



COMMUNITY-BASED

Parent/Guardian & Child Handbook



VISION - All youth achieve their full potential.

MISSION - Create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth.

ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT - We partner with parents/guardians, Bigs, and others in the community and hold ourselves accountable for each Little in our program achieving:

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

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION STATEMENT - At Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is an integral part of our values and mission. We recognize, affirm, and celebrate the diverse backgrounds, lives, and experiences of our stakeholders, including youth, families, board members, donors, volunteers, and staff. We ensure the opportunity for voices and perspectives to be heard and honored. In the community, we foster an environment where people can be their best selves. We affirm that every person [regardless of ability, age, cultural background, ethnicity, faith, gender, gender identity, gender expression, income, national origin, race, or sexual orientation, marital or veteran status] has the opportunity to reach their full potential. We strive to realize the full potential that is within all of us by ensuring that voices and perspectives are heard and honored.

About Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS)

Big Brothers Big Sisters has been matching Littles with caring Bigs in fun and rewarding relationships since 1904. By participating in mentoring programs, young people are:

- 75% more likely to receive a four-year college degree
- 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs
- 53% less likely to skip school
- 37% less likely to skip a class

Who are Big Brothers and Big Sisters Volunteers?

- People who work and live in your community
- High school and college students from nearby schools
- Retirees
- Military personnel
- Members of faith communities or civic organizations
- Ordinary people that are extraordinary

What they all have in common is a sincere interest in supporting the Vision and Mission of Big Brothers Big Sisters. They are not paid – all of their time is volunteered.

How do we select Bigs?

BBBS staff make a professional decision about whether an applicant is eligible to mentor a Little after the applicant has completed an extensive screening process that includes:

- An application
- A criminal background and motor vehicle check
- At least three reference checks
- An in-person interview
- An orientation and training that helps prepare a mentor to support your child's healthy development

Who are Littles?

- Youth who would benefit from having a positive adult role model.
- All Littles and their parents/guardians agree to participate in our program and commit for one year.
- All interested applicants must submit an application and complete an in-person interview/orientation with a Program Coordinator. Information collected in the enrollment process will help our staff determine eligibility for our program. Upon acceptance, Littles are placed on a waiting list. Some Little's take longer to match than others depending on volunteer availability.
- Although the matching process may take some time, please know that we work hard to find appropriate matches for all waiting Littles. While waiting for a match, waiting Littles and their families are able to participate in many of our agency activities and events.

When Bigs and Littles get together, what do they do?

Matches typically meet 2-4 times a month (no more than once a week or 4 times per month) to enjoy low/no cost activities, such as playing catch, going to the park, doing arts/crafts, cooking, playing board games, or attending agency sponsored activities

SPECIAL INITIATIVES

BIG FUTURES: COLLEGE & CAREER READINESS – BBBS provides activities for our Littles to help prepare them for college and career. This includes such activities as: scholarship opportunities, hands on career exploration activities, help with completing job, college & scholarship applications, help with completing the FAFSA, etc. These activities are open to all current and past Littles as well as high school Bigs.



DR. POTTER BIGS ON CAMPUS MENTORING INITIATIVE – In partnership with our local colleges and school districts students will be bussed to a college campus where they will be matched with an employee of that college, graduate student or business professional from the community. They will meet twice a month on campus. The purpose of this initiative is to introduce the students to college and provide professional adult mentors to the students.

LGBTQ AND ALLY MENTORING INITIATIVE – We are an organization dedicated to inclusiveness and diversity. Big Brothers Big Sisters is actively looking for a diverse group of volunteers who identify as part of the LGBTQ community or consider themselves Allies to match Littles with Bigs who can provide a positive, supportive, and consistent mentor relationship.

TYPES OF BIGS

BIG – Individual who wants to positively impact the life of a child.

BIG DUOS – Two adults can team up to mentor a youth. “Duos” may be a spouse, significant other, or close friend. As a Big Duo, the two mentors provide a child with a team of support.

BIG FAMILIES – This opportunity allows a family to invite a child to join in on their family activities! A couple or individual with a child or children all benefit when adding a Little to their family.

HIGH SCHOOL BIGS – We provide a unique opportunity for high school students to volunteer as mentors in our school-based program. High school Bigs must be 9th grade or older.

MY ROLE AS A PARENT/GUARDIAN

- **Know about each scheduled activity and give approval in advance.**
- Assist in the establishment of boundaries.
- Communicate with the Big and with BBBS Staff often.
- Talk openly with your child after they return from BBBS activities.
- Encourage communication and ensure your child feels safe spending time with their Big.
- Communicate any concerns to the Big or BBBS Staff in a timely manner.

BBBS MATCH SUPPORT

BBBS works hard to support the relationship between Bigs and Littles.

Our goal is for the relationship to be as successful as possible for everyone.

Program Coordinators will discuss your match with you every month for the first year and quarterly after that.

This required communication allows us to:

- Ensure your child’s safety
- Provide support, feedback, and coaching

Your Program Coordinator is the main link between you, your child, the Big, and the agency. They will...

- Find information and resources that you might be interested in
- Connect you with community resources
- Keep you updated on activities offered by the agency
- Help you communicate with your child and their Big
- Work with you on any conflicts or challenges that may arise

Why Match Support is required:

- To discuss your child’s safety or well-being; this is our number one priority
- To discuss general concerns, or concerns you may have about your child’s Big
- To report any changes in address or phone number
- To report any important family changes
- To share success stories about your child’s progress or special honors

**If we are unable to reach you or your child after three attempts, the match may be suspended or even closed. Be sure to return phone calls within 3 business days to stay in good communication with your Program Coordinator.*

As an affiliate of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, **we are obligated to report on the progress of each match in our program on a scheduled basis.** If this contact is not maintained, it puts at risk our standing with the national BBBSA organization and our ability to provide match liability insurance for every Big in our program. Finally, by being aware of match activities and any issues that may arise, **we are better able to support your match.**

Your Role: We need you to be an active partner in helping to build a successful and meaningful friendship between your child and the Big.

