



Big Brothers  
Big Sisters®

OF THE MISSISSIPPI  
VALLEY



**CHILD & PARENT  
ORIENTATION HANDBOOK**

# OUR ORGANIZATION



Our Big Brothers Big Sisters agency is an affiliated member of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. The concept of a one-to-one relationship between an adult and a child began in 1903, when Irvin Westheimer noticed a young boy rummaging through some trash outside the rear entrance of his office in Cincinnati, Ohio. Discovering that the child had no father, he befriended the boy and became his "Big Brother." He then urged his friends to do the same with other young boys in father-absent homes. Thus, the concept of one-to-one relationships began. In 1908, the first Big Sisters program was started. As these two organizations grew and spread, they began to discuss the possibility of merging into a single organization concerned with all school age children living in single-parent homes. In 1977, a merger was ratified and signed into law creating Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

## WHO ARE OUR LITTLES?

Big Brothers Big Sisters enrolls children between the ages of 6 and 14 who could benefit from a relationship with a positive adult. Most often, the children who are served come from single-parent homes or may be experiencing some difficulties in the home, school, or the community.

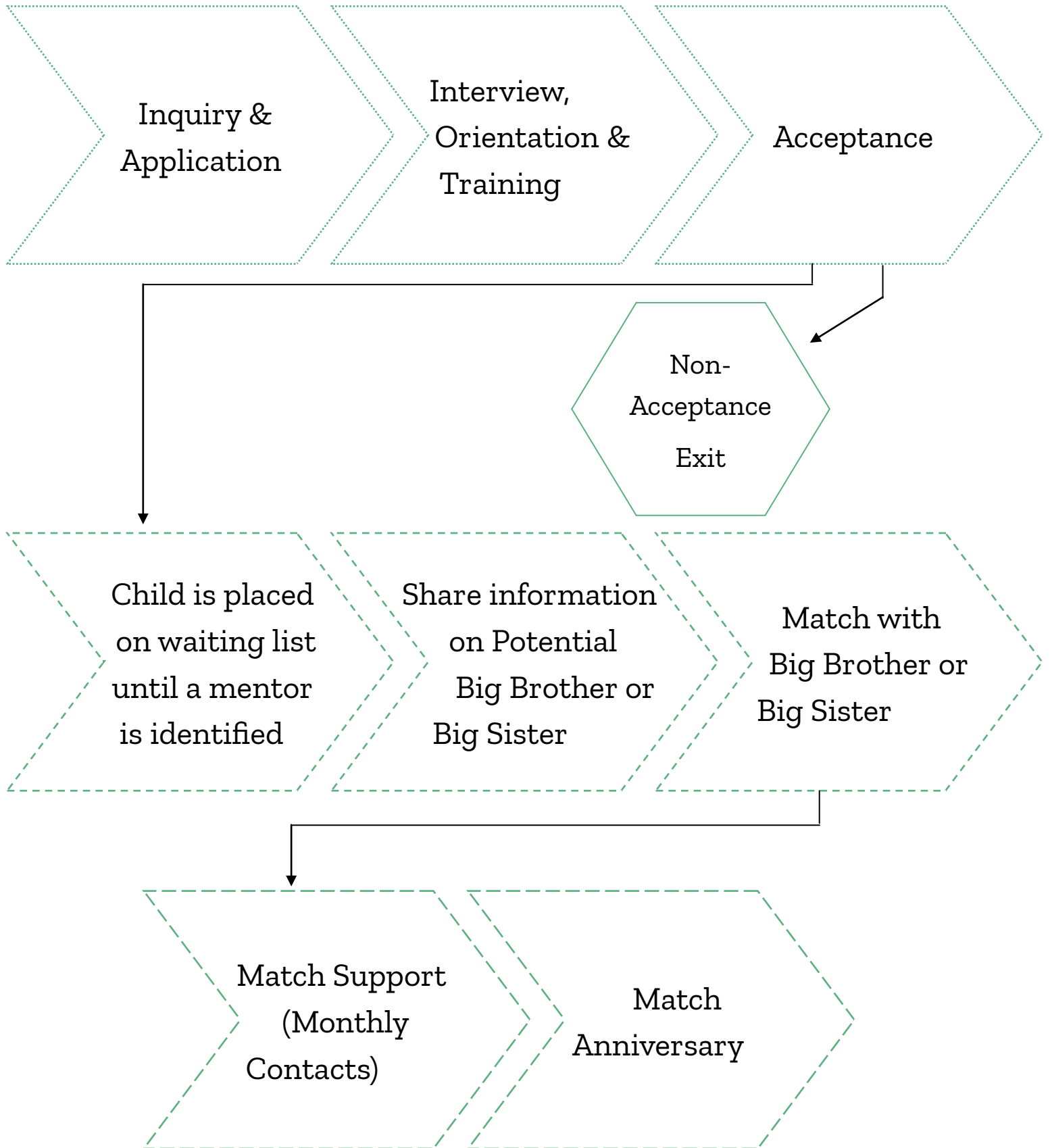
## WE DEFEND POTENTIAL

One-to-one matches between an adult and a child are carefully selected on the basis of similar interests, needs of the child, and special qualities in the volunteer that help that child meet those needs. The matches plan to spend some time together every month, either in the community or at school. It is not necessary for the volunteer to always plan special activities, or spend a lot of money. Instead, the volunteer should simply try to include the child in their regular activities, sharing interests and tasks with the child. The friendship that is developed is expected to last at least one year; however, many of the friendships that are formed may last much longer.

