

# MENTOR ORIENTATION & CHILD SAFETY HANDBOOK



**Big Brothers  
Big Sisters®**

OF THE MISSISSIPPI  
VALLEY



# 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.

## MISSION

BBBS exists to help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships with measurable impact.

## 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.

## STAND WITH US

In order for a program such as this to work, there must be support from the community. People are our best resources for ideas, help with service delivery by volunteering time to do necessary tasks, and of course, financial support. The staff at Big Brothers Big Sisters wishes to inform the community about our program and its needs. If you or an organization you are affiliated with would like to hear more about the program, or feel there is a way you can help, please feel free to contact us. We would very much appreciate hearing from you.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is an ongoing relationship between a positive role model and a child. A mentoring relationship encourages individuals to develop to their full potential, helps an individual to develop his/her vision for the future, breaks down old barriers and develops new and different perspectives on life. In simple terms, a mentor is a positive role model and a friend.

The process of mentoring takes many forms which include:

- Social/Emotional Focus
- Encouragement
- Support and Guidance
- Giving Advice
- Giving Undivided Attention
- Experiencing New Interests and Activities
- Academics (in a fun and creative way)
- Career Exploration

## WHO ARE OUR BIGS?

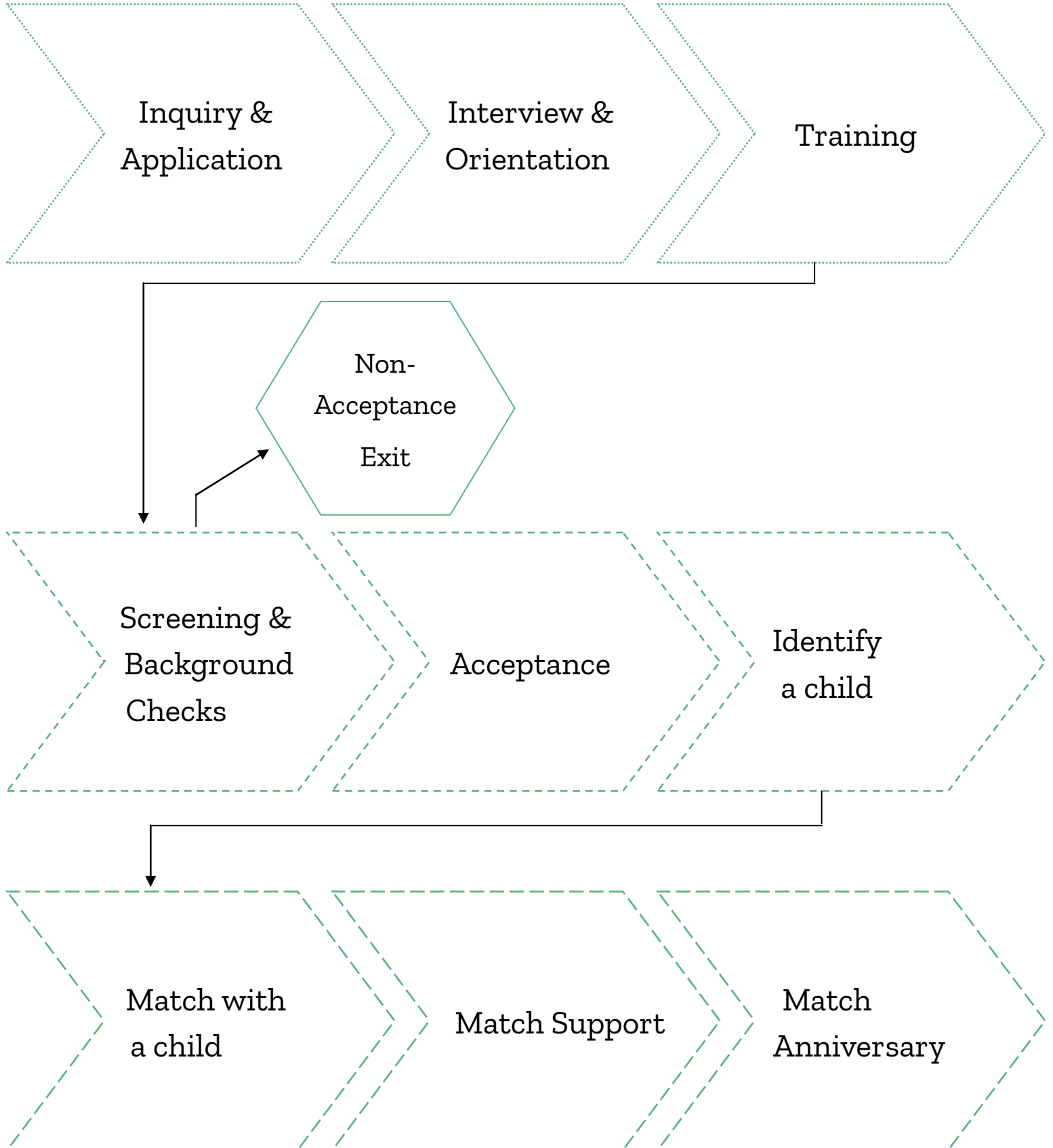
A Big is an adult friend who provides support, encouragement, and attention to a Little. A Big exposes the Little to new things in life, such as, new places, new interests, new hobbies, or new ideas. A Big interacts with a Little and has fun in the process. A Big is not a parent, teacher, counselor, babysitter, or a tutor.

