



# VOLUNTEER BIG 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.

## 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 in 9<sup>th</sup> grade or older.

## BENEFITS OF BECOMING A BIG

- It's FUN! Being a Big, Big Duo, Big Family, or High School Big is a rewarding and enjoyable experience.
- Leave a legacy through your gift of friendship.
- Impact the future through your Little.
- Meet other Bigs and Littles.
- Provide opportunities for your Little to participate in college & career readiness activities and apply for scholarships.

## COMMUNITY-BASED MENTOR (Big, Big Duo, or Big Family)

**POSITION SUMMARY** – Bigs in the community-based program provide friendship, emotional support, and hope to young people with whom they are matched.

**COMMITTMENT** – Bigs must commit to one year of friendship with your Little, meeting 2 to 4 times a month.

## SCHOOL/SITE-BASED MENTOR (Big)

**POSITION SUMMARY** – Bigs in the school/site-based programs provide friendship, emotional support, and hope to young people with whom they are matched. They meet with their Littles ONLY on school/site grounds, except for agency-supervised activities. School/site-based Bigs are not allowed to provide transportation to their Littles under any circumstances.

**COMMITTMENT** – Commit to one year of friendship with your Little, with activities 2 to 4 times per month (during school year) for approximately one hour at the school/site. Bigs should expect to maintain communication over school breaks and summer months via phone, mail, email, or in person by attending BBBS staffed activities.

## HIGH SCHOOL BIG (Big)

**POSITION SUMMARY** – High School Bigs in the school-based program provide friendship, emotional support, and hope to young people with whom they are matched. They meet with their Littles ONLY on school grounds, with the exception of agency-sponsored activities. High School Bigs are not allowed to provide transportation to their Littles under any circumstances.

**COMMITTMENT** – Commit to one year of friendship with your Little, with meeting once a week, for approximately one hour at the designated location. Bigs are expected to maintain communication over school breaks and summer months via phone, email, mail, or in person by attending BBBS staffed activities.

# ADULT VOLUNTEER BIG POSITION DESCRIPTION

## RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Put the Little's safety and well-being first.
- Decide activities together with your Little.
- Be consistent, dependable, and patient.
- Acknowledge the positive impact on the Little comes after trust has been built.
- Have realistic expectations.
- Set boundaries and limits.

## QUALIFICATIONS:

- As a representative of BBBS, Bigs must demonstrate a willingness to uphold the Vision and Mission of BBBS.
- As a representative of BBBS, Bigs must demonstrate a willingness to uphold the Accountability Statement and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement of BBBS.
- Bigs must be 18 years of age or older and have completed high school or equivalent.
- Bigs must agree to participate in the background check and enrollment process specific to their volunteer status at BBBS.
  - Provide information regarding other youth serving involvements.
  - Provide their social security number, complete a background check, and prior agency involvement.
  - Provide a release of information authorization for criminal history checks, driving record checks, and counseling reports.
- Bigs must be able to supply references.
  - Spousal/Familial Reference
  - Professional Reference (Employer/Teacher)
  - Personal Reference (friend/neighbor)
  - Prior Youth Experience References
- Bigs must demonstrate stability in mental health, personal/family life, social relationships, good judgment, and employment history.
- Bigs must have a viable means of transportation. A valid driver's license and current proof of insurance is required for any Big who drives and provides transportation for match activities.
  - School/Site-Based Bigs, and High School Bigs are never allowed to drive with Littles.

## REQUIRED ATTRIBUTES:

- Sincere desire to be personally involved with a child, helping them to realize their potential.
- Ability to communicate with youth openly and without judgment.
- Strong listening skills and the ability to establish a relationship based on honesty and respect.
- Sensitivity to people of different sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, socio-economic, educational, cultural, and racial backgrounds.
- Reasonable flexibility and tolerance toward attitudes and values different from their own.
- Bigs must agree to follow agency procedures and policies.

## TRAINING – All Bigs are required to complete a virtual/ in-person orientation, which includes:

- Official Policies and Guidelines
- Child Safety Guidelines
- Child Abuse Prevention
- Cultural Competency
- Information on the Role of a Mentor
- Tips For Being a Successful Big

## SUPERVISION – Once matched, Bigs are supervised by a Program Coordinator.

Bigs must maintain monthly communication with your Program Coordinator to discuss:

- Activities
- Agency affiliation
- Child safety
- Relationship development
- Child development

# HIGH SCHOOL VOLUNTEER BIG POSITION DESCRIPTION

## RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Put the Little's safety and well-being first.
- Decide activities together with your Little.
- Be consistent, dependable, and patient.
- Acknowledge positive impact on the Little comes after trust has been built.
- Have realistic expectations.
- Set boundaries and limits.

