



**Big Brothers  
Big Sisters.®**

# **VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION GUIDE**

**DEFENDERS OF POTENTIAL**

**IGNITE.**

**INSPIRE.**

**EMPOWER.**

## 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 and Hillsdale 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. Volunteers are our most important asset in the service of our youth. Now more than ever, kids need caring, competent adults in their lives—adults who can help guide them through the crucial years from six to twenty-two years of age. With so many negative influences pressing on today's youth, having a positive adult role model is vital in determining how children fare in life, now, and in the future.

We are very excited that you are considering being a volunteer with our Agency. Friendship is a powerful thing. Experiencing fun activities together and forming a trusting bond with a child can have a powerful and positive impact.

## ABOUT OUR PROGRAMS

We have two basic ways you can meet with your Little to build a fun friendship. We offer **Community-Based** and **Site-Based** programs.

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 child's school, which is referred to as the **site**, typically on 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 (Community-Based)**

From zoo outings to movie nights, Little Brothers and Little Sisters are laughing, learning, and making memories with caring adult mentors thanks to the Community-Based program. This 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.

### **BIG FUTURES (Community-Based)**

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 employment-focused events planned by the agency. An orientation will be provided by BBBS for both volunteers and students. Time Commitment: 2 to 4 hours, two times a month for fourteen months, with the understanding that, as these students are older, they may be some limitations to this.

### **School Buddy (Site-Based)**

The School Buddy program matches elementary 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 full academic year or more.

### **Match Activities (Site-Based)**

The Match Activities program serves youth who are on the BBBS waiting list with cooking classes, pizza parties, movie nights, and more. Each month, Match Activity volunteers have 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.

**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.

### 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 parents 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 you to understand your role as a Big.

### What makes a successful Big

- Emphasize friendship over changing the behavior of the child
- Do not be authoritarian
- Decide activities together with Littles
- Be consistent and dependable
- Have realistic expectations
- Be 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

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



## ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES FOR A 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 enrolled along with their parent/guardian
3. If part of the Community Based program, has automobile transportation, a valid driver's license and up to date 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; **failure to do so will result in the 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 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 the approval of the Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters.**



## MANAGING EXPECTATIONS

It's 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 their 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 Specialists:** Parents have entrusted their child to you. 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 Specialists 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 your designated Match Support Team.

## **The Team will:**

- Call 2 weeks after the Match-Up meeting or introduction
- Call once a month for the first year, quarterly thereafter.
- If Community Based, conduct an in-person 3-month review and annual review on the one-year anniversary and each year anniversary thereafter

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

## **They will:**

- Provide your 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.
- Keep you updated on activities offered by the agency
- Help you communicate with your Little and their parent or a school representative.
- Work with you on any conflicts that might come up.

**Please contact the Agency when problems (personal or within the match) arise which may 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 promptly, ideally within 48 hours. Any updates to contact information should be reported immediately. BBBS must be notified of any significant changes in the match such as legal, educational, family dynamics, or social changes.

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

## **Here are some good reasons for calling your Match Support Specialists:**

- To get feedback from the Little and the 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 emergencies.

## Confidentiality Policy

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 BBBS Confidentiality Policy states that this personal information shared is confidential, only allowing the release of information outside the Agency when an appropriately signed consent to release form is obtained.

### **The Agency respects the confidentiality of client and volunteer records.**

Regarding the exceptions listed under “Limits of Confidentiality,” information about the clients and volunteers is shared only as necessary among agency professional staff. All records are considered the property of the Agency and not Agency staff, clients, or volunteers themselves. To provide a service that is in the best interest of the children served by the program, information from outside sources, including confidential references, must be assessed along with information gained from the clients or volunteers themselves. Records are, therefore, not available for review by the clients or volunteers.

### **INFORMATION CONSIDERED CONFIDENTIAL WITH THE AGENCY**

1. 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;
2. Casework logs; and
3. Meetings and telephone conversations with both clients, parent(s)/guardian(s), and volunteers wherein personal information are shared.
4. All Donor information including, but not limited to, lists distributed at committee meetings and information shared via email, phone, or in-person meetings.