## WHO ARE OUR LITTLES?

Every child can benefit from having a mentor. However, there are some children that benefit more by being involved in a mentoring program. The target population to be served by Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs is at-risk youth. Some demographics of these children are:

- Living in a single-parent home
- With low socioeconomic status
- Struggling with social skills
- Struggling with academics
- Experiencing loss (death of a relative, divorce)
- With an incarcerated parent
- Experiencing a significant life transition
- First time offenders with the Juvenile Justice System

# MATCH PROCESS



# ELEMENTARY MENTORING

## COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAM



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.

### WHAT TO DO DURING VISITS?

Big Brothers Big Sisters encourages fun and free or low-cost activities. The mentor is not obligated to pay for the child’s portion of an activity. The purpose of the program is to spend time with a child, and not to spend money.

BBBS also provides group activities throughout the year. BBBS encourages participation in these activities.

### SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

- Find interests that both you and your Little have and do an activity around that interest
- Do an activity that your Little has never done before and would like to do
- Build something together (birdhouse, model, etc.)
- Make a meal together
- Play board games
- Read a book together
- Go to the park
- Go on a walk
- Put together a puzzle
- Learn to do magic tricks
- Go to the museum
- Go swimming
- Go fishing
- Eat at a restaurant where neither of you have been before
- Do yard work together
- Go on a bike ride
- Go to a show (movie or play)
- Volunteer at another non-profit agency

### COMMUNITY SERVICE OBLIGATION

BBBS would not exist without the support and generosity of our community. A principle we want our Little Brothers/Sisters to learn about is the importance of giving, not just taking. Therefore, each match relationship is asked to participate in at least one community service project each year. BBBS has a number of fundraising events throughout the year from which you may select. Or, a different service project with another service organization is acceptable.

# ELEMENTARY MENTORING

## SCHOOL BASED PLUS PROGRAM



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.

### WHAT TO DO FOR LUNCH?

The mentor has several options:

- The mentor can take his/her own sack lunch
- The mentor can buy the school lunch
- The mentor can bring in lunch for themselves and/or the student (McDonalds, Wendy's, Subway, etc.)
- The mentor can choose not to eat lunch

If you choose to buy the school lunch or bring in lunch for the student, the school needs to know this information so they have an accurate lunch count for the day. **Please call before 9:00 a.m. to notify the school.**

### WHERE TO EAT LUNCH AT THE SCHOOL?

Each school designates a space where the mentor and child can eat lunch. This place will be shown to the mentor on the first day they see the student. If the designated space is taken or the student would like to eat with their friends, you can eat in the cafeteria as long as it is not a regular occurrence.

### WHAT TO DO DURING VISITS?

It is up to you and the child what you would like to do during the time you spend together. Schools may have an activity box available, which has games, puzzles, coloring books, cards, and other activities to do. Other activities you can do are read a book, work on homework, or play outside. If you have an activity you would like to do with your Little, you are welcome to bring it into the school.

# MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL MENTORING

## COMPASS PROGRAM



**C**onnecting  
**O**pportunities (through)  
**M**entoring (and)  
**P**reparation (for)  
**A**chieving  
**S**elf-Sufficiency (and)  
**S**uccess

The Middle/High School COMPASS 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 one-year 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.

### WHAT TO DO DURING VISITS?

- Spend six to ten hours per month with a Little.
- Attend a minimum of 4 Career Navigator Tours together each year.
- Participate in at least one enhancement program together per year:
  - Job Readiness
  - Leadership/Character Development
  - Next Steps (post high school education)
  - Financial Literacy
- Participate in group BBBS match activities throughout the year.