BIG THINGS YOU COULD DO TO HELP

- Be welcoming to your child's Big!
- Share your concerns, hopes, and wishes for your child with your Program Coordinator.
- Help find the best times for outings to occur and make sure that your child is prepared: wearing proper clothing, ready on time, limited spending money if needed, etc.
- Make sure that you know details of each planned activity (and have given your approval in advance), when your child will be picked up, and when you can expect them back. Make a point of being home.
- Always ask about what the activities were, where they took place, who else was involved, and your child's feelings about the visit.
- During the first year, monthly calls from your BBBS Program Coordinator are required. After one-year, quarterly contacts are required with the parent/guardian, Little, and Big. Be prepared to discuss your child's experiences: What activities have they been involved in? What does your child say about the outings? What makes you happy about being in the program?
- Participate in agency sponsored events and activities. You can view and sign up for these events through our activity emails or by visiting our website: <https://www.bigdefenders.org/big-happenings-e-news/>
- Bigs are "older friends." They are not substitute parents, babysitters, disciplinarians, financial support, a taxi service, or counselors.
- Don't talk about your child with the Big when the child is present. If there is something you think the Big should know, call them when your child is away.
- Don't ask that siblings be included. This is special 1:1 time for your child.
- Time with a Big is special. Don't punish your child by saying they can't see their Big. Often, this 1:1 time will improve your child's overall behavior.
- Be flexible. Remember that the Big is a volunteer and has a busy schedule, too. Both you and the Big should make sure to call ahead to cancel any planned visits when needed.
- Help make sure that your child returns phone calls and stays in regular contact with the Big and the Program Coordinator. Regular contact is important to the success of the match.
- Parents/guardians are expected to pay for their portion of the activities and the Big will pay for their own portion. We encourage matches to do low or no cost activities and utilize the discounts that are offered to matches by agency partners in the community. We have many great community partners that offer discounts to matches. A current list can be found at <https://fundraise.givesmart.com/e/cJtaGA?vid=13kl45>.
- Give it time: This relationship needs time to develop – at least three months – so don't judge it too quickly.

CHILD SAFETY

Our Top Priority

We focus on the child's safety and well-being throughout the match, not just at the beginning. We want to work together to keep your child safe. While our staff carefully screens each volunteer, we need your help to make sure the relationship is healthy and the volunteer is making good judgments about your child's safety and wellbeing.

- Your approval is necessary for all activities. If you are not comfortable with an activity that the Big suggests, do not approve it, and notify your Program Coordinator.
- The Big should never ask your child to keep a secret.

If the following patterns arise, you should discuss them with your Program Coordinator:

- Your child's Big wants to spend more and more time with your child.
- Your child's Big is frequently buying them gifts.
- Your child's Big often invites other children to join their activities (siblings, child's friends, etc.).
- Activities always take place in private settings such as the volunteer's home, a camping setting, overnight visits, instead of more public settings.
- Your child's Big takes an excessive amount of pictures or videos of your child.

Work with your child to teach them skills to help keep them safe. Discuss these issues, and any other issues related to child safety, with your BBBS Program Coordinator. We want to work with you to keep your child safe. During the enrollment process you will be assigned a training titled "Your Child's Personal Safety." This is an optional training but will better prepare you to help us identify any safety concerns.

As a parent/guardian, you recognize the potential of your child better than anyone. By giving them the opportunity to be part of BBBS, you're starting them down a path to an even brighter, more promising future. We look forward to working with you and your child!

If at any time you have concerns regarding your child's match, please contact BBBS staff for support.

OFFICIAL POLICIES & GUIDELINES

Big Brothers Big Sisters requires all volunteers who work with children to abide by the following policies while they are involved in our program.

If you have questions about these policies or if the Big violates any of these policies, please contact the Program Team at 320.253.1616 immediately.

USE OF CHEMICALS BY BIGS:

BBBS requires volunteers to ensure that interactions are free from the influence of drugs and alcohol.

We prohibit volunteer Bigs from being under the influence of, or using, any substance (including alcohol, illicit drugs, and legal drugs, which includes medical cannabis and general cannabis use in jurisdictions that have legalized it, and prescription medications) that could potentially affect their judgment, driving, reaction time, or otherwise jeopardize a child's safety and well-being while the Little is in the volunteer Big's care or company.

Bigs are prohibited from the use of tobacco products and electronic cigarettes in front of their Littles.

Bigs must abide by any site or facility-based organizational drug and alcohol-free workplace policies.

* High school Bigs are expected to be a role model in and out of school and agree to be chemical free. If convicted of any type of drug/alcohol related offense they will lose their privilege to be a Big. High School Bigs must agree to not violate any Minnesota High School League rules; please refer to <https://www.mshsl.org/about/mshsl-handbook> (section 205 - Chemical Eligibility, and section 206 - Good Standing and Eligibility Requirements).

GIVING MEDICATION:

Bigs are not allowed to give Littles any medication (prescription/non-prescription) without written or electronic permission and administering directions from the parent/guardian.

FIREARM/WEAPON SAFETY:

Sometimes our work includes activities in locations where weapons may be present. We expect everyone who works with our agency to make child safety their primary consideration in such situations.

There may be times when it is appropriate for a Little to visit a location where firearms may be present or take part in hunter safety courses. Volunteers and staff must adhere to all requirements to protect child safety on these visits.

Weapons, firearms, and ammunition must be made inaccessible at all times to a child while in the volunteer Big's care unless participating in specific, approved activities that the parent/guardian and volunteer Big have approved in advance, and such approval is documented in the match file (e.g., hunter safety courses.)

All firearms must be locked/secured and inaccessible to the Little.

Personal firearm/carry and conceal: volunteer Bigs are prohibited from carrying, possessing, or using firearms, including but not limited to, pistols or other weapons while Littles are in the volunteer Big's care and while at BBBS sponsored events, at the BBBS office or at off-premise locations, unless for hunting or target practice purposes.

This policy applies to all volunteer Bigs, including, but not limited to, those who have a valid permit to conceal and carry.

