



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Volunteer Orientation Guide

start something

Think of the possibilities. **What will you start?**

About Our Agency

For more than 100 years, Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) has operated under the belief that inherent in every child is the ability to succeed and thrive in life. As the nation's largest donor and volunteer supported mentoring network, BBBS makes meaningful, monitored matches between adult volunteers ("Bigs") and children ("Littles"), ages 6 through 22, in communities across the country.

Founded in 1972, Big Brothers Big supports 13 counties: Adams, Allen, DeKalb, Huntington, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Noble, Steuben, Wells and Whitley counties in Indiana as well as Branch, Hillsdale and St. Joseph counties in Michigan.

BBBS NEI is an affiliated agency of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, which is the nation's foremost mentoring program for children. But that means very little without the help of adult volunteers. More than ever before kids need caring, competent adults in their lives—adults who can help guide them through the crucial years from seven to seventeen years of age. With so many negative influences pressing on today's kids, having a positive adult role model is an important factor in how children fare in life, now and in the future.

We are very excited that you are considering being a volunteer with the BBBS Agency.

Friendship is a powerful thing. It's fun, most anyone can be a friend and it's important. Experiencing fun activities together and forming a trusting bond with a child can have a powerful and positive impact on the child.

About Our Programs

We have two basic ways you can meet with your Little to build a fun friendship.

1. As a Big you can meet with a Little in the community at a time convenient for both you and the child. You can see a movie; wash your car or whatever else sounds like a fun way to spend time together.
2. Bigs and Littles can meet at the Little's school or other site typically at the same day and time each week.

Types of Programs

We have several agency programs that are either community-based or site-based:

One-to-One / Big Couple

From zoo outings to movie nights, Little Brothers and Little Sisters are laughing, learning and making memories with caring adult mentors thanks to the One-on-One/Big Couple program. The program pairs children with a Big Brother, Big Sister or Big Couple (husband and wife mentoring team) who spend a few hours together each month doing a variety of activities. Time Commitment: 2 to 4 hours, two times a month for fourteen months.

First Friends

The First Friends program serves youth who are on the BBBS waiting list with museum trips, volunteer gardening, pizza parties, movie nights, and more. Each month, First Friends volunteers are given opportunities to provide transportation and companionship for two or three children during these events. Mentors and children both enjoy community service, educational, and recreational activities. Time Commitment: Varies to suit volunteer's schedule for 1 year.

School Buddy

The School Buddy program matches elementary or middle school students with caring adult mentors. Buddies meet once a week for lunch at the child's school. The agenda is simple - eating lunch, doing homework, reading books, creating arts and craft projects or playing games. Time Commitment: 1 hour, once a week for one academic year.

Big Futures

As a mentor, you have a unique opportunity to be a friend and role model, to share your life experiences and diverse perspective to bring enrichment and encouragement to a student. The goal is to keep the student motivated so that he/she will not give up on the goal of succeeding in life or in going to college. Matches will participate in monthly college and academic focused events planned by the agency. Volunteer training seminars and academic focused events, handbooks and manuals will be provided by BBBS for both volunteers and students. Time Commitment: 1 to 2 hours, two times a month for the life of the match.

Coalition for Christian Outreach (CCO)

The CCO is a campus ministry that partners with churches, colleges and other organizations to develop men and women who live out their Christian faith in every area of life. Staff members build close relationships with students of influence on campus to help them develop as leaders, challenge them to grow spiritually, and invite them to join the mission of reaching out to their campus, the community, and the world. Time Commitment: 1 hour, once a week for one academic year.

Have Fun. Make a Difference. Make a Friend.



Program Participants

Participants in the Program Include You!

The success of the match friendship depends greatly on the efforts of the Big, the Little, and the Parent/Guardian. Each one plays an important role in helping build a meaningful friendship. Working together, parents/guardians, volunteers, and BBBS staff members plan activities and opportunities that can have a powerful and positive impact on children.

Who are our Littles?

- Children from our community who could benefit from having a positive adult role model
- Children who like to have fun
- Children who are age 6 to 22

How do Children come into the program?

Most children in our community-based programs come to us through their parent or care-giver. Most children in our school-based programs come to us through a teacher or counselor. We also reach out to involve children through churches, youth service agencies, and other referrals. All children and their parents must want to be in our program.

What is a “Big”?

It won't be long before you meet your Little Brother or Little Sister for the first time. And, when you do, it will help for you to understand your role as a Big.