## QUALIFICATIONS:

- As a representative of BBBS, Bigs must demonstrate a willingness to uphold the Vision and Mission of BBBS.
- As a representative of BBBS, Bigs must demonstrate a willingness to uphold the Accountability Statement and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement of BBBS.
- High School Bigs must be in 9<sup>th</sup> grade or older
- Bigs must agree to participate in the enrollment process.
  - Provide information regarding other youth serving involvements.
  - Provide their social security number, and prior agency involvement.
  - Provide a release of information authorization for counseling reports.
- Bigs must be able to supply references.
  - Parent/Guardian Reference
  - School Faculty Reference (teacher/coach)
  - Adult Personal Reference (family friend/neighbor)
  - Prior Youth Experience References
- Bigs must demonstrate stability in mental health, personal/family life, social relationships, good judgment.
- High School Bigs are never allowed to drive their Little.

## REQUIRED ATTRIBUTES:

- Sincere desire to be personally involved with a child, helping them to realize their potential.
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## 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, students, alumni 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/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.

## UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL DYNAMICS

### The journey of building cultural connections

*“Culture is more than a collection of artifacts and holidays. It is, in its broadest sense, a set of values, attitudes, beliefs, and rules for behavior by which we organize and give meaning to the world.”*

– Dr. Carol Brunson Phillips Day, author, educator, speaker, activist

Everyone – families, neighbors, communities, and organizations – all have culture. Culture is often invisible and described as “just the way we do things around here.”

Our culture gives us unique lenses through which we give meaning to experiences, events, and relationships. Even though someone may look like us, they are still likely to differ from us in family composition, tradition, religion, class, region, ethnicity, etc. As such, it is important to remember that all matches are likely to be intercultural relationships. Cultural understanding and learning are essential to building authentic connections in an intercultural context.

BBBS wants to support all program participants in building meaningful, caring, and respectful relationships.

### Qualities of good intercultural communication and relationship building:

#### SELF-AWARENESS

The ability to reflect and process one’s own biases, prejudices, and areas of struggle. The willingness to explore one’s history, both personally, and within a social context and relate this to their place in the world today.

## **EMPATHY**

The ability, or willingness, to recognize and emotionally respond to another's struggles and/or joys by drawing connections to one's own life experiences. Those unable to do this should still be able to validate another's experiences as real and true for them and respond accordingly.

## **FLEXIBILITY/TOLERANCE FOR AMBIGUITY**

The ability to adapt and integrate various changes, outward and inward, with minimal resistance. Also, the ability to recognize and respond to differences in communication styles, work behavior, and cultural norms in a way that reflects a level of acceptance and appreciation. The ability to recognize, in depth and breadth, information available to us about individuals, cultures, and concepts and the ability to contextualize information.

## **CURIOSITY**

Willingness to explore and learn things with our conscious and subconscious knowledge base and experience.

## **PATIENCE**

The recognition and acceptance that relationship building, and change take time and energy. People will differ in their paths to change. In order for transformation to take place, support and encouragement are needed.

## **COURAGE**

Willingness to accept and embrace discomfort when new experiences, information, emotions, and relationships are encountered.

# 10 TIPS FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH

1. Take time to reflect on your own background and values, particularly regarding your own beliefs about youth/adult relationships.
2. Take time to learn about your Little and their lifestyle.
3. Recognize that differences can, but need not, be a source of conflict.
4. Avoid prejudging youth and families. It limits you and them.
5. Acknowledge that differences are likely to exist. They provide an opportunity for you and your Little to expand your understanding of one another.
6. After acknowledging differences exist, be interested and seek to understand.
7. Remember that everyone has values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that make sense in their own context. Even though they may be different than yours, they are valid.
8. Don't expect reciprocity. People express themselves differently.
9. Don't use differences as an excuse for inappropriate behavior.
10. Remember intent does not equal impact. Even with the best of intent, you and your Little may have misunderstandings. Acknowledge the impact these misunderstandings may have on your Little. Assume good intent from your Little towards you and model ways to take responsibility for negative impacts that result from misunderstandings.

