



## COMMUNITY-BASED VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION GUIDE

Our vision is that all youth achieve their full potential.

Our Mission is to create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth.

We partner with parents/guardians, volunteers and others in the community and hold ourselves accountable for each child in our program achieving:

- Higher aspirations, greater confidence, and better relationships
- Avoidance of risky behaviors
- Educational success

This is what we do, this why we do it, and this is why it matters:

**2011 percentage of youth maintaining or improving in our key areas:**

	Community	Site-Based
<b>Socio-Emotional Competence</b>	97.9%	96.6%
<b>Educational Success</b>	94.5%	95.2%
<b>Avoidance of Risky Behaviors</b>	88.8%	83.4%

## About **Our Bigs**

Based on years of extensive research, Big Brothers Big Sisters requires our volunteers to be capable of the following commitments. Our professional staff work with volunteers to ensure these commitments can be met by providing coaching, training and activities to help you develop in your role as a Big.

- Commit to a minimum of 12 months as a Big
- Commit to spending consistent, significant time with your Little each month
- Follow all agency policies, procedures and ground rules. Because child safety is a top priority, we consider violations of policies, procedures, and ground rules to be grounds for match suspension or termination.
- Maintain regular communication with Match Support staff, including returning all calls and emails. Failure to maintain contact may result in closure of the match.
- Participate in required surveys and assessments related to the match relationship and youth outcomes.
- Complete assigned training.

## **Research tells us that Littles achieve greater results when their Big....**

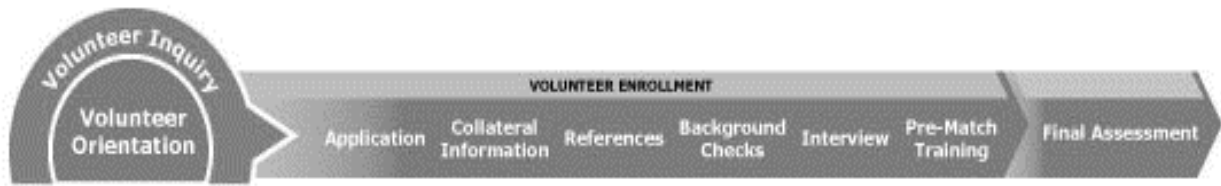
- Emphasizes friendship over changing the behavior.
- Is not authoritarian.
- Decides activities together with Littles.
- Is consistent & dependable.
- Has a realistic expectation about the Little.
- Is patient.
- Focuses on having fun.
- Sets boundaries and limits.
- Acknowledges that positive impact on the child comes after the relationship is built.
- Puts a child's safety and well-being first.
- Helps form goals.

And we know what a Big is **not**:

ATM  
Childcare provider  
Provider of professional services  
Tutor

We will work with you to ensure healthy boundaries are established.

## About the **Enrollment Process**



### **Enrollment Steps**

1. Inquire about becoming a Big
2. Connect with our staff
3. Complete the online application including personal references
4. Interview with us- you will be matched with a Little based on compatibility, interests, and preferences given during the interview
5. Complete the Online Volunteer Pre-Match Training
6. Provide information about work or volunteering with other youth-serving organizations and other related information as requested
7. Background checks, including criminal history and DMV record checks

**Big Brothers Big Sisters retains the right to accept or deny participants, or close a match at any time.**

Potential Littles, along with their families, are also screened to ensure that our mentoring programs are the best fit for the Littles needs. The process for youth and families is similar to that of our volunteers and looks like this:



Leading the enrollment and matching processes are professionals whose job it is to make the best possible match. When a match is made, a Match Support Specialist oversees the relationship by providing coaching, ensuring safety, assisting in goal-oriented activities, referring services, and helping you, the Little and his/her family with needs. It is therefore critical for all match parties to treat contact by the Match Support Specialist as a serious component of match development. Lack of response to Match Support's contacts is grounds for match suspension or termination, which can have detrimental impact on the Little.

Later in the process, you'll receive training and instruction on our policies, procedures and guidelines – all of which are designed to help you have the most positive impact on a Little as possible.

## Match Activities



Being a Big is about both having fun with your Little and achieving positive outcomes. Your Match Support Specialist will work with you, your Little and your Little's parent/guardian to identify goals for the match, which will likely fall into one or more of these three categories of:

- Avoidance of risky behaviors
- Educational Success
- Higher aspirations, greater confidence, and better relationships

When you discuss goals with your Match Support Specialist, they will fall into one or more of these categories. These categories represent the most common youth outcomes found as a result of effective mentoring. In general, youth-specific match goals are established to produce one or more of the youth outcomes. The activities you select should support those goals, which can produce the desired outcomes.

