

Dear Bigs, Littles, Parents and Guardians:

I hope you and your family are doing well. As our state and nation continue to respond to the evolving challenges presented by COVID-19, I am reaching out to update you in on our latest program policies.

In accordance with guidance provided by the State of New Jersey and the [Center for Disease Control](#), **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Essex, Hudson & Union Counties is once again permitting in-person visits between Bigs and Littles under the guidelines and protocols listed below:**

**BBBSEHU In-Person Mentor Visit Policy (effective June 23, 2020)**

- During in-person visits, Bigs and Littles are **required to wear face coverings and maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance between them at ALL times.**
- Bigs are **prohibited from transporting their Littles** to or from any activities in their vehicles or on any other form of public transportation.
- We **STRONGLY encourage** Bigs and Littles to **participate in outdoor activities**, such as hikes and visits to local parks, and to avoid any activity in which 6 feet of physical distance cannot be maintained. More on outdoor activity safety tips can be found below.
- If a Big or Little has been **knowingly exposed to someone** who has recently tested positive for COVID-19 or experienced symptoms as those listed in the next bullet, or if a Big or Little is experiencing symptoms (e.g., fever, coughing, shortness of breath), **in-person visits must cease for at least 14 days.**
- **Each person in the match needs to assess their health directly and those in their immediate household before each outing. They must discuss the self-assessment with each party (Big, Little, AND Parent/Guardian)** to determine if the outing should occur or be a virtual visit instead. Examples of self-assessment questions that can be asked to assess health. Are you feeling achy? Do you have a fever or chills? Are you feeling Fatigued? Do you have a cough or tightness in chest? Do you have unusual digestive issues? Do you have an unknown rash? Before each outing, all parties (Big, Little, AND Parent/Guardian) should do this self-evaluation and
- Prior to meeting in-person, **share with your match if you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, or had exposure to a large amount of people** within the 14 days prior to your in-person visit– consider your recent contacts. We must be open and honest with each other so we can protect each other and work together to make the best-informed decision about an in-person visit.
- When you get together, **remind each other about rules for the day.** How will we help keep each other healthy? There are many logistics to think through. Make a plan and discuss your plan. Check in throughout your outing.
- **Wear a mask during outings.** Refer to the Center for Disease Control & Prevention for further details about mask best practice. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>
- **Big is responsible for supplying a clean mask for self and Little for each outing.** Bring a new mask for youth each time and Big will take the mask at end of the outing to launder it – [follow CDC guidelines for safe handling and washing of cloth face masks.](#)

- **Big must also supply hand sanitizer and anything else needed for hand hygiene or protection (i.e. rubber gloves).** If match needs help accessing these materials, please contact your MSS at least one to two weeks prior to your planned in-person visit
- **Wash or sanitize hands frequently** and remind each other to do so during the outing.
- **Outdoor activities are best** and strongly encourage. View our list for ideas. Consider time of day – morning activities will help beat the heat and the crowds. Consider bathroom needs – where is there access to a restroom? Facilities are locked at some parks, but not all. Consider where you can find shade. Take plenty of water for hydration. Take and use sunscreen and insect repellent.

### **In-Person Match Outing Safety Kit**

**BBBSEHU strongly encourages Bigs to prepare a safety kit for each in-person match outing that includes the items below.** As noted elsewhere in this document, if you have trouble locating any of the items, please communicate with your MSS at least one to two weeks prior to your outing. As you know some of these items are in short/low supply and take time to obtain.

- Masks for Big and Little
- Hand sanitizer
- Sanitation wipes
- Hand soap
- Disposable gloves
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Individually wrapped snacks
- Outdoor fold-up chairs or blanket
- Water (for drinking and handwashing)
- Materials for your planned activity and a back- up activity
- Agency COVID-19 Match Contact Guidelines (this document)

### **Social Distancing and Virtual Match Engagement Tips**

When deciding if you should have an in-person contact, first acknowledge the following:

