COVID-19 Quick Guide:
Connecting with Someone in the Hospital

How can I help my patient connect with their family?

_A note for parents helping children with the call_
If your child struggles to connect well on Facetime, encourage them to identify something they want to talk about or show patient before the call (toys, books, something from school, bugs, etc.) and also something they want to ask the patient.

Also, try doing the call in a play space in your home while you’re sitting on the floor doing something together, like building a train set or a tower. Having an activity can help calm and focus children.

You can always try following kids around with your phone or the laptop, too. So don’t feel like you have to do the classic “sit and talk” call.

_A note for the patient receiving the call_

Children often freeze up or struggle to talk via Facetime or computer. You can help them by asking a couple of open-ended questions that require the child to give more than a simple “yes” or “no” answer.

“What did you eat for lunch today?” “What new thing did you learn today?”
Give children time to come up with those answers after you ask a question. Don’t rush in too fast to fill pauses or silence – children may just be struggling to find the words. Try not to take it personally if the child doesn’t seem interested in talking to you on a particular call. Kids are going to be kids at times, and we have to remember that talking to you this way may be very new to the child.
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Send photographs to patient (child life can assist)

Send patient photographs of children, family, photos that include the patient. (Families can email these pictures and child life can work with nursing staff to print and hang in patient’s rooms.)

Schedule a special “themed” call

Because it can be challenging for some kids to open up on via phone or video call, you might want to put some extra effort into having “themed” calls you plan in advance or have child dress up in their favorite superhero or princess costume. For example, you can schedule a special “5 Questions” call. Children can come prepared with a list of 5 questions for the patient and vice versa.
If kids are young, start with favorite movies, foods, colors, etc. For older kids, try more complicated questions like, “What would you do with a million dollars?” and “What three things would you bring with you to a deserted island?”

Activities that can be home/hospital projects

Make a paper chain: cut strips of construction paper, have kids at home write something fun they did today down on the strip, do this each day to create a paper chain he/she can share with the hospitalized patient during hospital phone calls or when mom/dad come home from the hospital.

Create a story: Have child or parent write the opening sentence to the story and then each day when they talk, the next person adds a sentence to write the story. Adult at home with child can record the story daily.

Create a gratitude pennant banner: Have child create a pennant banner to record a daily gratitude. Cut triangles from paper, punch holes at the top and string them on ribbon or yarn and hang up. During each phone call to the loved one hospitalized kids and patient can share something they are grateful for. Record on triangles.

Create a video: Use your favorite video making app to create a special message for your loved one at the hospital. (Talking, singing, dancing, playing.) Apps to use Tiktok, Snapchat, etc. Create an art piece for your loved one: Have children draw, color, paint a “me and you” picture. Send patient photo of the creation or child life can work with nursing to print and hang in patient’s room.