What makes a successful Big

- Emphasize friendship over changing the behavior of the child
- Are not authoritarian
- Decide activities together with Littles
- Are consistent and dependable
- Have realistic expectations
- Are patient
- Focus on having fun
- Set boundaries and limits
- Acknowledge that positive impact on the child comes after the relationship is built
- Put a child's safety and well-being first



What a “Big” Is Not

- Parent
- Financial supporter
- “Taxi” service
- Babysitter
- Peer
- Therapist

Eligibility Guidelines for a Volunteer Prospect

The Volunteer Prospect:

1. Must be determined to be an appropriate role model for a youth
2. Is a minimum of 18 years of age, with the exception of high school volunteers who must be recommended to the program by at least two faculty members; written consent will be required from parent/guardian of volunteers under the age of eighteen (18)
3. If part of the Community Based program, has automobile transportation, a valid driver's license and adequate automobile insurance; proof of insurance needs to be verified, meeting state minimum coverage before the match-up
4. Agrees to abide by the Agency's policies and procedures and to cooperate with the BBBS staff
5. Agrees to maintain contact consistent with specific program requirements (one-to-one, Big Couple, First Friends, or Bigs in Schools); **failure to do so will result in closure of match**
6. Agrees to be flexible and to cooperate with child/family's schedule
7. Completes the volunteer application, interviews and volunteer training; provides the Agency with a minimum of four (4) references, proof of insurance and consents to background checks, including a law enforcement record's check and Bureau of Motor Vehicle check
8. Provides accurate information during the interview process
9. Allows the enrollment specialist to make a home visit and to meet with spouse and others within the household if applicable during the screening process
10. Does not abuse drugs and/or alcohol; if ever hospitalized or treated for drug-related addiction or alcoholism, may be considered for matching after a period of abstinence of five (5) years has lapsed;
11. Should have a five (5) year period of stability after psychiatric hospitalization
12. If ever convicted of a misdemeanor, must demonstrate a pattern of emotional and behavioral stability for five (5) years
13. If ever convicted of a felony, may be considered for matching after a period of at least five (5) years after final discharge and must demonstrate a pattern of emotional and behavioral stability

NOTE: Exception to any of the Eligibility Guidelines may be made with approval of the Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters.



Managing Expectations

We all had someone in our lives, other than a parent, who made a difference to us. This is what you can do for a child in our program. It's really pretty simple—it's a matter of making yourself available on a consistent basis. It's showing you care. It's having fun with a child. It's listening to him/her talk about whatever is going on in his/her life. **It's a series of small, teachable moments that, in the end, make a BIG difference.**

Changes in your Little tend to occur slowly. Your Little may not call you or suggest activities for you to do--this is normal behavior. Often Littles won't say "thank you" –but this doesn't mean they aren't enjoying the time with you. It just takes time for the relationship to form.

To make the most of your relationship:

- **Be a good friend:** Listen, have fun, take time to get to know this new person in your life. Choose activities that you both enjoy and that will strengthen the bond between you. Don't set out to impose mandatory changes in the Little. Positive behaviors will flow after your Little trusts you and your Little grows in being more secure, not by your declaring mandatory new behaviors that the Little has to do.
- **Be Consistent:** Show the child you think your time together is important.
- **Be involved and participate in Agency activities:** This connects you with other Bigs and Littles and allows your Little to interact with other children in the program.
- **Regularly communicate with your Little, the parents and your Match Support Specialist:** Parents have entrusted their child to you. They remain the leaders in their family. We must respect and honor their role. The parents' support is critical to the success of the match. Over time this relationship with the parent(s) can be fostered by:
 - Communicating with them before and after an activity. Describe what you plan to do and what you've done together
 - Ensuring they are aware of activity plans, and they approve; do not rely on the Little to tell the Parent/Guardian about plans
 - Advising them of any changes in plans in a timely manner;
 - Respecting the privacy and confidentiality of your Little's family;
 - Maintaining a primary relationship with your Little and do not become overly involved with the rest of his/her family;
 - Talk to your Match Support Specialist about any concerns you have about your Little/Little's family or your Little's well-being. We will contact you each month to provide assistance and give feedback on how you're making a difference. Anytime you are unsure about what to do or how to handle a situation, your Match Support Specialists are there to help.
- **Work for a long-lasting relationship and realize that problems may come up:** It's normal for problems to arise in a match relationship. Try to balance your expectations of what it will be like with your Little and be realistic about how fast the relationship will take to develop.

The Role of the Match Support Specialist

The Match Support Team will have on-going contact with the Match Participants, including you. They are genuinely interested in the progress of the match and to ensure the child's health, safety and happiness.

During the first year of the match, you will be contacted monthly by the Match Support Team. The Team will call:

- 2 weeks after the match-up meeting or introduction
- Once a month for the first year
- To conduct a 3-month review in person
- To conduct an annual review in person on the one-year anniversary and each annual anniversary thereafter

The Team will help provide support by guiding you through problems, giving you direction and celebrating successes. They will:

- Provide you feedback on how you're making a difference.
- Find information and resources that you might be interested in.
- Offer group activities and give you activity ideas for you and your Little.
- Hook you up with donated tickets to community/sports events.
- Keep you updated on activities offered by the agency.
- Help you communicate with your Little and their parent.
- Work with you on any conflicts that might come up.

