

An Intergenerational Guide to Helping Your Community During COVID-19

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In a time of crisis, aiding others supports our own well-being. Research backs this intuitive claim: studies have shown that [volunteering is associated with higher self-esteem, improved immune system, and lower blood pressure](#). Physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic requires that New Yorkers find new ways of helping our loved ones. No matter our age or our health or employment status, we can all contribute during this public health emergency. Here are some ways to get started:

Call and connect with new acquaintances

Physical distancing puts a strain on everyone's mental health, but it's particularly difficult for people living by themselves. Submit an application to the [JASACHat program](#) or find another [volunteer opportunity](#) through the NYC Department for the Aging if you want to reach out to isolated older adults beyond your own social network.

Research COVID-related resources online for neighbors without internet access

Bridge the [digital divide in New York City](#) by helping neighbors access the resources they need during the pandemic online. Examples include placing an order for a grocery delivery through [online grocery companies](#) and arranging a no-contact delivery of household supplies, medicine or food through the national platform [Umbrella](#).

Mentor students who need extra academic help, college counseling, or a friendly chat

[UPchieve](#) will connect you virtually with high school students through a free online platform. As a volunteer "academic coach" setting your own schedule, you can offer tutoring in math and provide some basic college-prep advice. [Eldera](#) is a free service that will connect older adults with kids ages 5-15 for virtual story times, help with schoolwork or just a friendly chat.

Teach adults about the subjects you know best

For those who prefer to work with adult learners, [Volunteermatch.org](https://www.volunteermatch.org) has all kinds of virtual tutoring opportunities. The local nonprofit [Selfhelp Community Services](https://www.selfhelpcommunityservices.org) is seeking volunteer facilitators to share their intellectual interests in one-hour interactive classes with older adults, delivered by video chat. If you have high-speed internet and a webcam, sign up to become a facilitator [here](#).

Make your own face masks for essential workers

Some healthcare organizations in New York, including the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, are now seeking private donations of sewn cloth face coverings, which can be worn over medical-grade surgical masks and N95 respirators to extend the life of that critical equipment. If you have a sewing machine and the materials, you can contact VNSNY Volunteer Program Services manager Gail Sirota at gail.sirota@vnsny.org to express your interest and coordinate the logistics. The CDC provides instructions to make sewn masks [here](#).

Donate your PPE

If you have N95 or surgical masks that you want to donate, [find organizations](#) working to pair healthcare workers with personal protective equipment.

Get civically engaged from the comfort of your own couch

We are in election season right now, and this is a great time to research your local candidates to make an informed decision about your future government representatives. Find out which U.S. representatives and state legislators are on your ballot by inputting your address [here](#).

You can also volunteer for a local campaign by signing up to call registered voters. Look for details on how to get involved on candidates' websites.

Complete the 2020 Census

The census determines political representation for each state in the House of Representatives as well as how federal funding is distributed across the United States, so it's important that every person is represented. [Fill out the census today online or by phone](#) and check in with your friends and family members to see if they have completed it as well.

At age 68, The New York Academy of Medicine's own president, Dr. Judith Salerno, [has joined the front lines of New York City's healthcare system efforts](#) to care for COVID-19 patients, but you don't need a medical degree to help during this crisis. Every contribution – a face mask, a Google search, a phone conversation – counts.