When a law enforcement official must carry a weapon at all times as a condition of employment, staff must document the weapon-related job requirements as well as parent/guardian notification of the requirements and their approval of the condition prior to match.

Any firearms and/or weapons ownership by the volunteer Big applicant must be:

- Disclosed to agency staff at enrollment and throughout the life of the match;
- Disclosed to the child's parent/guardian by agency staff; and
- The volunteer Big must attest that any weapons, firearms, or ammunition owned are licensed, permitted, registered, and handled in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT:

It is BBBS' objective to resolve problems and complaints promptly, keep the resolution as close to the source as possible, and offer graduated steps for further discussion and resolution at higher levels of authority as necessary. Child safety is BBBS' highest priority in resolving conflicts among adults (e.g., between a Big and their Little's parent/guardian). We encourage the person who believes there is a problem to talk directly to the person with

whom they have a conflict. If the discussion does not resolve the issue, the adults involved in the conflict should discuss the situation with their Program Coordinator.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Given the nature of the program, our Bigs may be introduced to sensitive and extremely personal information about the child with whom they are matched. Every Big in the program must agree to treat all information pertaining to areas of concern and background with strict confidentiality. BBBS encourages confidentiality between the Big and Little. For a trusting relationship to develop, friends need to feel confident their thoughts and feelings will not be shared with others without their permission. However, there are certain things that must not be kept secret:

- Concerns about the health or well-being of a Little should be discussed with their Program Coordinator.
- Anytime a Big learns about or suspects physical, emotional, or sexual abuse or neglect the Big and/or BBBS is required by law to report the actions to the proper authorities. The Program Coordinator should be used to help facilitate this process.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN (BBBSCM) prioritizes child safety, confidentiality and the privacy of program participants. All electronic documentation is maintained in a safe, secure file via Matchforce. Our confidentiality policy, which addresses program participants' information and the limits of confidentiality is signed by all program participants and staff.

BBBSCM asks all volunteers who are accepted into the program to recognize that their personal information available on the Internet can be viewed by Littles and their families. Volunteers are expected to be positive role models on all Internet websites that are accessible to the public, their Littles and their Littles' families.

BBBSCM may search public information on the Internet about each volunteer. Volunteers must confirm parental consent prior to posting pictures or personal information of any BBBSCM youth or BBBSCM family. BBBSCM requires its volunteers to respect the confidentiality and privacy of the children and families of BBBSCM in regard to social networking and Internet technology. The volunteer must adhere to all state and federal laws where applicable.

BBBSCM recognizes that social media, and other digital technology is an integral communication tool. In general, personal use of social media sites is typically for communications between peers, including friends and family. Not all social networking sites are designed to support mentoring relationships. BBBSCM encourages volunteers to interact with their youth on a one- to-one, in-person basis, but understands that there are certain circumstances where the use of social media is acceptable with specific authorizations and safeguards to ensure a mentee's safety, confidentiality, and privacy. When necessary to communicate outside of face to face, BBBS encourages matches to communicate on a BBBS provided or approved platform.

As a condition of being a Big, volunteers must abide by these Social Media Guidelines. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in termination of their match.

Social Media/Digital Technology Guidelines

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It is the policy of BBBS/SCM that all agency volunteers, youth, and Parent/Guardians who engage in the use of digital technology (texting, video chats) and/or social networking, which includes, but not limited to social media, blogs, wikis, Twitter, Facebook, etc., agree:

1. To remain a positive role model in all postings and/or communications.
2. To respect our youth, families, staff and volunteers' privacy and dignity.
3. To honor privacy and confidentiality by not sharing confidential information about a youth, family, volunteer, employee or BBBS, or use their image without consent, even in a private forum.
4. To model healthy boundaries when communicating over social media/digital technology. Examples: To use prudent judgement in the time and manner in which you are contacting each other.
5. To be transparent in interactions.
6. To be aware of surroundings especially when utilizing video technology.
7. To ensure privacy controls and settings restrict accessibility of youth in the program to only age-appropriate content when using any device while in the care of the volunteer.
8. To speak respectfully about BBBS and those affiliated with BBBS and refrain from posting information that reflects negatively on BBBS or any match participants.
9. To report any potentially inappropriate content immediately to BBBS.
10. To abide by any other policy or procedure that BBBS may put into effect regarding social media, social networking and/or digital technology.
11. Most social media platforms have requirements that minors be age 13 before using the service. Mentors should not connect with youth under the age of 13 on social media.
12. To adhere to all local, state and federal laws.

Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in the termination of your match.

CHILD SAFETY GUIDELINES

The following safety rules were designed to protect program participants from harm, identify potential areas of risk, and define ways to minimize liability. Bigs will be expected to follow these rules while matched with a Little. Contact us at 320.253.1616 with any questions or concerns.

PERSONAL BOUNDARIES:

- Respect the need for personal space and privacy.
- Provide separate/private areas to use the restroom, change, or bathe.
- Showering or bathing together is not permitted.
- Affection is best expressed through positive or affirming comments.
- Physical affection may be expressed using a handshake, high five, pat on the back, or hug if permission is obtained prior to engaging in any form of physical contact.
- Sitting on laps, massage, or touch of any private areas (genitals, breasts, buttocks) is not permitted.
- Wrestling and tickling is not permitted between Bigs and Littles.
- Bigs are never allowed to sleep or nap with their Little in the same bed, sleeping bag, or sofa.
- Contact your Program Coordinator if there are any concerns about boundaries or expressions of affection.
- Consult with parent/guardian before discussing values, sexuality, religion, and/or life choices with a Little.
- Never come between the parent/guardian and their child. Respect the parental role/authority.

DISCIPLINE/SETTING LIMITS:

- Verbally, physically, and/or emotionally abusive means of discipline are never allowed.
- State expectations for behavior and set appropriate boundaries.

- Verbally address behavior concerns and clarify what needs to change or happen.
- If the Little does not respond to verbal redirections for concerning behavior, inform the parent/guardian, take the Little home, and inform the Program Coordinator.