So that we can best support you, BBBS must be notified of any significant changes in the match such as legal, educational, family dynamics or social changes.

Please contact the Agency when problems (personal or within the match) arise which affect or could affect the relationship. Any suspected cases of neglect or abuse in the child's family must be reported immediately.

Contact with the Agency must be maintained. Phone calls should be returned in a timely manner, ideally within 48 hours. Any updates to contact information should be reported immediately.

You don't need to wait to hear from your Match Support Specialist--they love to be contacted by their Bigs.

Here are some good reasons for calling your Match Support Specialist:

- To get feedback from the Little, and Parent/Guardian about how the match is going.
- Share fun stories about your match.
- Discuss concerns you are having with your match or the safety of your Little.
- Ask for activity ideas and find out about current events at BBBS.
- Report any emergency situations.

Contact your Match Support Specialist by phone and/or email--whichever is most convenient for you.

The Processing Steps

BBBS gathers information to learn more about you, including a(n):

- Interview
- Home Assessment
- Reference checks, including criminal history & background checks
- Possible interview with significant other
- Information from another BBBS agency or other service organization where you may have volunteered previously
- Information from another BBBS agency or other service organization where you may have volunteered previously
- If agreeable to all parties, you get matched with a child

Start having FUN, making a difference in the life of a child, and enjoying your new friend.

In order for BBBS to provide a responsible and professional service to clients, it is necessary to ask all Participants--Volunteers, Parents/Guardians and Children—to reveal extensive personal information about themselves and their families. The Agency respects the confidentiality of the Participant records. Information is shared only as necessary among professional staff. The Program Committee of the Board of Directors, including the Board President and representatives from BBBS of America, may have access to confidential information as needed to fulfill its function. Members of the Committee shall be required to read and sign the Confidentiality Agreement. In all cases of review of questionable matches or intake, names will be withheld from all professional staff.

Information which is considered confidential with the Agency includes, but is not limited to:

- All volunteer and client files including, but not limited to, applications, transcribed records or interviews, psychological test results, references, and information supplied by referring sources and other agencies
- Casework logs; and
- Meetings and telephone conversations with Participants, wherein personal information is shared.
- The BBBS Confidentiality Policy states that this personal information shared is confidential, only
- Allowing release of information outside the Agency when an appropriately signed consent to release form is obtained. Please see the complete Confidentiality Policy provided separately.

***THESE STEPS MAY VARY DEPENDING ON PROGRAM OPTION SELECTED**

Application

Take time to carefully complete the application. Read the paragraphs on the back and sign and print your name on the bottom of the last page. Return the application to us via mail, e-mail, or fax. An application which has been e-mailed will be signed at the interview. Inform your references that we will be contacting them; this can overcome any potential delays.

Interview

An interview will be scheduled with you as soon as possible after the completion of the application. This interview will include a brief orientation, signing of police check consents, with a discussion and questions. The interview is usually completed at the most convenient location for the volunteer and will last about 1 ½ hours.

We also ask that you supply us with two forms of ID including a copy of your driver's license, a DD214 for those in the military, and proof of auto insurance which meets State minimum requirements for the applicable program.

Notification of Decision on Involvement

When the enrollment process is complete, you will be notified in a letter or by phone of the decision regarding your involvement with the Agency. Agency policy prohibits the disclosure of information related to this decision.

Matching

Once you are approved a Match Support Specialist arranges a match with a child based upon interests and preferences of the participants (parent/guardian, child and you). A match-up meeting may occur

at the child's home, in our office, or another appropriate place. The purpose of the match meeting is to introduce the participants and hopefully, the participant's family. For the School Buddy Program, the match-up meeting will occur in the school as contact outside the school setting is not permitted in this program.

Case Management Follow-up

Throughout your involvement in our program, the Match Support Team will be in touch on a regular basis. Most of the contact will be by phone with periodic in-person contacts. Match Support offers professional support to matches and families. For the First Friends program, the First Friends Coordinator will be the contact for any additional training and follow up.

Training

You will be required to attend a training session before you're matched. Training will be offered weekly or as needed, and will cover areas that you feel would be beneficial. On-line training may also be available.

***PROCESSING OF YOUR VOLUNTEER APPLICATION MAY TAKE UP TO 4 – 6 WEEKS**

A Top Priority - Child Safety: Child Protection in BBBS Programs

Children's safety is our #1 priority. We focus on the child's safety and well-being throughout the match.