### **LIMITS OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

#### ***ONLY UNDER THE FOLLOWING CIRCUMSTANCES WILL CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION BE RELEASED:***

1. An appropriately signed “Consent to Release Information” form shall be obtained from the client or volunteer before releasing confidential information outside the agency, however, the complete file will not be released.
2. The Program Committee of the Board of Directors, including the Board President and representatives from Big Brothers Big Sisters 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 but professional staff.

3. For agency investigations, members of the Board of Directors, including the Board president, may have access to confidential information as needed to fulfill its function. Members of the Board of Directors shall be required to read and sign the Confidentiality Agreement.
4. Information shall be provided to law enforcement officials or the courts only pursuant to a valid and enforceable subpoena or other court order.
5. Information shall be provided to the agency's legal counsel in the event of litigation or potential litigation involving the agency. Such information is considered privileged and its confidentiality is protected by law.
6. Information regarding child abuse shall be reported to appropriate government authorities as mandated by state law and when present, such conditions shall abrogate the Confidentiality Policy to facilitate investigation of such charges.
7. If an agency worker has reason to believe that a client or volunteer may be dangerous to himself or others, necessary steps will be taken to protect the appropriate party. If a child is involved, the parent(s) or guardian(s) will be notified first. Notification may also include a medical referral or a report to law enforcement authorities.
8. At the time a child or volunteer is considered as a match candidate, information is shared between prospective match parties. However, the last names and addresses of prospective match mates are not shared until after the involved parties agree to the match.

### **PROCEDURES TO SAFEGUARD CONFIDENTIALITY**

1. All volunteer and client files shall be maintained in a secure place so that only those authorized shall have access to them.
2. Meetings and telephone conversations with both volunteers and clients shall be conducted in a setting conducive to privacy so that confidential information may not be overheard by unauthorized individuals.

### **VIOLATIONS OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

1. A staff member who violates the Confidentiality Policy shall be disciplined by the Executive Director pursuant to the provisions in the Agency Personal Policy.
2. A member of the Board of Directors who violates the Confidentiality Policy shall be asked to resign.
3. Violation of the Confidentiality Policy by other individuals shall be resolved by the Executive Director.

# THE PROCESSING STEPS

## 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. 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 will usually last about 1 ½ hours. **We also ask that you supply us with a copy of your driver's license, a DD214 for those in the military, and proof of auto insurance which meets State minimum requirements.**

## NOTIFICATION OF DECISION ON INVOLVEMENT

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

## TRAINING

You will be required to attend a Volunteer Readiness session before you're matched. Sessions are held at various times each month at the BBBS office as well as other popular locations within the community. These will review many of the common concerns and issues which may arise in your match and clarify your role and staff's role in your Little's development.

## MATCHING

Once you are approved, a Match Support Specialist arranges a meeting with a child based upon the interests and preferences of the participants. The purpose of the match meeting is to introduce the participants to each other while supported by a Match Support Team Member. 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. We encourage you to be open, honest and ask questions during the Match-Up to ensure the child and program is a good fit for you.

## 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.

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

# Suggested Activities for Matches:

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES:

- Water skiing
- Roller skating
- Aerobics
- Weight lifting
- Twirling a baton
- Cheerleading
- Learning a dance
- Horseback riding
- Wash a car
- Walking/Jogging
- Golfing
- Soccer
- Canoeing
- Bicycling
- Tennis
- Handball
- Racquetball
- Horseshoes
- Fishing
- Flying a kite
- 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 land
- Concerts
- Fairs/Circus
- Star gaze

## HOBBIES:

- Start a collection

- Make puppets and do skits
- Paint rocks
- Model cars
- Craft shows
- Knit/Sew
- Garden
- Do carpentry
- Play instruments
- Board games

## INDOORS ACTIVITIES:

- Write an article about your experience as a Big/Little
- Try hairstyles
- Visit a nursing home
- Color
- Do puzzles
- Make bird feeders
- Recite a poem
- Sing a song
- Bake cookies