# BOUNDARIES, ROLES, & PROBLEM SOLVING

## Things to consider concerning boundaries with your Little:

- Never promise to keep a secret.
- Be respectful of the privacy of your Little and their family.
- Seek more information and ask open-ended questions before making assumptions.
- Guidelines for sharing personal information:
  - Are you comfortable and willing to share?
  - If you are willing, is it appropriate to share?
  - Part of determining the appropriateness includes determining your intentions. Why are you sharing the information? Is it about you? Or about the child?
- Values, Beliefs, and Opinions:
  - Use statements such as "I believe...", "I think...", or "In my opinion...".
  - Follow up with "What do you believe?" or "What do you think?"
- Touch can be confusing for adults and kids. Some general guidelines for touch:
  - Don't pick up Littles or let them jump on you.
  - Have them sit next to you rather than on your lap.
  - Hugs are okay if the initiator asks first and obtains permission.
- Utilize the Match Support Team:
  - Seek support from your Program Coordinator.
  - Report information about things that may be concerning.
  - Remember that your Program Coordinator can help find additional resources for families.
  - You are a mandated reporter. BBBS staff are also mandated reporters. It is against the law not to report suspected abuse or neglect to a local child protection or law enforcement agency. If you suspect child abuse or neglect, talk with your Program Coordinator. They will assist you in making a report.

You are not allowed to babysit your Little or their siblings. This includes high school Bigs.

# AGES & STAGES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Below are age categories with some general characteristics of children in each of the four different age categories. These are to help you understand what your Little might be like depending on their age. They also include some suggested activities.

As you read through these categories, keep in mind that they are generalizations. You may encounter something slightly different with your Little. This does not mean that there is something wrong with your Little. A child's development may be delayed because of trauma, negative experiences, or simply a slower or faster development than others. The stage they're in at present may not correlate to their age in years.



## DEVELOPMENT IN 5-7 YEAR OLDS

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Eager to learn, easily fatigued, short periods of interest.
- Learn best when they are active while learning.
- Self-assertive, boastful, less cooperative, more competitive.

### PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Active and need frequent breaks from tasks. They like to do things that are fun and involve the use of energy.
- Large muscles are well developed.
- Activities involving small muscles are difficult (i.e., working on models with small pieces).
- May tend to be accident prone.

### SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Like organized games and may be concerned about following rules.
- Can be very competitive. May cheat at games.
- Imaginative and involved in fantasy playing.
- Self-assertive, aggressive, want to be first, and boastful.
- Learn best through active participation.

### EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Alert to feelings of others but may be unaware of how their own actions affect others.
- Sensitive to praise and recognition. Feelings are easily hurt.
- Inconsistent level of maturity evidenced. Regress when tired, often less mature at home than with outsiders.

### MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Eager to learn and like to talk.
- Their idea of fairness becomes a big issue.
- May have difficulty making decisions.

### DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

- Early moral development.
- Concrete operations - the child begins to experience the predictability of physical events.

### ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR 5-7 YEAR OLDS

Bake and frost cut out cookies | Fly a kite on a windy day

Go on a walk and collect interesting rocks, leaves or other items | Visit a local park

Make a present for someone special | Play UNO, Crazy 8s, Old Maid

Play badminton or croquet | Go for a walk and find interesting places to practice "balancing"

Have a peanut butter and jelly sandwich picnic | Visit a pet store and decide which is the oddest pet

## DEVELOPMENT IN 8-10 YEAR OLDS

### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Interested in people, aware of differences, willing to give more to others but expects more.
- Busy, active, full of enthusiasm, may try too much, accident prone, interest in money and its value.
- Sensitive to criticism, recognize failure, capacity for self-evaluation.
- Capable of prolonged interest, may make plans on own.

- Decisive, dependable, reasonable, strong sense of right and wrong.
- Spend a great deal of time in talk and discussion, often outspoken and critical of adults although still dependent on adult approval.

### **PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Active and need frequent breaks from tasks to do things that are fun for them and involve use of energy.
- Bone growth is not yet complete.
- Early or late maturers may be upset with their size.
- May tend to be accident prone.

### **SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Can be very competitive.
- Choosy about their friends.
- Being accepted by friends becomes quite important.
- Team games become popular.
- Worshipping heroes, TV stars, and sports figures is common.

### **EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Sensitive to praise and recognition. Feelings are hurt easily.
- Because friends are so important during this time, there can be conflicts between adults' rules and friends' rules. Honesty and consistency help clarify expectations.

### **MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- The idea of fairness becomes a big issue.
- Eager to answer questions.
- Curious. Collectors of everything. However, they may jump to other objects of interest after a short time.
- Want more independence, but know they need guidance and support.
- Wide discrepancies in reading ability.