### COMMUNITY SERVICE OBLIGATION

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# MENTOR PROGRAM RULES



- 1. COMMITMENT AND CONSISTENCY** | Becoming a Big Brother/Sister is a commitment to be a positive influence and spend time with a Little Brother/Sister. Consistency is one of the most important aspects of the mentoring program.
- 2. ROLE OF A MENTOR** | A mentor is a friend to the Little Brother/Sister. A mentor is not a parent, taxi service, babysitter, Santa Claus, repairman, teacher, counselor, etc. The mentor should not allow him/herself to be manipulated into situations with which he/she is not comfortable.
- 3. ONE-TO-ONE RELATIONSHIP** | The relationship between a mentor and Little Brother/Sister is one-to-one. A mentor should not bring others when spending time with their Little without prior approval by parent/guardian and no more than 25% of the time.
- 4. RESPECT CHOICES** | Mentors should respect the choices of the family. If the Little Brother/Sister criticizes his/her parent, the mentor should try to help the child understand the reason the parent may do what he/she does, and find positive things about that parent. The mentor should also never side with either the parent/guardian or Little Brother/Sister during a disagreement.
- 5. DISCIPLINE** | This is an adult-child relationship that is friendly, but firm. The mentor does not become involved in disciplining or punishing the Little Brother/Sister. All behavioral issues should be brought to the attention of the child's parent/guardian and BBBS staff.
- 6. GIVING ADVICE** | The mentor should not give the Little Brother/Sister advice unless he/she asks for it. If advice is given, the child should be told that this is your opinion, and that others may feel differently. Be honest.
- 7. CONFIDENTIALITY** | Mentors are privy to personal information about the Little Brother/Sister and their family members. Mentors must keep all information confidential, unless it is information that might be harmful to the Little Brother/Sister.
- 8. MATCH SUPPORT** | BBBS will have contact with each match relationship during the time the match is involved with BBBS. It is the responsibility of the mentor to return calls, emails, etc. to the BBBS agency when prompted. In addition, the mentor is to update the BBBS staff on the progress of the relationship. If there is a problem presented, the mentor can contact the BBBS office at any time. If the mentor has any changes occur (employment, address, phone number, email address, etc.), they are to update the BBBS office.
- 9. DISCLOSURE OF CRIMINAL CHARGES** | The mentor will keep BBBS staff informed of any criminal charges (including traffic violations) that occur throughout the length of the match relationship.



# MENTOR PROGRAM RULES



10. **REPORTING ABUSE** | If the Little Brother/Sister is suspected of or is being abused or neglected, the mentor is required to contact BBBS staff immediately and/or the appropriate authorities to discuss and report the situation. If the mentor believes the Little Brother/Sister is in immediate danger, the volunteer is required to call 911, and then BBBS staff, once the child is in a safe situation.
11. **RESPONSIBILITY** | The mentor is responsible for the physical and emotional well-being of the Little Brother/Sister while together. Mentors should be positive influences to the Little Brother/Sister. Therefore, BBBS prohibits the use of alcohol, tobacco products, and/or drugs while in the presence of the Little Brother/Sister.
12. **FIREARMS/WEAPONS** | Weapons, firearms and/or ammunition will be made inaccessible at all times to a child while in the Big Brother/Sister's care, unless participating in specific, approved activity(ies), which the parent/guardian and Big Brother/Sister have approved in advance. A Big Brother/Sister will not carry a concealed weapon at any time while with their Little Brother/Sister.
13. **FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY** | The mentor has no financial responsibility to the Little Brother/Sister or the family. Expenses incurred during match outings should be shared, depending on the mentor's desires and financial situation. Gifts are okay to give for special occasions, but should not be expensive or excessive.
14. **FLEXIBILITY** | Mentors need to be flexible when planning match activities. Postponements of outings should be kept to a minimum.
15. **OVERNIGHT VISITS** | BBBS does not allow overnight visits between the mentor and Little Brother/Sister. If one should happen, the match will be closed permanently.
16. **VISITS TO BIG BROTHER/SISTER'S HOME** | 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.
17. **UPDATING PARENTS/GUARDIANS** | The mentor should plan and update outings with parents/guardians. It is advised to check with the parent/guardian when he/she picks up the Little Brother/Sister and inform him/her where they are going and when they will return so that the parent can be there.
18. **CONTACT AND COMMUNICATION WITH CHILD (SCHOOL-BASED PLUS)** | All face-to-face contact with the Little Brother/Sister is limited to school grounds or BBBS events, throughout the school year and over the summer. Outside contact with the Little Brother/Sister is acceptable through phone, mail, or email.