ABUSE, NEGLECT, MALTREATMENT, AND SAFETY ISSUES:

- Both Bigs and BBBS staff are mandated reporters.
- Consult with the Program Coordinator if you suspect abuse, neglect, maltreatment, or safety issues.
- If there is immediate danger, contact legal authorities and follow up with BBBS after the call has been made.

INVOLVING FAMILY MEMBERS/FRIENDS ON MATCH ACTIVITIES:

- Matches are designed primarily as one-to-one relationships, apart from Big Duos and Big Families.
- Parent/guardian permission is needed if another adult will be participating in a match activity.

SUPERVISION AND TRANSPORTATION OF LITTLE:

- Bigs are responsible for the supervision of their Littles at all times from start to finish of a match activity.
- At no time should the Little be left unsupervised or left with someone else during a match activity.
- Others are not allowed to transport Littles (friends, family, roommates, partners, etc.).

RIDING IN OR OPERATING MOTOR VEHICLES:

- General safety rules must be followed and factory installed seatbelts must be used by all occupants.
- The Minnesota Safety Council recommends children under the age of 13 sit in the back seat. Children should be 4'9" tall and/or 90 pounds before sitting in a front seat with airbags.
- If a child or other person tests positive for COVID-19 and has been in the volunteer's personal vehicle, clean and disinfect the vehicle as soon as possible.
- Smoking or vaping in a vehicle while transporting a child is strictly prohibited.
- Cell phone use is limited to handsfree function for conversations or texting.
- Minnesota Law states: Children 4 years old AND have outgrown the forward-facing seat with internal harness by height or weight must ride restrained in a belt-positioning booster seat using the lap belt and shoulder belt. Children who are 9 years old or have outgrown the booster seat AND the child can pass the [five-step test](#) must ride restrained with a lap belt and shoulder belt secured correctly on the vehicle seat.

GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH USING UBER/LYFT TO BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS' EVENTS

- Families are encouraged to reach out to Big Brothers Big Sisters to discuss transportation options when it is a barrier for their child/children to attend a Big Brothers Big Sisters' agency sponsored activity.
- If a family decides to use hired transportation it is recommended that families use [Uber Teen](#) when the child is riding without an adult present. Only youth ages 13 and older can ride in an Uber alone. The family must have a signed waiver on file prior to using Uber.
- Youth under age 13 can ride in an Uber without their parent/guardian if an older sibling (between 13 and 17) rides with them.
- Lyft doesn't allow riders under the age of 18 to ride alone, therefore Lyft should only be used when the youth is 18+
- If a family decides to use Uber, we ask that they notify Big Brothers Big Sisters prior to the start of an activity so Big Brothers Big Sisters staff is aware of this and what the plans are to get home.
- If the family is using Uber for the ride home, they should schedule the ride 10 to 15 minutes before the activity ends, so the Uber arrives by the time it ends. The child should wait with a Big Brothers Big Sisters staff until the Uber arrives and wait to get into the vehicle until the Big Brothers Big Sisters staff person says it is okay for them to get in.

GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH WALKING TO AND FROM BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS' EVENTS

- Families are encouraged to reach out to Big Brothers Big Sisters when transportation is a barrier for their child/children to attend a Big Brothers Big Sisters agency sponsored activity to discuss transportation options.
- With parent/guardian permission, youth 13 and older may walk to and from an activity alone if the distance is under half a mile. Youth under 13 may walk to and from an activity with an older sibling if the distance is under half a mile. Time of day and time of year should be taken into consideration when deciding if walking is an option.
- If a family decides to allow their child/children to walk, we ask that they notify Big Brothers Big Sisters prior to the start of an activity so Big Brothers Big Sisters staff is aware of this and what the plans are to get home.
- If a family decides to allow their child/ren to walk to and from an activity, they must have a signed waiver on file prior to doing so.

PET CARE/CONTROL:

- Introduce pets carefully considering the temperament of the pet and any fears and/or allergies.
- Establish boundaries and talk about appropriate care and treatment of a pet.
- Always maintain safety and control of the pet while following all local ordinances and rules.

PUBLIC RESTROOMS:

- Bigs are instructed to walk the Little to any public restroom to ensure safety and wait for the Little either in the restroom if there are stalls or just outside of the restroom.

GIFT GIVING, DONATIONS, AND WORK FOR PAY:

- Gifts for birthdays, holidays, special events, or recognition of personal achievements are acceptable. Bigs must inform their Program Coordinator if they purchase a gift for their Little. The value of the gift should not exceed \$25. Staying in the \$5 to \$10 range is preferred. Giving gifts is not an expectation.

THE LITTLE GETS SICK:

- Inform the parent/guardian of their Little's symptoms and take the Little home.
- Never give medication to a Little unless written permission from the parent/guardian is obtained.

ACCIDENT OR INJURY:

- Non-Emergency:
 - Apply basic first aid (bandage, ice, etc.).
 - Decide whether the activity can continue.
 - Notify your Little's parent/guardian of the injury.
- Emergency
 - Make the necessary arrangements to address medical needs.
 - Notify your Little's parent/guardian.
 - Report accident/injury to your Program Coordinator.

NOT PERMITTED ACTIVITIES (not covered by Big Brothers Big Sisters liability insurance):

- Activities that involve free falling such as bungee jumping, hang gliding, parachuting, or parasailing.
- Flights on private planes, helicopters, sailplanes, hot air balloons, or blimps.

ACTIVITIES PERMITTED ONLY WITH EXTREME CAUTION AT ALL TIMES. All safety guidelines must be followed. Parent/Guardian permission must be obtained prior to the Little's participation:

- Activities involving shooting projectiles at another person (paintball, airsoft, etc.) Protective gear must be worn.
- Boating, wakeboarding, and water skiing. Aerial tricks are not allowed. Life jackets must be worn.

- Personal watercraft. Proper certification must be obtained prior to operation. Life jackets must be worn. Littles are only allowed to be passengers until they complete the proper certification.
- All-terrain vehicles (ATVs), including three-wheelers, four-wheelers, snowmobiles, motorcycles, dirt bikes, and go carts. Helmets must be worn. Littles are only allowed to be passengers until they complete the proper certification.
- Rock climbing. Free climbing is not allowed.
- Scuba diving in pool only.
- White water rafting only with a professional/certified guide or proper certification.