We do this by providing:

- Thorough professional screening;
- Child safety and child abuse prevention education programs for volunteers, parents and children;
- Guidelines that establish appropriate boundaries and respect a child's right to feel safe;
- Ongoing BBBS Match Support contact with each party in the match. This helps provide up- to-date information about safety issues and early warnings of potential problems throughout the match relationship;
- The BBBS Match Support Specialist maintains required consistent scheduled contacts with each member of the match party; and
- On-going training on sexual abuse through Empower Children educational opportunities.

As a Big you have a responsibility in supporting the parents' primary role of keeping their child safe. Bigs need to model appropriate behavior as well as assume responsibility for their Little's safety during outings.

Some safety issues include: Internet safety, bullying and violence prevention, the Little's medical condition and child abuse prevention.

Our agency has expectations and guidelines relating to child safety. We expect you to know and follow these guidelines.

- If you have a car, you must carry adequate insurance. We expect you to make the child wear a seat belt, and we expect you to drive safely. Please remember that if there are passenger airbags and you are matched with a child under the age of 12, the child will need to sit in the back seat for his/her safety.
- If you engage in activities like boating or other water sports, we expect that you will have the child wear a life vest.
- Read and follow the Empower Children rules outlined in a separate guide.

Whatever you are doing with the child, we expect that as the adult, you will enforce safety rules by saying, "If we are going to do _____, then you have to do _____ for your safety."

We also expect you to follow the guidelines for the match that we give you. Remember that the child's parent/guardian has the ultimate say about what activities are acceptable. Don't put yourself in jeopardy by not abiding by her/his wishes. Keep her/him informed of your plans and make sure you contact her/him if there is a problem.

Empower Children Education (against sexual abuse)

BBBS is serious about child safety in all of its matches. Children have a right to feel good about their bodies. They have a right to say “No” to anyone. Children are in charge of their bodies and can say who can and who cannot touch them.

Some people could be attracted to a youth program like ours because they wish to form unhealthy relationships with children (potential child abusers, possible sexual molesters of children). They might view our program as a means of gaining regular access with children.

We realize that possibility and take every precaution against it. We screen our volunteers thoroughly for their appropriateness. We also train our clients (youths and parents) to be watchful of unhealthy signs especially in the area of sexual abuse. Communication between our staff and the child and parent continues after the match so we are alert to unhealthy signs and actions.

If an allegation of sexual abuse should occur, we are obliged to report it to the proper authorities who will initiate an investigation.

The things we have said may make you feel uneasy or as though we aren't trusting of you. That is not the case. Our agency has been very fortunate in attracting very high caliber volunteers since we began operations in 1972. We are still aware of what could happen and will do all in our means to prevent any occurrences.

As a volunteer you need to:

1. Follow the Match Guidelines provided.
2. Maintain regular contact with your match support specialist.
3. Use common sense when choosing activities.
 - a. Overnight visits can only take place after you are matched for a minimum of six (6) months; these overnight visits are then at the discretion of the parent/guardian.
 - b. Maintain separate sleeping quarters, at least a separate bed for your Little when he/she stays with you.
4. Keep in touch with the child's parent or guardian informing her/him of activities in advance and abiding by her/his wishes.

If you ever have a situation where your Little talks to you about any abuse or violence he/she is subject to, contact your Match Support Specialist immediately. Our response to the disclosure by a child can prevent negative outcomes for the child and his/her family. For that reason, it's critical that volunteers follow our BBBS protocols on reporting abuse.

Abuse Reporting Actions:

- Volunteers immediately contact BBBS at 456-1600 or (888) 456-1600. If after business hours, immediately contact law enforcement and contact BBBS the next day. Remember, state laws require the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. Callers can remain anonymous and are immune from all civil and criminal liability, provided they have made the report in good faith.
- BBBS will immediately inform the Executive Director who will contact legal counsel.
- BBBS will immediately contact local law enforcement and/or Child Protective Services and solicit guidance with respect to handling the interview of the child and contact with the alleged perpetrator to prevent interference with vital investigative matters.
- The child will be interviewed by law enforcement and/or
- If the alleged perpetrator is the volunteer, BBBS will close the match and notify all parties by certified letter that they are not to have further contact until further notification.
- If the alleged perpetrator is someone other than the volunteer, BBBS will provide additional support and guidance to the volunteer as necessary.

