

## “GOING HOME” PACKAGES

### What is it?

This activity creates packages for parents to take with them as they leave the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Your group can get creative to celebrate this moment and help parents take home items that they need to make the transition a little easier.

### HOW YOU CAN DO IT:

- 1. Assign a lead:** Assign one or two volunteers to lead this engagement and to liaison between March of Dimes and your group of volunteers.
- 2. Get Connected:** Connect with your March of Dimes staff contact listed at the bottom of this page to let them know you're interested in providing “Going Home” Packages 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 determine a hospital site in your area that your chapter can partner with given your volunteer interests. **It's important to connect 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 March of Dimes 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 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 “Going Home” package ideas listed on the back along with information from the NICU/hospital staff and create your “Going Home” packages.
- 5. Celebrate:** Each time 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.

Please note: Each NICU/hospital partner has different requirements of volunteers. Hospitals might require volunteer training to access the facility.

### WHY IS IMPORTANT?

Going home from the hospital—and especially the NICU—can be a scary and uncertain time. These “Going Home” packages help families with the transition.

### 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:

- Will volunteers be purchasing items, collecting donations or making donations (i.e. bags, baby items)? Who will store items?
- If a donation, whom do you intend to ask?
- Who will drop off the completed packages?

## Questions to ask the NICU/hospital site:

- Are volunteers able to bring the packages to the hospital?
  - Can volunteers interact with the families? If so, what's the best timing?
- Does the hospital have restrictions on volunteers? If so, be very specific about what is feasible for volunteer engagement at the site. Often, NICU's don't allow visitors during COVID, cold and flu season, or else keep volunteer activities separate to protect the babies.
- How many "Going Home" packages are needed (approx.) for this site?
  - Is it possible to know how many big sisters and big brothers are expected?
- Are there any brands or items that are not approved for use for this site?

## "GOING HOME" PACKAGE IDEAS:

This is a list of ideas but check with your NICU/hospital contact to see what the site might already have and what is most needed for parents as they are leaving the NICU. Each site differs in programming and could have limitations on what can be donated. New items only.

- Baby first aid kits
- Forehead and ear thermometers
- Bag (opportunity for your group to design the bag)
- Onesie, clothing (various sizes), socks, hats, etc. Please purchase in packs of 3 or 6.
- Toys, teething rings
- Picture frames and keepsakes (for entire family)
- Bottles, pacifiers, bibs and other feeding and travel accessories
- Wipes, diapers and skincare products
- Personal care items for parents
- March of Dimes resources – add information about sharing story and staying connected

## SURPRISES & DELIGHT

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

- Write a note of encouragement to the parents. These should be reviewed by the primary contact prior to ensure appropriate and sensitive language is used.
- Write "thank you" notes to the NICU staff for all their support of moms and babies.

**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**

Centralsupport@marchofdimes.org

800-906-3463

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