CERTIFICATION AVAILABLE THROUGH MN DNR:

- Certification to operate a snowmobile, ATV, watercraft, or firearm can take place at the age of 12. For more information on these and other certification classes check out <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/es/index.html>.

RETURNING CHILD HOME AFTER A MATCH ACTIVITY:

- Meet your child at the door to ensure their safety.
- Check in with the Big to see how the activity went. Communicate any concerns privately.

MOVIES, VIDEO GAMES, MEDIA, AND INTERNET GUIDELINGS

Bigs and parent/guardians are responsible for determining age-appropriate content/ratings in all media forms when with their Little.

- Viewing rated R (under 17 requires a parent/guardian) or NC-17 (no one under 17 admitted) movies or playing video games rated M (Mature-17+) is not allowed.
- Exercise caution and careful consideration when viewing movies rated PG-13 (parents strongly cautioned—some material may be inappropriate for children under 13) or playing video games rated T (content suitable for ages 13 and older) with your Little. If the Little is under the age of 13, the Big must get the parent/guardian’s permission first.
- Viewing content with explicit sex, graphic violence, or pornography is not acceptable while with a Little.
- Consult with your Program Coordinator for further consultation or clarification of these rules

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Who should report suspected child abuse or neglect?

Anyone may voluntarily report suspected child abuse, neglect or exploitation to the appropriate local child protection or law enforcement agency. Minnesota law requires professionals who work with children and families and their delegates to make a child protection report if they know, or have reason to believe:

- A child is being neglected or abused.
- A child has been neglected or abused within the preceding three years.

This applies to all BBBS staff and all Bigs. It is against the law to **not** report suspected abuse or neglect to a local child protection or law enforcement agency. All Bigs are mandated reporters.

Anyone who reports child abuse in good faith is immune from civil liability. The reporter's name is confidential and accessible only if the reporter consents or by court order. The inconvenience of reporting is offset by one simple fact: the action you take could save the life and spirit of a child and provide a family with much needed support.

Immediate danger - If you know or suspect that a child has been abandoned or is in immediate danger (such as recent sexual assault or a serious physical assault), contact your local law enforcement agency immediately.

No immediate danger - If the child is not in immediate danger, but you have reason to believe a child has been maltreated:

- Contact your Program Coordinator immediately. They are there to assist and offer support during the reporting process.
- Reports need to be made within a 24-hours after the suspected abuse or neglect has occurred. A written report is required within 72 hours of the report.
- Contact the child protection unit of the county social service agency of the county in which the child resides.

If you are unsure whether you should make a report, contact your Program Coordinator and they will assist you.

DRESS CODE

Bigs and Littles are asked to dress appropriately.

- Be aware of logos and designs on clothing and baseball caps to ensure that they are suitable for children. Inappropriate examples include logos/designs using alcohol or drugs, vulgar language, sexually explicit...
- Undergarments should not be visible at any time, including while bending or reaching.
- Tops should be modest and cover your stomach and chest.

ACTIVITIES IN THE BIG'S HOME/CABIN

Sometimes, that may include youth visits to a volunteer's home (including cabin or lake home). Home visits are only allowed for Community-based and Site-based Plus matches. Safety is our number one priority in these interactions. Failure to comply with this policy may result in immediate match suspension or closure.

At minimum, the following criteria must be met:

- A waiting period of at least three (3) months before a child can visit a volunteer's home (including cabin or lake home);
- Documented pre-approval by parents/guardians and staff before the youth can begin visits to a volunteer's home;

- A documented professional assessment of healthy relationship development between a match before a child can visit a volunteer's home;
- Volunteer, Child, and Parent/Guardian are in compliance with the match agreement and all program policies and ground rules are being followed;
- The Volunteer and Child completed the three-month Strength of Relationship Survey.
- Procedures for staff monitoring of safety levels and frequency of child visits to volunteer's homes throughout the life of the match. The Program Coordinator will regularly assess safety levels and frequency of match activities in the volunteer's home when completing match support contacts with all match parties (Volunteer, Child & Parent/Guardian).

Through match support contacts with all match participants (child, parent/guardian, and volunteer), program staff will monitor the promotion of a healthy relationship throughout the match (especially early in the match relationship), safety levels of activities that take place in the volunteer's homes, and reinforce personal safety education provided to children, parents/guardians, and volunteers during enrollment.

OVERNIGHT MATCH ACTIVITIES

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America agencies must have a policy that **prohibits overnight visits with rare exceptions**, listed below. This policy applies to those **enrolled in the Community-based program** (not school-based, site-based, or BIG Partners) **for at least 48 months**. Matches transferring from other programs to the Community-based program are only eligible for overnights 48 months from the date they become a Community-based match.

It is the policy of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN to prohibit overnight visits generally. Exceptions to this policy may be allowed if ONE of the following criteria has been met AND required authorizations have been documented:

- Genuine concern exists for the safety of a child returning to their own home (emergency circumstances)
- OR The agency formally designates an event as
 - (1) providing an exceptionally significant developmental or educational benefit to a youth, and
 - (2) not possible unless the Big accompanies the Little (e.g., a college visit)

The agency's Executive Director or Program Director may authorize an exception to the policy prohibiting overnight visits AFTER the following steps have been taken and documented:

- Confirmation that the match relationship has been in place for at least twenty-four months in a community-based match
- Assessment of healthy relationship development between match parties with no serious violations of agency policy including the code of conduct
- Preapproval by parents/guardians, youth, and professional staff with the exception of an emergent circumstance (see above)
- Arrangements for privacy in sleeping, changing clothes, bathing/showering
- Consideration of reasonable alternatives
- Staff monitoring for any safety concerns following the event

Match parties are expected to follow BBBS child safety policies and procedures at all times.