Child Protective Services for all residents in all Indiana counties:

800-800-5556

Branch County

(517) 279-4200

Hillsdale County

(517) 439-2200

St. Joe County

(269) 467-1250

Child Protective Services for Michigan:

855-444-3911

You Can Make a Difference in the Life of a Child

Suggested Activities for Matches

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES:

- Water skiing Swimming
- Roller skating
- Aerobics
- Weight lifting
- Twirling a baton
- Learning a cheerleading routine
- Learning a dance
- Horseback riding
- Wash a car
- Walking/Jogging
- Golfing
- Soccer
- Canoeing
- Bicycling
- Tennis
- Handball
- Racquetball
- Horseshoes
- Fishing or catching tadpoles
- Flying a kite
- Throwing a Frisbee
- Baseball
- Football
- Kickball
- Bowling
- Play foosball, air hockey, pool or ping pong at BBBS
- Chop wood
- Shovel snow

GO TO / DRIVE TO:

- puppet shows
- Airport to watch the planes take off and land & visit the free museum
- concerts
- Fairs or help at one
- Circus
- Star gaze

HOBBIES:

- Expensive neighborhoods

- Start a collection
- Make puppets and do skits
- Draw faces on balloons
- Paint rocks
- Do model cars, planes, or boats
- Buy a book of crafts or go to craft shows
- Sew or needlework
- Knit
- Grow plants
- Go hunting (after hunter safety class)
- Do carpentry
- Play musical instruments
- Play board games

INDOORS ACTIVITIES:

- Write an article about your experience as a match for BBBS
- Experiment with different hairstyle
- Introduce each other to family members
- Visit a nursing home
- Color
- Do puzzles
- Make bird feeders
- Recite a poem
- Sing a song
- Read a recipe

CULTURAL EXPERIENCES:

- Go to a play
- Watch an athletic event
- Be in or go to a fashion show
- Go to the zoo
- Go to the movies
- Go to art museums
- Go to historical museums

ACADEMIC:

- Do Flash cards
- Do homework together
- Plan for future schooling
- Read a book out loud
- Workbooks
- Make up your own stories
- Go to the library
- Go to the book store
- Do a leaf collection
- Learn about another country
- Get library cards
- Visit your Little at school for lunch (with parent permission note)
- Set goal with prizes for reading a certain number of books
- Participate in the Summer Reading Program at the library
- Visit a college campus
- Visit different work sites
- Take your Little to work

WORK EXPERIENCES:

- Explore different job opportunities
- Learn how to complete applications
- Complete a resume
- Rehearse an interview
- Help your Little open a savings account (with parent's permission)
- Fix something together
- Clean your house or car
- Do yard work together
- Change your oil

Ground Rules:

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS COMMUNITY-BASED VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

1. To be in contact (phone calls and in-person meetings) with the Match Support Specialist as required.
 - a. During the first year, these contacts will be monthly. After one year, the contacts will be quarterly.
Note: Contact schedule will vary by program.
 - b. In-person meetings required at 3 months and Annually
2. To return phone calls from BBBS and from other Match Participants (Child/Parent/Volunteer) within 48 hours.
3. To support regular, in-person contact with the Child and to support the appropriate activities designed to foster the Match according to the individual program guidelines. Volunteer should make arrangements in advance, communicating any changes in the schedule or activity.
4. Not to have an overnight visit during the first six months. After six months, the Parent/Guardian must approve of the overnight visit and must inquire about the sleeping arrangements. For overnight visits, the Volunteer must maintain a separate sleeping area or at least, a separate bed for the Child. Volunteers or Parent/Guardian must notify the Match Support Team prior to any overnight visit. Overnight visits should be occasional—i.e. should not be excessive.
5. To participate in Empower Children educational opportunities.
6. To provide safe environment for child: 1) Volunteer must have adequate car insurance and children must always wear a seat belt in accordance with laws; 2) Child must wear life vest when participating in activities such as boating or water sports; and 3) Volunteer and Parent/Guardian will support safety guidelines by encouraging compliance by Child.
7. To contact BBBS when problems arise which may affect the Match relationship. To report any significant changes in the Child's behavior, especially when BBBS support may be needed.
8. To report any changes in contact information such as phone number, address, etc.
9. To participate in Match Support community activities as desired and training programs as required which are offered by BBBS.
10. To contact BBBS if closure of the Match is contemplated. This contact should be made before ending the Match.
11. To report to BBBS any suspected case of neglect or abuse in Child's family.
12. To attend training session offered by BBBS within six months of Match Date of Introduction (above).
13. To observe BBBS Alcohol Policy: Volunteers will abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages before and during Match activities; Volunteers will also abstain from purchasing alcohol during Match activities.
14. To abstain from the use of illegal drugs while a Volunteer with the BBBS program.
15. To report any moving auto violation or ticket and/or arrest to BBBS in a timely manner.
16. **To consider and make an effort in support of BBBS programs through participation, fund-raising and/or Volunteer recruitment. The best recruiters for children are current Volunteers. If you know someone who might like to volunteer to be a mentor for a Child, talk with them, share your experience and encourage them to contact BBBS. We have children waiting to be matched!**

Ground Rules:

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS SITE-BASED VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