### **DEVELOPMENTAL TASK**

- Social cooperation.
- Self-evaluation/Skill learning.
- Team play.

### **ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR 8-10 YEAR OLDS**

Start a scrapbook with a page for pictures of favorite things  
 Go on a scavenger hunt to find odd objects to photograph  
 Make greeting, get well, or holiday cards to give to special people  
 Make a bug cage and catch lightning bugs together  
 Visit the zoo at feeding time | Read a selected book out loud and record it  
 Play Miniature golf or go bowling | Play Monopoly, Life, Sorry

### **DEVELOPMENT IN 11-13 YEAR OLDS**

#### **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Testing limits, "know-it-all attitude."
- Vulnerable, emotionally insecure, fear of rejection, mood swings.
- Identification with admired adult.

- Bodies are going through physical changes that affect personal appearance.

### **PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Small muscle coordination is good, and interests in art, crafts, and music are popular.
- Bone growth is not yet complete.
- Early or late maturers may be upset with their size.
- Concerned with their appearance, and very self-conscious about growth.
- Diet and sleep habits can be bad, which may result in low energy levels.
- Females may begin menstruation.

### **SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Being accepted by friends becomes quite important.
- Cliques start to develop outside of school.
- Team games become popular.
- Crushes on peers are common.
- Friends set the general rules of behavior.
- Feel a real need to conform. They dress and behave alike in order to "belong."
- Concerned about what others say and think of them.
- Tendency to manipulate others ("Mary's mother says she can go. Why can't I?").
- Interested in earning their own money.

### **EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Sensitive to praise and recognition. Feelings are hurt easily.
- Because friends are so important, there can be conflicts between adults' rules and friends' rules.
- Feel caught between being a child and being an adult.
- Loud behavior hides their lack of self-confidence.
- Look at the world more objectively, adults tend to be subjective and critical.

### **MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Tend to be perfectionists. If they try to attempt too much, they may feel frustrated and guilty.
- Want more independence, but know they need guidance and support.
- Attention span can be lengthy.

## **ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR 11-13 YEAR OLDS**

- Watch a TV program and identify negative stereotypes
- Look up your state on the internet: Identify the major industry? Biggest cities?
- Build and paint a bird house – watch for occupants | Rent rollerblades and learn to skate, safely
- Make a list of people you admire – look them up on the internet
- Take a long ride on public transportation to the end of the line
- Visit the Humane Society and offer to walk the dogs | Mow the lawn or wash the car together
- Play video games together | Plan and plant a garden or visit a community garden

## **DEVELOPMENT IN 14-16 YEAR OLDS**

### **GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Testing limits, "know-it-all attitude."
- Vulnerable, emotionally insecure, fear of rejection, mood swings.

- Identification with admired adult.
- Bodies are going through physical changes that affect personal appearance.

### **PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Concerned with their appearance and very self-conscious about growth.
- Diet and sleep habits can be bad, which may result in low energy levels.
- Rapid weight gain at the beginning of adolescence. Enormous appetite.

### **SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Friends set the general rules of behavior.
- Feel a real need to conform. They dress and behave alike in order to "belong."
- Concerned about what others say and think of them.
- Tendency to manipulate others ("Mary's mom says she can go. Why can't I?").
- Going to extremes, emotional instability with "know-it-all" attitude.
- Fear of ridicule and of being unpopular.
- Strong identification with an admired adult.

### **EMOTIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Sensitive to praise and recognition. Feelings are easily hurt.
- Caught between being a child and being an adult.
- Loud behavior hides their lack of self-confidence.
- Look at the world more objectively, adults tend to be subjective and critical.

### **MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS**

- Can better understand moral principles.
- Attention span can be lengthy.

### **DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS**

- Physical maturation.
- Membership in peer groups.
- Becoming interested in dating relationships.

## **ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR 14-16 YEAR OLDS**

- Volunteer together | Watch a professional or semi-professional sporting event
- Take a class together | Research what happened on the date each of you was born
- Check out the classified ads and discuss what each job requires in terms of education and experience
- Visit a farmers market, or other place where food is not prepackaged
- Go out for dinner at an ethnic restaurant; discuss who else is eating there and your favorite dishes
- Explore a new radio station; discuss ads and target audience
- Plan, shop for ingredients, and cook dinner | Go to a concert featuring a favorite performer
- Try mastering something difficult: juggling, cooking a soufflé, water color painting

# 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.

*\* 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:**

Community-based Bigs are not allowed to give Littles any medication (prescription/non-prescription) without written permission and administering directions from the parent/guardian. High School and Site Based Bigs are not allowed to give Littles any medication (prescription/non-prescription).