The Program Coordinator will compile all relevant documentation and submit it to the Executive Director or Program Director within ten business days prior to an overnight visit occurring. Once approved, this approval will be documented in the electronic match record.

Within three (3) business days of an overnight match activity, the Program Coordinator will conduct and document a follow-up call with the volunteer, parent/guardian, and child to discuss the overnight visit, assess for safety, and determine whether policy guidelines were followed.

No out-of-country travel will be allowed.

All overnight visits must adhere to the following criteria during the entire time of the visit:

- The Big is responsible for the supervision and for providing a safe and secure environment for their Little.
- The Little is not left unsupervised or in the care of someone else.
- Use of alcohol, drugs, or tobacco is prohibited when with their Little.
- Separate sleeping spaces are a must. Under no circumstances will a Big and a Little sleep in the same bed, sleeping bag, or sofa.
- Private space is used when changing clothing. Neither the Big nor the Little will undress or change clothing in front of the other.

VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

This is what we ask all of our volunteer Bigs to agree to:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN provides children and youth with safe, quality mentoring relationships with caring adults who serve as volunteers. Our Bigs teach by example the importance of giving and giving back, of staying in school, and of having respect for family, peers, and community. As a Big, you share with your Little, their parents/guardians, and the agency, a commitment to fostering a safe, enjoyable, meaningful, and healthy mentoring relationship by observing our code of conduct.

I agree to conduct myself in a manner consistent with my position as a positive role model to a child/youth, and as a representative of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN.

I will not inflict any physical, sexual, emotional, or other abuse or exploitation on children and/or youth.

I will use respectful and appropriate language in all interactions with my Little and avoid use of the following: profanity, derogatory terms, inappropriate jokes, name calling, or discussion of intimate personal details of my life.

I will respect my Little's personal space and boundaries and avoid inappropriate physical contact, including tickling, wrestling, sitting on laps, back rubs, etc.

I will provide fair treatment to youth and their family, no matter gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, disability, medical needs, and/or sexual orientation.

The Big-Little relationship is based on mutual respect. I agree to treat my Little and their family in a respectful manner at all times.

I agree to notify BBBS immediately of any safety issues in the life of my Little that I become aware of in the course of volunteering.

I understand that failure to adhere to this code of conduct may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Both kids who are bullied and who bully others may have [serious, lasting problems](#).

As defined by the state of Minnesota, “bullying” means intimidating, threatening, abusive, or harming conduct that is objectively offensive. In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- **An Imbalance of Power:** Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- **Intent to Cause Harm:** actions done by accident are not bullying; the person bullying has a goal to cause harm.
- **Repetition:** Bullying behaviors often happen, or have the potential to happen, more than once to the same person.

TYPES OF BULLYING:

- **Verbal:** name-calling, teasing, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, threatening to cause harm
- **Social:** spreading rumors, purposefully leaving people out, breaking up friendships, embarrassing someone in public
- **Physical:** hitting, kicking, pinching, punching, shoving, pushing, spitting, tripping, taking someone’s things
- **Cyberbullying:** bullying using technology or other electronic communication, including, but not limited to, a transfer of a sign, signal, writing, image, sound, or data, including a post on a social network, internet website, or forum, transmitted through a computer, cell phone, or other electronic device.

No single factor puts a child at risk of being bullied or bullying others. Bullying can happen anywhere—cities, suburbs, or rural towns. Depending on the environment, some groups—such as [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning \(LGBTQ\) youth, youth with disabilities](#), and socially isolated youth—may be at an increased risk of being bullied. [Stigma](#) can also spread false and harmful information that can lead to increasing rates of bullying, harassment, and hate crimes against certain groups of people.

Steps you can take to help a child in a bullying situations

- Contact the program coordinator, teacher, or principal with concerns.
- Keep notes of any witnessed bullying or take a screenshot of cyberbullying.
- Encourage your little to keep a journal about the highs and lows they experience each day.
- Ensure there is a plan in place to keep the child safe at school.
- Encourage respect for all people. Repeat expectations of honesty, empathy, responsibility, and kindness.
- For more information and help handling a bullying situation, check out the resources listed below.

Resource: <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/fam/safesupp/> - The *Minnesota Department of Education’s* website dedicated to safe and supportive schools.

Resource: StopBullying.gov - An official U.S. Government Web site managed by the [Department of Health & Human Services](#) in partnership with the [Department of Education](#) and [Department of Justice](#).

TOP 10 SUCCESSFUL MATCH RECOMMENDATIONS

1. KEEP APPOINTMENTS & BE CONSISTENT.

- When you follow through and show up on time for activities, it sends a positive message that you value the match and the time you spend together, which will help build trust in the relationship.
- Contact the Big when you can't keep an activity appointment to keep communication open and honest.

2. COMMUNICATE OPENLY & REGULARLY.

- Schedule all activities through the Big, not the Little, and be sure to let Big know of any schedule changes.
- Be honest about match activities or actions you are not comfortable or happy with.

3. MAINTAIN MONTHLY CONTACT WITH BBBS.

- Monthly check-ins with your Program Coordinator are required for the first year to ensure that your Child is safe and happy in the match. If BBBS is unable to contact you on a monthly basis, they are unable to help the match through any challenges that may arise. If BBBS is unable to reach you after 3 attempts, your match may be suspended or closed.
- Returning all phone calls, emails, or letters from BBBS will help ensure a strong, healthy match.

4. SET BOUNDARIES & KEEP THEM.

- Discuss clear expectations with your child before the match begins meeting on their own. Discuss your expectations for their behavior when with their Big. Make it clear that your child is not to ask the Big for gifts or money spent on activities. The focus of the match is solely on developing a friendship.
- Address concerns as they arise – do not wait until it becomes a larger issue.

5. BE PATIENT.

- BBBS has worked hard to match you and your Little based on shared interests, but that does not mean friendships form overnight. Take the time to check in with your child's Big before and after each activity. Your teamwork and affirmations will help your child feel more comfortable participating with BBBS.

6. MAKE A CALENDAR.

- Talk about what days and times of the week work best for activities for both their schedule and yours.
- Having a common meeting day can help cut down on rescheduling and communication issues.