1. To meet in-person with my match at the designated site once a week during the school year and to be in contact through approved BBBS methods during school breaks, including the summer months, according to the individual program guidelines.
 - a. Match term is at least one year and may be extended.
 - b. The Little will ask Big when he/she will be visiting the next week and the Little will let the teacher know when the next visit will be. The Big will contact the school secretary or other designated representative before the scheduled visit time if it is necessary to cancel the activity. It is important the Little be properly notified.
 - c. The giving of food and gifts to the Child is not appropriate except for special occasions.
2. To spend one-on-one time with my match in the designated areas on school property (e.g., classroom, and playground).
 - a. Big and Little will spend most of the time together one-on-one. Big may play on playground once a month with Little; this time should be spent with Little but it will be natural that other children may want to join.
 - b. Volunteer will not spend time with any child other than his/her Little, as a matter of practice; on special occasions, such as birthdays, exceptions may be granted in advance.
 - c. The Little will not bring friends along to meet with his/her Big.
 - d. As the only adult approved to spend time with the Little, the Big may not bring another individual to participate in a match activity.
3. To contact the BBBS Team Member as required. This includes a phone call within two weeks of being matched and monthly thereafter or as required by the individual program while Match is active. Calls from BBBS to Volunteer should be returned within 48 hours.
 - a. To contact Team Member when problems arise which may affect the Match relationship, especially if BBBS support may be needed.
 - b. To contact Team Member if Volunteer personal contact information changes such as phone number, email address, etc.
4. To maintain contact with the Match at the designated site (e.g. school) only and have no contact with the Match outside this site.
 - a. Exchange of contact information such as home address, phone numbers and email addresses is prohibited; social media contact is prohibited.
 - b. In-school activities such as plays, concerts, classroom parties are acceptable; BBBS should be advised when this occurs.
 - c. Field trips, sporting events and any other off-ground school activities are prohibited unless special permission is given by BBBS prior to the event.
 - d. The taking of photos and videos of the Little are not allowed unless written permission is given to Agency staff via a Parent Permission form.
5. To complete required end of year paperwork to assess the program's effectiveness.
6. To contact BBBS if closure of the match is contemplated. This contact should be made before ending the match.

Valuable Relationships

Now that you are matched with your Little; you may be thinking what comes next and how fast will it happen?

As every experienced Big will tell you, the friendship takes time to develop. It is a different experience for every Big and Little, and no doubt your friendship will be unique.

However, there are some common stages that most match friendships will go through at different times, usually depending on the level of trust that has been established.

HONEYMOON STAGE: From the first meeting to approximately the four-month date.

What does this stage look like?

- You both are trying to figure out each other.
- Littles may try to get their Bigs' approvals or impress them.

What can you do to move it along?

- Without prying, learn facts about your Little and reference them in your conversations: e.g. favorite things, best friend, where they've traveled.
- Be consistent and flexible, do what you said you were going to do.
- Be patient and remember that relationships have ups and downs, and don't "happen" by themselves.

GROWTH STAGE: From approximately the four-month date to the one-year date.

What does this stage look like?

- This is the most crucial time regarding the development of the Big/Little relationship.
- This is the time that may be a turning point in the relationship.
- It is common, around the four-month date, that your Little will begin testing you to see what you are really about and how much he/she can get away with.
- Your Little may be observing you to find a reason not to trust you.

What can you do to move it along?

- Show your Little that he can trust you, through your reliability, consistency, and time together. As trust develops, your Little will probably begin sharing bits of information here and there with you.
- Keep in close contact with your Support Specialist for ideas.
- Recognize and praise accomplishments
- If you need to give advice or address behavior problems, give reasons; avoid "shoulds."



MATURITY STAGE: This stage begins somewhere around the one-year anniversary date.

What does this stage look like?

- You will notice your relationship with your Little has become more positive and realistic and match activities are less structured.
- Most Bigs have shed their preconceived notions regarding the match and their Littles.
- As the friendship matures, you will see the maturity of your Little as he/she grows and develops.

What can you do to move it along?

- Develop long term shared interests, activities that you will do frequently together and that you both enjoy.
- Identify past shared experiences and enjoy shared "jokes."
- Learn something new to both of you, together.

Transition and “Closure”

Your relationship with your Little may transition to less regular contact because of:

- A change in where you or your Little lives;
- A change in life circumstances;
- A feeling that you have successfully taken your Little through a critical stage;
- A change in school the Little is attending;
- Declining interest as the Little grows older;
- Decreasing times that the Big and Little are meeting; or
- Challenges in the match.

Consequently, the match can end its regular pattern of meetings. When one of these circumstances occurs, the Big and/or the Little may decide it is time for a change—for a “transition.” BBBS will “close” the file of your match and will not continue providing regular support to the match.