## MATCH SUPERVISION

Matches between the adult and child are carefully supervised by agency staff. Contacts are made on a monthly basis, receiving relevant information from the volunteer, child, parent, and school staff. Goals are set for the child's growth and progress and assessed in regular conferences between the parent, volunteer, agency staff, and school staff. It is important for all of these individuals to be committed to the child's relationship with his/her Big Brother/Sister in order for the child to gain from the friendship that is developed.

# MATCH PROCESS



# ELEMENTARY MENTORING



## COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM: OVERVIEW

The Elementary Community-based Program is a one-to-one mentoring program that matches a LITTLE, a child between the ages of 6 and 12, with a BIG, an adult volunteer over the age of 18. They make a twelve month commitment to spend six to ten hours together each month doing activities of interest to both of them—riding bikes, watching movies, visiting a museum, going to sporting events, or participating in the monthly BBBS planned activities. Bigs are also encouraged to become engaged in the child's school activities, if possible.

## COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM: GROUND RULES

1. The child and the mentor are friends. The parent/guardian is still the parent. The mentor has no parental or legal responsibility for the child.
2. The mentor is not a taxicab service, Santa Claus, babysitter, or repairman. Please don't treat him or her as such, or ask personal favors of the mentor. Expenses incurred during outings will be the responsibility of the parent for the child's portion, depending upon individual financial situations.
3. If you have a question or concern about the mentor or the program, please contact a BBBS staff member to discuss your concerns. This information should not be relayed to the mentor.
4. The relationship exists between the child and the mentor. It is inappropriate to have brothers/sisters/friends or parents included in their activities.
5. The parent or guardian should not deprive the child of the visit with the mentor as a means of discipline. Likewise, the mentor is never allowed to discipline the child, but may set limits if it is necessary.
6. The mentor will check with parents when the child is picked up, and will inform the parent of where they will be going and when they will return, so it is important for the parent to be home at that time. Children should also inform the parents of the activities they are doing.
7. The mentor is responsible for the child during their outings. At no time is the mentor to leave the child alone or with others without the mentor present.
8. Children must act appropriately when with their mentor. Consistent disruptive behavior may result in the match closing.
9. Be flexible. Remember the Big Brother or Big Sister has a busy schedule too. If your plans change, please contact the mentor to reschedule.
10. Big Brothers Big Sisters does not allow overnight visits. If one occurs, your child's file and the match will be closed immediately.
11. Visits to the Big Brother/Sister's home by the Little are not allowed in School-based or School-based Plus matches and not within the first 6 months of a Community-based match to allow for the healthy development of the match relationship. After the first 6 months, the decision to allow the child to visit the Big Brother/Sister's home is at the parent/guardian's discretion.
12. Keep regular contact with the agency staff by responding to phone calls and letters. If telephone calls are not returned, it can cause closure of your child's match. If contact information changes, it is necessary to provide the new information to the BBBS staff promptly.

# ELEMENTARY MENTORING



## SCHOOL-BASED PLUS PROGRAM: OVERVIEW

The School-based Plus Program is a one-to-one site-based mentoring program that matches a LITTLE, a child between the ages of 5 and 12, with a BIG, an adult volunteer over the age of 18. They make a twelve month commitment to spend two to six hours together each month primarily on school grounds, either during lunch hour, after school, or free time. Interaction outside of the school setting is allowed only for BBBS sponsored events.

## SCHOOL-BASED PLUS PROGRAM: GROUND RULES

1. The child and the mentor are friends. The parent/guardian is still the parent. The mentor/Big has no parental or legal responsibility for the child.
2. The mentor has no financial responsibility for the child nor is expected to give gifts to the child.
3. The mentor will only see the child at school or during a BBBS event. No other face-to-face contact is permitted. The mentor is only allowed to transport the child to and from a BBBS sponsored event or activity. Visits to the Big Brother/Sister's home by the Little are not allowed in School-based or School-based Plus matches.
4. The mentor and child can communicate outside of school through mail, email or the telephone.
5. If you have a question or concern about the mentor or the program, please contact the BBBS staff or your child's teacher. Please do not contact the mentor directly.
6. The relationship exists between the child and the mentor. It is inappropriate to have brothers/sisters/friends or parents included in their activities.
7. Children must act appropriately when with their mentor. Consistent disruptive behavior may result in the match closing.
8. Keep regular contact with the agency staff by responding to phone calls and letters. If telephone calls are not returned, it can cause closure of your child's match. If contact information changes, it is necessary to provide the new information to the BBBS staff promptly.

# MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL MENTORING



## MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM: OVERVIEW

The Middle/High School Program is a one-to-one mentoring program that matches a LITTLE, a child between the ages of 11 and 14, with a BIG, an adult volunteer over the age of 18. They make a twelve month commitment to spend six to ten hours together each month doing activities of interest to both of them—riding bikes, watching movies, visiting a museum, going to sporting events, or participating in the monthly BBBS planned activities. Bigs are also encouraged to become engaged in the child's school activities, if possible. In addition, match activities focused on career exploration, academic motivation, and achievement are offered to matches.

## MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM: GROUND RULES

1. The child and the mentor are friends. The parent/guardian is still the parent. The mentor has no parental or legal responsibility for the child.
2. The mentor is not a taxicab service, Santa Claus, babysitter, or repairman. Please don't treat him or her as such, or ask personal favors of the mentor. Expenses incurred during outings will be the responsibility of the parent for the child's portion, depending upon individual financial situations.
3. If you have a question or concern about the mentor or the program, please contact a BBBS staff member to discuss your concerns. This information should not be relayed to the mentor.
4. The relationship exists between the child and the mentor. It is inappropriate to have brothers/sisters/friends or parents included in their activities.
5. The parent or guardian should not deprive the child of the visit with the mentor as a means of discipline. Likewise, the mentor is never allowed to discipline the child, but may set limits if it is necessary.
6. The mentor will check with parents when the child is picked up, and will inform the parent of where they will be going and when they will return, so it is important for the parent to be home at that time. Children should also inform the parents of the activities they are doing.
7. The mentor is responsible for the child during their outings. At no time is the mentor to leave the child alone or with others without the mentor present.
8. Children must act appropriately when with their mentor. Consistent disruptive behavior may result in the match closing.
9. Be flexible. Remember the Big Brother or Big Sister has a busy schedule too. If your plans change, please contact the mentor to reschedule.
10. Big Brothers Big Sisters does not allow overnight visits. If one occurs, your child's file and the match will be closed immediately.
11. Visits to the Big Brother/Sister's home by the Little are not allowed in School-based or School-based Plus matches and not within the first 6 months of a Community-based match to allow for the healthy development of the match relationship. After the first 6 months, the decision to allow the child to visit the Big Brother/Sister's home is at the parent/guardian's discretion.
12. Keep regular contact with the agency staff by responding to phone calls and letters. If telephone calls are not returned, it can cause closure of your child's match. If contact information changes, it is necessary to provide the new information to the BBBS staff promptly.

# CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY



(Below is a summary of the agency confidentiality policy. To retain a full copy of the confidentiality policy, please contact the BBBS agency.)

In order for Big Brothers Big Sisters to provide a responsible and professional service to clients, it is necessary for volunteers, clients and parents or guardians of clients to be asked to divulge extensive personal information about themselves and their families. The agency respects the confidentiality of client and volunteer records and shares information about clients and volunteers only among the agency professional staff.

All records are considered the property of the agency and not the agency workers or clients or volunteers themselves. In order to provide a quality service, information from outside sources, including confidential references and criminal background checks must be assessed along with information gained from the clients or volunteers themselves. Records are not available for review by the clients or volunteers.

It is mandatory to keep all information discussed between Big Brothers Big Sisters staff, volunteer, parent, child, and school staff confidential. It is not appropriate to discuss this information with anyone unless it is first discussed amongst those involved in the relationship. If confidential information is discussed with outside parties, the match will terminate immediately.

## PERMISSION TO USE PICTURES

With parent/guardian permission, Big Brothers Big Sisters may use the following information: *First name, Age, School and Picture* of the child involved with any of the mentoring programs. The information listed above will only be used for promotional materials. By giving permission, Big Brothers Big Sisters is not legally responsible in any way to the parent/guardian and child in connection with the picture or identifying information. If the parent/guardian does not want their child's picture to be public, the parent/guardian needs to tell the staff at Big Brothers Big Sisters.

## NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

BBBSMV will not discriminate against potential volunteers, parents/guardians, or children based on race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, ancestry, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, marital status, creed, gender identity or any other protected characteristic as established by law.

# MATCH SUPERVISION AGREEMENT



In order to maintain child safety, Big Brothers Big Sisters staff will be contacting the mentor, child, and parent on a consistent basis to discuss the match relationship. This is a requirement of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program as well as the National program. Those who fail to cooperate with this agreement are subject to disciplinary actions such as having their match terminated. Extenuating circumstances will be evaluated prior to any termination.

# CHILD ABUSE INFORMATION



Child safety is a top priority of Big Brothers Big Sisters. If child abuse or neglect is suspected, it needs to be reported. Child abuse is the mistreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caretaker, someone living in their home or someone who works with or around children. The mistreatment must cause injury or must put the child at risk of physical injury. Child abuse can be physical (such as burns or broken bones), sexual (such as fondling or incest) or emotional. Neglect happens when a parent or responsible caretaker fails to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter or other basics for a child.

Contact the BBBS staff for assistance.

## **To Report Abuse:**

**1-800-25-ABUSE (Illinois)**

**1-800-358-5117 (TTY for Illinois)**

**1-800-326-2178 (Iowa)**

**563-326-8698 (Scott County local office)**



**KNOW**



**SEE**



**RESPOND**