7. CREATE A BUDGET.

- Discuss at the match meeting or privately on the phone, what the budget will be for activities – including how much you both are willing to contribute. Money is often a sticky subject, but the sooner a budget is discussed, the more relaxed you and your child's Big will be in the match.
- Talk with your child about the budget you agreed on, and let them know not to ask for additional activities of money spent beyond what was agreed upon.

8. BE FLEXIBLE.

- Everyone has busy lives these days, including you, your Little, and their parent/guardian. Sometimes activities must be cancelled or rescheduled. Cancelling or rescheduling with as much notice as possible will keep the match running smoothly.

9. HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS.

- Remember that friendships and change take time. The impact of the match may not be easy to see, especially early on, but to prevent frustration and burnout, focus on consistent activities and the fun they are having together.

10. ENJOY YOUR TIME WITH BBBS!

- Thank you for partnering with us to defend your child's potential!

MATCH COMPLETION

Addressing Completion in the Match

Most mentoring relationships end at some point. Sometimes they end because the match just doesn't fit, one of the parties has moved or changed schools, or life circumstances have changed. Whatever the reason, positive match completion is an important part of healthy relationship management. Listed below are some important aspects of successful match completion.

Remember Closure in Your Life

First, consider a time in your life when you experienced the end of an important relationship; perhaps a break-up, divorce, etc. How did this event make you feel? How was it handled? How could it have been addressed in a different, more positive way? What practices do you have regarding endings and transitions?

Consider Your Child

Next, consider how ending the relationship may affect your child. Your child may feel they are at fault, feel hurt, abandoned, or angry. They may also act indifferent. If handled inappropriately, completion can have a very negative impact on a child.

Acknowledge Emotions

It is helpful to acknowledge your own emotions and the emotions of your child. Match completion is common and honesty around the situation is most helpful. Consider this an opportunity to handle saying goodbye in the most healthy, respectful way. If addressed properly, match completion can be a positive experience.

Steps to Completion

It is the commitment of BBBS to assure closure is handled in the most respectful, positive manner possible. Therefore, we ask all participants to participate actively in completion and adhere to the following steps:

- Notify your Program Coordinator as soon as the need for completion is identified.
- Develop a completion plan with your Program Coordinator.
- Work with your Child's Big and the Program Coordinator to arrange a final closure activity.
- Focus on the positive aspects of the match. Perhaps share photos, stories, etc. Matches often make a farewell project such as a memory book or cards.
- Allow an opportunity to discuss completion if they desire.
- Acknowledge that the closure can also be difficult for your child. Use this event as an opportunity for a teachable moment. Discuss how moving on is a part of life.
- Discuss with your child's Big what you can expect from them going forward. Do they plan to stay in touch with your child? If so, how? What will it look like?
- Complete closure questions with the Program Coordinator. This is a requirement, especially if your child would like to be re-matched.

BBBS appreciates your commitment and follow-through in this process. We recognize this can be very difficult for all involved. We are dedicated to supporting you in match completion and hope you will work with us to ensure a positive mentoring experience for all involved.

BIG HAPPENINGS

Big Happenings is a weekly activities email newsletter highlighting upcoming activities being offered by our agency for matches and various other opportunities in the community that your match can take advantage of. Find past issues of the Big Happenings [here](#).

Agency Sponsored Activities take place often. These events are a great way to meet other matches and staff members. A few examples include ice skating, movies, fishing, and picnics. You can learn about activities through the Big Happenings activity emails or by visiting our website: BigDefenders.org/Calendar.

We offer several **Special Events** for matches/Bigs to participate in throughout the year including an annual picnic, the Big Celebration for matches that honors our volunteers, and our annual Go Big for Kids' events. Events vary from year to year and will be listed in the Big Happenings.

CONNECT WITH US ONLINE

There are more ways than ever to connect with the BBBS community online. Share ideas and receive agency updates by searching for **"Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Minnesota."** You can find us on:



Like us on Facebook [@BigDefenders](#) and visit BIGDEFENDERS.ORG for agency news, activity information, merchandise, photo galleries, and more.

SPREAD THE WORD

If you know someone who you think would be a wonderful Big, encourage that person to apply.

If you would like posters or brochures for advertisement, let us know!

We are always looking for Bigs!

In summary, the top 3 Expectations for Parents/Guardians are:

1. Know what your child is doing with their Big.
2. Communicate any concerns to BBBS staff.
3. Be an active partner!

FEDERATED CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY



The three Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies in Minnesota (BBBS of Central Minnesota, BBBS of the Greater Twin Cities, and BBBS of Southern Minnesota), through generous donations from the Federated Insurance Foundation and the donors to the Federated Challenge, have established a scholarship program to assist current and past Littles, as well as High School Bigs, who plan to continue their education in a non-four year postsecondary program at an accredited Minnesota school that is focused on apprenticeship, certificate, trade school, technical, or community college. Scholarships are offered each year for study at an accredited institution of the student's choice.

Eligibility:

Applicants to the Federated Challenge Scholarship for Big Brothers Big Sisters Agencies in Minnesota must:

- Be a current or past Little or High School Big for a minimum period of 18 months prior to application deadline date and have been matched through either Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Twin Cities, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Minnesota, or Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southern Minnesota.
- Be a U.S. citizen or have permanent resident status.
- Have attained a high school diploma or GED (or will have graduated prior to the term for which the scholarship application is being submitted).
- Be enrolled or plan to enroll part-time or full-time in a non-four-year program at an accredited Minnesota postsecondary school that is focused on apprenticeship, certificate, trade school, technical, or community college.
- Have a minimum grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale (or equivalent).
- Have completed the FAFSA.

Awards:

- If selected as a recipient, the student will receive an award ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000. Funding can be applied toward tuition, fees, books, and other necessary expenses related to the particular program or training (i.e. tools, materials, cookware, etc.).
- Scholarships are a one-time award. Students may re-apply each year, but funding cannot exceed \$5,000 per year, and will not continue beyond the established time necessary to complete the program or degree.