All BBBS matches “close” when the Little reaches age 18 or graduates from high school; unless in the Big Future Program.

Remember:

- No matter the reason or the length of the match, you and your Little have given a lot to each other and going through this transition should be handled in a sensitive, thoughtful, and caring way;
- Recognize that you have made an impact at some level on your Little;
- Celebrate the experience as much as you can together - highlights and hurdles. The little you now know is probably not the same Little with whom you were initially matched. Changes probably have occurred; and
- Work closely with the child’s parent/guardian make a plan for some form of continued contact that feels appropriate to your match circumstances. This may be as limited as exchanging greeting cards at holidays or as intense as continued regular contact with an 18 year old going off to college.

If the transition of closing the match is not approached carefully, a child can be hurt by the experience. Our staff will work with you, the child and his/her parent to help you with this transition.

Strategies for Common Problems: “What do I do?”

Over the years we have seen some common problems that can occur in any match. These are called common because they are, well...common. It's normal for Little/Big relationships to experience some of these situations. We've collected some examples of these common problems and some tips on how to handle them. If you are experiencing one of these challenges in your match, please bring the issue up with your Match Support Specialist and discuss in more detail how to proceed in a successful way.

“My Little doesn't show appreciation.”

Coming into the match with a preconceived notion of how your Little should show appreciation will set you up for a letdown. Your Little may not say “please” and “thank you” when you first start meeting, and even after many times together he/she may still not respond in a way that you deem appropriate.

Response: *“I had a good time” may eventually be a response, but may be a long time in coming. Sometimes he/she might only say, “It was o.k.” Be sure you model the behavior you would like your Little to demonstrate, and be consistent.*

“My Little doesn't share feelings and/or initiate conversation.”

You may feel that your Little is not putting as much into the relationship as you would like. The relationship may seem one-sided for a long time with you doing the talking, but your Little not saying much.

Response: *Eventually your Little may well respond in a more open and honest way, trusting you and confiding in you as an adult who will not disappoint or walk out on him/her. Conversation between you will grow and your Little may share more feelings with you. If this happens, rejoice in it, but remember that no relationship is perfect and all relationships are defined in a variety of ways.*

“My Little never calls me.”

Littles love to receive phone calls, but seldom feel comfortable initiating them. Asking your Little to share with you the good feeling that comes from getting a phone call may help him/her to understand that adults also like to receive calls from people they like. Giving your Little definite times to call may help, as can enlisting the parent's help in encouraging your Little to call.

Response: *It is important not to stop calling with hopes that they will start calling you. It is important to be patient, and be sure to reinforce the behavior with positive remarks when they do call.*

“My Little doesn't act the right way.”

Your Little may come from a family with a very different value system than yours. It is not your responsibility or role to try to change the values of your Little. Your match is a learning experience for both of you. If your Little has never been to a play, they may not know what behavior is expected of them.

Response: *Try to be content with the understanding that, through your example, your Little may come to respect values that are more positive. But this may be a long process.*

“My Little doesn’t seem to need me.”

Every child should have someone to bring a little magic to them, but your Little may not respond in a way that makes you feel you are needed. Feeling needed may be expressed by your Little in small ways, and may be non-verbal.

***Response:** In time, you may learn to recognize small signs that your Little needs you. This will help you in being content with the knowledge that you are making a difference and are a much-needed part of your Little’s life.*

“My Little doesn’t make time for me.”

Your Little may seem to have little time for you, but be assured that although other activities and family issues may appear to interfere, your Little is benefiting from the interest and involvement of a caring adult friend. You are the person spending one-on-one time with your Little; listening; sharing, and showing your desire to be together on a regular basis.

***Response:** No group activity, school event or family commitment can take the place of your special relationship with your Little. If you recognize the importance of what you are doing, chances will increase that your Little will recognize this too.*

“My Little doesn’t seem interested.”

Keep in mind that we all demonstrate interest in different ways, and your Little may not know how to communicate that he/she is interested.

***Response:** Be sure you do not make assumptions based on your Little’s behavior, and talk to your Support Specialist if you have questions.*

“My Little doesn’t want to improve.”

Your Little may have many adults eager to tell what she/he is doing wrong.

***Response:** What your Little will respond to is someone who will point out and praise strengths. These strengths (assets) can range from the values that the child holds to things he/she is good at doing. If your Little knows that you are going to be positive, give encouragement and compliments, and appreciate the unique person that he/she is, change will happen in very positive ways, and your Little will grow in confidence, competence and caring.*

The most important thing to remember is that you will need to be **patient** and **persistent** throughout your relationship! Your relationship may take time to develop, but if you are able to manage your expectations, be open to surprises, and accepting of your Little as an individual, you are in for a fantastic ride! Your Match Support Specialist is available to help you through any of the above situations. Remember to seek help as necessary.