# CHILD SAFETY GUIDELINES



The following safety guidelines were designed to protect program participants from harm, identify potential areas of risk and define ways to minimize liability. Volunteers will be expected to follow these guidelines while matched with a Little. Consult with a BBBS staff member for further consultation or clarification on any of the child safety guidelines.

## IF THE CHILD GETS SICK:

- Never give medication to the child.

Within the Community-based program, take the child home and inform the parent/guardian of the child's symptoms. When at school, take the child to the school nurse and inform the nurse of the child's symptoms.

## IF ACCIDENT OR INJURY OCCURS:

- Non-Emergency- Apply basic first aid (Band-Aid, ice, etc.)
- Decide whether the activity can continue.
- Notify parent/guardian, school official, or program coordinator of the injury.
- Emergency- Make the necessary arrangements to address medical needs.
- Notify the parent/guardian, school official, or program coordinator.

Report accident/injury to BBBS.

## WHEN USING THE PUBLIC RESTROOMS:

Escort the child to any public restroom to ensure safety. If you are involved in a cross-gender match, stand right outside the restroom door.

## WHEN RETURNING CHILD HOME AFTER A MATCH ACTIVITY:

- Escort the child to the door to ensure his/her safety.

Check in with the parent/guardian at this time, letting him/her know how the activity went.

Communicate any concerns about the child privately with the parent/guardian.

# CHILD SAFETY GUIDELINES



## WHEN RIDING IN OR OPERATING MOTOR VEHICLES:

- General safety rules must be followed.
- Seatbelts must always be used and airbag safety guidelines followed.

Iowa Restraint Law requires that: A child age 1 up to 6 years old must be secured in a

child restraint system (a safety seat or booster seat--NOT a seat belt); a child from age 6 up to age 11 must be secured in a child restraint system or by a safety belt; rear seat occupants up to age 18 must be secured by a safety belt

- Illinois Seat Belt Law requires that: Any person transporting a child younger than 8 years shall properly secure him or her in an appropriate child restraint system; a child weighing more than 40 pounds may be transported in the back seat while wearing only a lap belt if the back seat is not equipped with a lap and shoulder belt.
- Life preservers must be worn on any watercraft. Be sure the life preserver fits the child.
- Helmets must be worn on motorcycles, dirt bikes, snowmobiles, etc.
- Parent/guardian consent is required before a child is able to operate any motorized vehicles or equipment.

The state or a local municipality may require proper safety training/certification/permits and/or license for a minor to operate a certain kind of vehicle.

Supervision and transportation of child/youth:

- Bigs are responsible for the supervision of Littles.
- At no time should the child be left unsupervised or left with someone else during a match activity.

Others are not allowed to transport Littles (friends, family, roommate, partner) without the consent of the agency, appropriate forms being submitted and written permission from the parent/guardian.

## MOVIES, VIDEO GAMES, MEDIA, INTERNET:

- Volunteers and parents/guardians are responsible for determining age appropriate content/ratings in all media forms when with a child.
- Viewing content with explicit sex, graphic violence or pornography is not acceptable.
- Mentors are discouraged from participating in social media with their Little and parent/guardian to promote confidentiality, privacy, and child safety.
- Mentors will not participate in any online communication about their Little or post a picture unless they have discussed this with the parent/guardian and have received approval.

Mentors are never to post any identifying information about the Little, parent/guardian (ie.: last name, contact information, child's home address, school the child attends, where the parent works, etc.).

# CHILD SAFETY GUIDELINES



## FIREARM SAFETY:

- In the home- All guns must be locked/secured or inaccessible to the child.
- A Big Brother/Sister will not carry a concealed weapon at any time while with their Little Brother/Sister..
- No child is permitted to use a firearm until they have completed a gun safety course.
- Parent/guardian must give his/her consent for child to use a firearm on a match activity (target-shooting, hunting).

BBBS must have gun safety course completion paperwork on file for the child prior to any firearm use during a match activity.

## PET CARE/CONTROL:

- Littles should be carefully introduced to pets. Be aware that Littles may have no experience with animals.
- Consider child's fears, allergies, establish boundaries and instruct child appropriate care and treatment of pet.

Make sure pet is secured if he/she does not like children.

Personal boundaries:

- Respect the child's need for personal space and privacy.
- Provide separate/private areas for child to change.
- Affection is best expressed through positive/affirming comments.
- Physical affection may be expressed using a handshake, high five, pat on back or hug.
- Contact match support specialist if there are any concerns about a Little's boundaries, expression of affection, or if a Little's family member shows a romantic interest in a Big.
- Consult with the parent/guardian before discussing values, sexuality, religion, life choices with a Little.