- Relationships can continue to grow and be meaningful in the absence of in-person contact. We also know that in-person contact is important for connection, mental health, and overall well-being. Whether virtual or in-person, remember that consistent communication to stay in touch and connected is important. Use our COVID-19 Toolkit for virtual activity ideas: [Virtual Match Activities Resource Guide\Virtual Match Activity & Resources Wk1-0323-0327 final.doc.pdf](#).
- Please check on your Little weekly. This could be as simple as sending a meme, emoji, or postcard. Let them know you are thinking of them, and keep sending encouragement and a way to make them smile.
- Any in person contact carries a risk for COVID-19 transmission. A person with no symptoms can be a carrier and infect others. Please follow recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) to help lower risk of transmission. Check back frequently as information and recommendations continue to be revised. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html>. Stay up to date on your state requirements regarding COVID-19 as well.
- Deciding whether or not to have in-person contact will be an ongoing personal decision that will change repeatedly depending on updates about the pandemic, contacts with other people, personal wellness, or symptoms day by day. This is a decision that will need to be assessed each time when planning an outing.
- Each person needs to make a thoughtful choice about what is the best decision for themselves and their own health. Members of the match need to respect each other's needs and put safety first. Consider ripple effects – who have you been exposed to recently? Will either of you be near someone who is immunocompromised or at heightened risk for COVID-19 infection? If so, consider what is best for their health too.
- Do not pressure each other into having in-person contact. Be careful and sensitive in assessing if anyone feels anxious or concerned about safety and wellness. If you need some support around how to have this conversation, contact your Match Support Specialist (MSS).
- Part of being a Big is to be a role model. This includes modeling healthy behavior, responsible decision making, self-care, and being a rule-abiding and conscientious community member. It also means modeling ways to cope with frustrating and stressful situations – talking about feelings, finding healthy self-care activities, being open about good days as well as bad days – are all part of the mentoring process.
- BBBSEHU will continue to monitor and follow advice of the CDC and state guidance. Our agency may choose to revise or revoke guidelines around in-person contact as needed. It is important that you check your email regularly for communication from our agency as well as that you are responsive to calls and other communication from your assigned MSS. Regular communication with our agency was part of the match agreement each of the parties signed.

**Follow the Center for Disease Control's Recommendations**

As a reminder: Our agency recommends that you follow the advice of the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov/) by following guidelines to help keep you and others healthy. These include:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom; and before eating or preparing food.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. The use of masks is also a safety measure to prevent touching your nose and mouth. Glasses or sunglasses can keep us from touching and rubbing our eyes.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick, even inside your home. If possible, maintain 6 feet between the person who is sick and other household members.
- Put six feet of distance between yourself and other people outside of your home.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others. Everyone should wear a cloth face cover when they have to go out in public, for example to the grocery store or to pick up other necessities.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash; if you have no tissue with you, turn away and cough or sneeze into your elbow or sleeve. Never cough or sneeze in your hand.
- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily with antibacterial spray or wipes. This includes cellphones, tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, household phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.

Per CDC recommendations, we encourage you to seek medical attention if you have been in close contact with a person known to have COVID-19, or who has been experiencing flu-like symptoms.

**More Information**

For more information and additional resources related to COVID-19, we encourage you to visit the State of New Jersey's Department of Public Health website: <https://www.nj.gov/health/>

We also encourage you to seek answers to more general questions by dialing the 2-1-1 info line. This line is available 24 hours a day, and has multilingual assistance and TDD/TTY access for those with a hearing impairment. The hotline is intended only for individuals not experiencing symptoms, but who may have general questions related to COVID-19.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as our team addresses this evolving situation. The safety of you, your child/Little and our community is paramount. We hope you, your family and loved ones stay safe and well.

Sincerely,



Michele Williers  
Chief Operating Officer

**How to Get in Touch with BBBSEHU**

Should you have questions or concerns, I encourage you to reach out directly to your assigned Match Support Specialist team member who supports you or your child/Little's match. Below are names and contact information for each Match Support Specialist:

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### Outdoor Activity Ideas

- Hike
- Walk
- Bike Ride
- Explore various neighborhoods and outdoor landmarks
- Walk to get an ice cream or other treat
- Have a picnic at the park
- Throw a football
- Take a pet for a walk
- Play a game: Charades, I Spy, Who Am I, checkers, board game, hopscotch, dominoes,
- Create a scavenger hunt, do nature bingo, or create a challenge – find and snap photos of as many different shaped leaves as you can. Or find and snap photos of objects that show range of colors – nature’s rainbow.
- Trash pick-up (service project)
- Kayak or canoe (this is considered higher risk due to water safety and requires signing an additional waiver)
- Do workout together at the park or in a backyard (yoga, squats, burpees, jumps, push-ups, relays, lunges, jump rope)
- Gardening: plant flowers or trees for someone. Weeding. (service project)
- Outdoor art project: sidewalk chalk. Tie-dye. Paint hopeful signs to share with others, coloring. Knitting.
- Read aloud.
- Backyard jigsaw puzzle (a puzzle mat allows you to roll up and travel with puzzle in progress)
- Make cloth masks for self or others (service project)
- Hula hoop
- Fishing
- Roller blade
- Fence art: Use ribbon to weave into chain link fence – various designs and patterns
- Outdoor Lego build competition – sit apart from each other with a timer to build a certain object, theme. At time, compare or swap projects. Or find way to unite them together.
- Learn and practice dance moves together
- Learn and practice a new language
- Wash the car
- Build something (bookshelf. Bird house. Bench. Table)