Other Considerations

Matching gifts allow you to leverage your donations to BBBS. The value of your contribution could be doubled or tripled in some cases! Over 6000 companies offer to match contributions (both time and/or money) their employees and retirees give to non-profit organizations like BBBS.

To see if your company participates in a program like this, contact the company's Human Resource Department or Business Office.

Tax deductions may be available to you to help defray some of the out-of-pocket expenses. The Department of Internal Revenue states:

"You may deduct reasonable unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses you pay to allow underprivileged youths to attend athletic events, movies or dinners. The youths must be selected by a charitable organization whose goal is to reduce juvenile delinquency. Your own similar expenses in accompanying the youths are not deductible."

You may also deduct parking fees and mileage at a rate of 14 cents per mile for transportation while with your Little. You must keep accurate records and appropriate receipts of your expenses as deductible amounts will vary from year-to-year based upon your actual expenses.

Liability insurance is provided for approved volunteers in our program. This approval and liability insurance coverage does not extend to others in your household or to your family members unless they are also approved volunteers in our program.

Specifically:

- It is your responsibility to supervise your Little at all time while he/she is with you.
- Transportation for your Little needs to be your responsibility and should be delegated only in an extreme emergency.

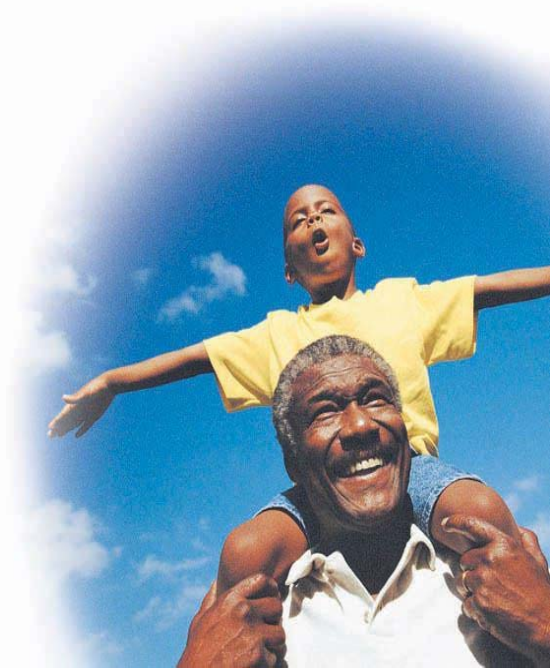
Only youth who are matched or who are on our waiting list are part of the BBBS program. Only these you are eligible to participate in our programs and, again, are the ones covered by our liability insurance while they are with you.

***Failure to comply with any of these guidelines is grounds for termination of the match.**

Transitioning the Match—Closing the File

As we described above, there is a “Transition” stage in a match where the pattern of activities together may become less frequent.

For various reasons such as change in where you or your Little lives, a change in life circumstances, a feeling that you have successfully taken your Little through a critical stage, a change in school the Little is attending, declining interest as the Little grows older, decreasing times that the Big and Little are meeting, or because of challenges in the match, the match can end its regular pattern of meetings. When one of these circumstances occurs, the Big and/or the Little may decide it is time for a change—for a “transition.” Hopefully this transition is very positive and leads to continuing contact between the Big and Little at some level.



At the time of transition, BBBS “closes” the file for the match as one that BBBS actively provides support to and the match is no longer considered an “active” match. We hope that you will stay involved with BBBS and we hope that you might consider taking on another Little. But for the purposes of your original match, BBBS closes the file and won’t make its regular contacts with you and your Little to provide match support.

Ideally, this transition period can be a positive time for setting up patterns that will be long-lasting for the relationship between the Big and the Little. You may decide to keep in touch and to get together regularly as your friendship continues into the adulthood of the Little. You may decide to contact each other occasionally by phone, emails, cards and get-togethers such as for birthdays.

Whenever possible, it is desirable to try to keep in some contact. You have invested a lot into each other. You want to communicate to your Little your appreciation of him/her and your hope and expectation that he/she will be successful and happy.

A few Guidelines:

- Never just stop and disappear from the match--this could really have a negative impact on your Little.
- The transition/file closing process gives an opportunity to review the great stuff that happened during the match.
- Your Match Support Specialist will walk you through the process—there are several steps to take which can maximize the positive effects.

NOTES:

THANK YOU!

As your match begins, and throughout the entire life of your match, we want to THANK YOU! You are stepping forward on a journey where you don't know exactly what will happen, but you are doing this because you care for others and you know that there is great reward in life in the relationships you develop.

We wish you all the best in your match with your Little Brother or Little Sister. Have great fun and take pride in your contribution to the happiness of your Little. We will be supporting you, throughout your journey.