## 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:

- Make flash cards
- Help w/ homework
- Plan for future

- Read a book
- Workbooks
- Write a story
- Go to the library
- Book store
- Leaf collection
- Learn about another country
- Get library cards
- Participate in the Summer Reading Program at the library
- Visit a college campus
- Take your Little to work

## WORK EXPERIENCES:

- Complete a resume /application
- 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
- Explore job opportunities

## GROUND RULES - COMMUNITY-BASE

### BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS COMMUNITY-BASED VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

1. To regularly meet in-person, (2 times a month for 2-4 hours each time) with the Child and to do 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.
2. No overnights allowed in the first year of the match per Overnight Guidelines see match agreement for more details.
3. The Child is not to be taken to the volunteer's home (or to another private residence) until:
  - a. The match has reached the three-month anniversary
  - b. The Volunteer and Child have met with BBBS staff for their first GSS (Goal Setting Session)
  - c. BBBS, Volunteer, and Parent/Guardian have given document approval for such visits to begin.
4. To provide safe environment for the child: 1) Volunteer must have adequate car insurance and children must always wear a seat belt in accordance with laws; 2) Child must wear a life vest when participating in activities such as boating or water sports; etc.
5. For the child to be on their best behavior and to see the value of the match is based on the relationship and not on the money spent. All gifts are to be reported to BBBS.
6. To not treat the match as a privilege to be taken away but as a mentoring opportunity. Parent and Big are a team working together to encourage positive behavior.
7. To be in contact (phone calls and in-person meetings) and to complete surveys with the Match Support Specialist as required. During the first year, these contacts will be monthly. After one year, the contacts will be quarterly.
8. To return phone calls from BBBS and from other Match Participants (Child/Parent/Volunteer) within 48 hours.
9. To report any changes in contact information such as phone number, address, etc.
10. 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.
11. To contact BBBS if the closure of the Match is contemplated. This contact should be made before ending the Match. A closure meeting is highly recommended. BBBS encourages at least a 14-month commitment for all parties.
12. To report to BBBS any suspected case of neglect or abuse in the Child's family.
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!

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

## GROUND RULES - SITE-BASED

### **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 calendar 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 child should eat their own school lunch.
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 the 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. The 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 Match Support Team 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 Match Support when problems arise which may affect the Match relationship, especially if BBBS support may be needed.
  - b. To contact Match Support 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 a 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.
  - 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 the required end of year paperwork to assess the program's effectiveness.
6. To contact BBBS if the closure of the match is contemplated. This contact should be made before deciding to stop seeing the Little.

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

## 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 consistently 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, 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.**

- Children under 8 years of age and/or under 40lbs should be restrained in a safety seat
- 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 rules outlined in our Empower 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 to 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 twelve (12) months; overnight visits are not recommended and only allowed after **prior** approval of the Match Support Specialists and 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.

## REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

- Volunteers **immediately** contact BBBS at 456-1600 or (888) 456-1600. If after business hours, contact law enforcement and contact BBBS **the next day**. Remember, state laws require the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. Callers 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**

**Child Protective Services for Michigan:**

**855-444-3911**

## VALUABLE RELATIONSHIPS

**Now that you are matched with your Little; you may be thinking about 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 they 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.**

### **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.

### **What can you do to move it along?**

- Develop long term shared interests and activities
- 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 on 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. 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 successfully.

### **"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 it 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 more openly and honestly, 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 or, non-verbal ways.

**>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 compliment 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 can 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 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 your family members unless they are also approved volunteers in our program.



## 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 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 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 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 contact. You have invested a lot in 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 have a negative impact on your Little.
- The transition/file closing process gives an opportunity to reflect on 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



# Big Brothers Big Sisters®

[www.bbbsnei.org](http://www.bbbsnei.org)

**800.456.1600**

# OUR MATCH SUPPORT TEAM IS HERE TO SERVE YOU

## REACH THEM AT THESE EXTENSIONS

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## OVER A YEAR

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# BIG FUTURES

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