To Apply:

- Application deadline: Please check website.
- Click here to apply: <https://bbbs.tfaforms.net/4842163>
- Contact Ann Matvick at Ann@BigDefenders.org or (320) 258-4517 if you have any questions.

BRIANNA KRUZEL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

BriAnna Kruzel Memorial Scholarship

BriAnna Kruzel is a former Little Sister and High School Big Sister (Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN), who passed away suddenly and unexpectedly in September 2013. BriAnna's family would like to honor her memory by awarding a scholarship to a High School Senior who is a current/past Little or High School Big who demonstrates some of the same characteristics of BriAnna.

BriAnna's experience with the Big Brothers Big Sisters program was quite unique. When her father was deployed in Iraq, BriAnna began as a Little Sister. Years later, BriAnna decided to become a High School Big Sister to provide a mentoring experience to another child. BriAnna was matched with a Little Sister whose father was deployed overseas, which helped them form an instant bond. BriAnna was able to relate to her Little Sister and provide advice and support. BriAnna was a dedicated friend and mentor for over two years. She was selected as the 2013 High School Big Sister of the Year for her outstanding commitment to the program and her Little Sister. She was also honored by the St. Cloud Optimist Club with the "Youth Appreciation Award" for her work with Big Brothers Big Sisters.



BriAnna was a hardworking, dedicated student who worked diligently at achieving the best grades that she could. BriAnna may not have always received the "A" that she was striving for, but she would never throw in the towel. BriAnna believed strongly in giving and volunteering. She was an active member of Big Brothers Big Sisters, volunteered with Sartell Community Education, her church, and would help anyone in need of assistance. She was also a person who believed in loving each and every person that she came across. She was strong in her faith, she didn't judge, and was compassionate towards everyone. BriAnna had a contagious smile that would light up a room.

Since BriAnna passed away, her family and friends have decided to live out the mission of WWBD by evaluating situations in their own lives by asking themselves "What Would Bri Do?" Check out <https://brislodge.com/> for more information on support with the loss of a loved one.

BriAnna's family would like to honor her memory by awarding a current/past Little or High School Big with a \$500 scholarship to a college of their choice. Payment of scholarship will be awarded after submitting proof of completion of first semester of college.

Eligibility:

- The applicant must be a current/past Little or High School Big in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN program.
- The applicant must be a senior in high school.
- The applicant must have been matched thru Big Brothers Big Sisters for at least 18 months.

To Apply:

- Application deadline: Check website for date.
- Click here to apply: <https://bbbs.tfaforms.net/4843657>
- Contact Ann Matvick at Ann@BigDefenders.org or (320) 258-4517 with any questions.

DAHLIAS ALONGSIDE GRAND LAKE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY

Dahlias Alongside Grand Lake Scholarship

Thanks to the generosity of past and current Big Brothers Daniel Weidner & Nathan Molitor, we are excited to offer two scholarships for current and former Littles in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Minnesota program who are graduating from high school or currently attending college.

Dan and Nate have both been involved in the BBBS program as Big Brothers. They believe Big Brothers Big Sisters is an important organization that defends the potential of youth. This scholarship was established to support students in Central Minnesota as Dan and Nate both believe education plays a key role in unleashing someone's full potential.



DAHLIAS
ALONGSIDE GRAND LAKE
SCHOLARSHIP

"Education is the key to unlocking the world, a passport to freedom." -Oprah Winfrey

Award

One \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to a current or former Little graduating from high school. A second \$1,000 scholarship will be awarded to one current or former Little currently enrolled in a post-secondary institution. The awards will be paid to the educational institution on behalf of each student. Funds may be used for tuition, fees, books, and other necessary expenses. Payment of scholarship will be awarded after submitting proof of completion of the first semester of college.

Eligibility

- The applicant must be a current or former Little in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN program for at least 18 months.
- The applicant must be a senior in high school planning to attend college part-time or full-time or a college student currently enrolled at a trade, technical or community college, or a 4-year college/university.

To Apply:

- Application deadline: Check website for date.
- Click here to apply: <https://bbbs.tfaforms.net/5002995>
- Contact Ann Matvick at Ann@BigDefenders.org or (320) 258-4517 with any questions.

AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

General Line 320.253.1616
 Fax 320.253.1702
 Toll Free 1.888.600.1616

Address 203 Cooper Avenue North
 Suite 162
 St. Cloud, MN 56303

PROGRAM SUPPORT TEAM

www.bigdefenders.org/our-leadership-team

	<u>Direct Line</u>	<u>Email</u>
Ann Matvick (Program Director)	320.258.4517	Ann@BigDefenders.org
<u>Enrollment</u>		
Tasha Bruns-Notsch (Lead)	320.258.4516	Tasha@BigDefenders.org
Katherine Swanson	320.258.4532	Katherine@BigDefenders.org
<u>Community Based</u>		
Mary Bellefeuille (Lead)	320.258.4538	Mary@BigDefenders.org
Kylie Nelson	320.258.4519	Kylie@BigDefenders.org
<u>School/Site Based</u>		
Robyn Rieland (Lead)	320.258.4512	Robyn@BigDefenders.org
Madeline Briekos	763.688.0205	Madeline@BigDefenders.org
Callie Huus	320.258.4530	Callie@BigDefenders.org
Raquel Minkel	320.241.7996	Raquel@BigDefenders.org

After hours emergency contact: Jackie Johnson 320.292.9235 or Ann Matvick 320.258-4517

HUMAN SERVICE AGENCIES/CHILD PROTECTION

Benton County 320.968.5087
 Morrison County 320.632.2951
 Stearns County 320.656.6000
 Sherburne County 763.765.4000
 Wright County 763.682.7400

COMMUNITY HELP LINE

United Way 2-1-1

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Benton County 320.968.7201
 Morrison County 320.632.9233
 Stearns County 320.251.4240
 Sherburne County 763.765.4000
 Wright County 763.682.1162

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND BIGS

www.bigdefenders.org/resources

LGBTQ RESOURCES

www.bigdefenders.org/lgbtq