that have lost employment is now available through the state.
- Compassion Coalition (865.251.1591) and the United Way Help Line (211) can direct families to many other services that they may need!



The team at Big Brothers Big Sisters has **so many ideas and resources** for how to support you, your Little, and your Little's family throughout the COVID-19 crisis.

We are looking forward to being able to provide:

- Regular emails and Remind texts with resources and activity ideas
- Facebook Live Club Nights with crafts, science experiments and more
- More resources and support for families as they become available

Thank you for your commitment to helping a child in need during this challenging time.

For children who are isolated, fearful, or depressed – now, more than ever, your consistency and support are making a difference.

Thank you.