## About **Expectations**

If you are approved and matched, you can expect a structured, professional process for ensuring match success:

1. Match Proposal: a potential Little will be proposed to volunteer
2. Match Introduction Meeting: Match Support Specialist, volunteer, child and parent are introduced
3. Communication: Match Support Staff are in contact with all match parties
4. Training: ongoing training and resources will be provided as needed
5. Match activities and events: info on monthly activities will be provided for matches by email
6. Youth Development Plan: volunteers will be provided with goals to work with Little
7. Annual survey completion: to evaluate match needs and accomplishments

## About **Safety**

**The safety of children is our number one priority – no exceptions.** Our staff carefully screens each volunteer Big, board member, staff and others who work directly with the children in our programs. As a volunteer Big, it will be your role to make sure the relationship is healthy and that you are making good judgments about the child's safety on outings. Here's how you can further promote safety:

- Follow all agency policies, procedures and ground rules at all times – no exceptions.
- Spending too much time with your Little too early in the match can set an unhealthy precedent for the relationship. Discuss plans and expected time with Match Support.
- Obtain parent/guardian permission for all activities. Be aware that some parents may not be comfortable with your suggestions, so we expect that you will comply with parent decisions. Talk to your BBBS match support staff when you have questions.
- Always stay with your Little; do not leave them alone or with someone else.
- Do not use alcohol or other drugs before or during activities.
- Do not use physical discipline or yell at your Little.
- If an activity involves changing clothes (for example, swimming), there must be separate changing and showering places.
- Never ask the Little to keep a secret.
- Gift giving is discouraged, although you might want to buy an occasional gift for your Little. Seek parental advice about this first.
- Do not engage in tickling, wrestling, giving backrubs, or ask your Little to sit on your lap.
- Seatbelts should always be worn.
- Bigs should never drop off a child at a home where no approved adults is present or at a location other than where the parent specified.
- Showing age-inappropriate videos, misusing social media, pornography or sexual material is not acceptable and is grounds for match termination.

## About **Match Closure**

We know from research on mentoring that when relationship closure is unplanned, abrupt, premature, or handled without care and communication, Littles can be harmed. In addition, mentors may also be left feeling guilty, sad, or lacking closure.

It may seem odd or even pessimistic to discuss this stage when you are contemplating or entering a mentoring relationship with a Little. However, research shows that when mentors are trained in how to handle match closure well and, in partnership with Match Support staff, actively plan for the end of their match, it can be a positive process that allows for reflection and personal growth for both the mentor and the Little.

At the time of closure, Big Brothers Big Sisters will discuss with you, your Little, and your Little's parent about the best plan for closing your match relationship with the organization. When a match is closed, Big Brothers Big Sisters officially closes the file and does not continue to provide professional support or guidance to the previously matched parties. At that point, the match is no longer considered an "active" match, or part of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. This means that Big Brothers Big Sisters is no longer responsible for or involved in the relationship.

By this time, you and your Little have most likely invested a lot into each other and the relationship. During the closure process, it is important that you communicate to your Little your appreciation of him or her and your hope and expectation that he or she will be successful and happy.

When your match closes, talk to your Match Support staff about ways in which you can stay involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters. This may include being matched again with another Little, but there are many other ways in which you can support the agency. You and your Match Support staff should talk about the best options for you.

## About Our Families

### WHO WE SERVE:

- Our 4-county community
- Children ages 5 - 14
- Any child who wants an extra friend
- 67% are eligible for free/reduced lunch
- 55% are from a non two-parent family
- 22% have an incarcerated family member



### About Our **Non-Discrimination Policies:**

Children are not excluded on the basis of race, religion, national origin, color, gender, marital status of parent, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status or disability.

Volunteer Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Board Members, and Agency Staff as Volunteer Bigs are not excluded on the basis of race, religion, national origin, color, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, or disability.

# Agency Staff CONTACT INFO

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## **Agency CONTACT INFO**

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Toll Free  
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[www.bbbsouthernmn.org](http://www.bbbsouthernmn.org)



Thank you for making  
a difference in the life of a child!