Never come between the parent/guardian and child; respect parental role and authority.

## GIFT GIVING, DONATIONS, WORK FOR PAY:

- Gifts are okay for birthday, holiday, special events or recognition of personal achievement. Gifts should not be expensive or excessive.
- Donations of furniture, clothing, money, computers, bikes or any professional services to Little/family must be discussed and approved by the BBBS staff.

Providing opportunities for the child to earn money should be discussed with the parent/guardian.

# MATCH SUPPORT & TRAINING



Prior to being accepted as a Volunteer Big Brother or Sister, each potential mentor will complete a mandatory Pre-Match Training. This training can be completed in-person or online through the BBBSA national training website. The Pre-Match Training will cover:

- Program Ground Rules
- Volunteer Big expectations and appropriate roles
- Expectations for the match relationship
- An explanation of what match support is and why we do it
- Child Safety and Youth Protection
- Ages & stages of child development
- The match closure process

It is the goal of Big Brothers Big Sisters to help support mentors, children, parents, and schools in the match relationship. Throughout the match relationship, monthly contact with the volunteer, child/parent/guardian will be maintained through phone, email, mail, or in-person by BBBS staff. Consistent contact between all match parties is a requirement of BBBS of the Mississippi Valley and BBBS of America. Monthly contact is the only way to ensure the match is meeting the child's and mentor's needs.

At the match anniversary, several evaluations will need to be completed. These evaluations help us assess the match relationship along with our organization as a whole. We appreciate honest feedback.

Throughout the year, Big Brothers Big Sisters will provide mentor trainings. These trainings consist of different topic areas of interest, such as poverty, communication, school performance, building effective relationships, developmental assets, to name a few. In addition, Big Brothers Big Sisters also provides Big Social Networking Events to allow Bigs to talk amongst each other and build relationships with other mentors. Big Brothers Big Sisters encourages mentors to take advantage of these opportunities.

Big Brothers Big Sisters also offers a lending library, which provides mentors, children, and parents/guardians access to resource materials on a wide variety of topic areas. To request a catalog of resources or to borrow an item, please contact our office at (563) 323-8006.

# 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.



# CONSENT TO USE OF IDENTIFYING INFORMATION IN PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL

Upon volunteer permission, Big Brothers Big Sisters may use the following information for print or video: *Name, Age, Place of Employment, and Photograph* (no personal history information will be used). In giving this consent, Big Brothers Big Sisters is released of any obligation or liability otherwise owed to the volunteer in connection with any personal or proprietary rights the volunteer may have as a result of the sale, reproduction or use of the above referenced identifying material. This consent may be terminated at any time by submitting a written request to the Big Brothers Big Sisters agency.

# VOLUNTEER POLICY

Big Brothers Big Sisters is a social service program designed to help children who have shown a need for a strong relationship with an interested adult. While the program is an interfaith and interracial one, the desires of the child's parent/guardian are respected in the selection of the appropriate adult for each child.

In determining whether an applicant may be considered for a match and what information shall be communicated to each party involved, consideration must be given to those past and present factors such as health, personality, and behavior of each individual and/or family which may have significant effect on the relationship and which, if revealed at a later date, may affect it adversely. Relevant information shall be provided, however, the name or names of the parties described are held confidential until the match is made. Any party has the right to refuse to enter into the match based on the information that is communicated.

The interview is designed to establish a profile of the volunteer and his/her interests. This profile will be used by the agency to determine the volunteer's suitability for service, and if it is deemed by the professional staff and/or the governing Board of Directors that the volunteer is suitable, it will be used to match you with a child. Except for the school liaison and/or parents of the Little being considered for a match with you, all elements of your profile will be kept in confidence.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is a volunteer organization. Therefore, Big Brothers Big Sisters has the right to deny any participate for any reason. In the event the agency denies acceptance of a volunteer, the agency need not identify a reason. There is no appeal until at least 12 months have passed. If the applicant reapplies following the 12-month period, his/her application will be reviewed by the professional staff and the decision made by the organization at this time is final. If denied the second time, no further appeals or reapplications will be considered.

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.



# REFERRING VOLUNTEERS

Big Brothers Big Sisters appreciates and encourages volunteers to refer others to our mentoring program. In case an individual would like to inquire about the programs Big Brothers Big Sisters offers, please have them contact the Big Brothers Big Sisters office through telephone, email, mail, internet or in person. It is prohibited for a prospective volunteer to attend an individual match session with a current volunteer and their Little.