## **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**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central MN 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.

It is the policy of BBBSCM 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 touching 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.).
- High School Bigs and School/Sited-Based Bigs are not allowed to transport their Little at any time.

## **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.
- Obtain approval from the Program Coordinator before donations (furniture, clothing, money, computers, bikes, etc.) are given to the Little or the Little's family.
- Obtain approval from the Program Coordinator and the parent/guardian before providing any opportunities for the Little to earn money.

**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 the 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:**

- Walk their Little to the door to ensure their safety.
- Check in with the parent/guardian to let them know 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.

## SCHOOL/SITE-BASED MATCH GUIDELINGS

**Littles and their Bigs are not allowed to meet off school/site grounds** unless attending a Big Brothers Big Sisters staffed activity. School/Site-based Bigs are not allowed to provide transportation to their Littles or walk them home under any circumstances.

**If you will not be able to meet with your Little** during your designated time, please follow the procedures directed by your Program Coordinator at the time of your match to ensure your Little is aware.

**Keep the relationship primarily one-to-one.** A good one-to-one friendship offers something the Little will look up to and admire. Keep your involvement with other students in the classroom minimal, as this may affect your relationship with the Little.

**Develop relationships with the teachers and staff at your Little’s school.** They will be a valuable resource to you throughout the school year and can update you on your Little’s progress in the classroom, let you know of important school days, and help you feel welcomed in their school environment.

**Follow the sign-in procedures** at your Little’s school and wear BBBS identification during all visits.

**If your Little gets sick,** walk them to the school nurse or to the Program Coordinator (in case of site-based).

**When using the restrooms,** walk your Little to the restroom and wait for your Little either in the restroom if there are stalls or just outside of restroom.

**Meet with your Little in an open area.** Leave the door open when meeting in a classroom or conference room.

**Supervision of Littles** – Bigs are responsible for the supervision of their Little at all times from the start to finish of a match activity. A Little should not be left unsupervised or left with someone else during a match activity.

**At the end of the activity**, walk your Little back to the classroom and sign out before leaving the building.

## 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 never be shown, even when bending or lifting arms overhead.
- Tops should be modest and cover your stomach and chest.
- Bigs are expected to be positive role models in every aspect including dress and appearance.

## ACTIVITIES IN THE BIG'S HOME

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 ACTIVITY

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.

# 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.

# VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT

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.

## TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

**Attachment:** the relationship of a child with their adult care givers which shapes how the brain grows and how the person forms relationships in life.

**Trauma:** any event which overwhelms a person's capacity to cope or make meaning in a useful way.

### How does this relate to mentoring?

- Often children who have been exposed to trauma have a hard time forming relationships.
- As a Big you are being tasked with forming relationships with children who struggle to form relationships!

### Tips for working with youth who have experienced trauma:

1. Celebrate and compliment your Little.
2. Stay calm and patient.
3. Listen & show an interest in their passions.
4. Ask their opinions.
5. Inspire them with new ideas.

## BULLYING

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](http://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 their parent/guardian when you can't keep an activity appointment to keep communication open and honest.

### **2. COMMUNICATE OPENLY & REGULARLY.**

- Schedule all activity plans through the parent/guardian, not the Little, and be sure to let your Little's parent/guardian 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 you and your Little are 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 contact 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 Little and their parent/guardian.
- 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 Little's parent/guardian before and after each activity. Your teamwork will help them feel more comfortable around you.

#### **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 Little's parent/guardian will be in the match.

#### **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 you are having together.

#### **10. BE YOURSELF!**

- Have fun, be silly, be yourself! Thank you for partnering with us to defend potential!

## **ACTIVITY IDEAS**

#### **COMMITMENT TO LEARNING:**

1. Take a walk and collect interesting leaves, rocks, etc.
2. Take a class.
3. Research about famous inventors/explorers/discoverers.
4. Learn to sew, mend, knit, or quilt.
5. Learn how to fix a bike.
6. Visit a museum.
7. Work on a home project such as painting or gardening.
8. Visit a college.

9. Get a chemistry set and do your own experiment.
10. Visit a music store and learn about different instruments.
11. Get a library card, check out a book, and read/discuss with your Little.
12. Learn words in a foreign language.
13. Visit a pottery place and watch a potter throwing on a wheel.
14. Look up new words in the dictionary and learn three new words a month.
15. Learn how to make homemade ice cream.
16. Make a bead necklace or bracelet.
17. Learn how to use a camera; take pictures and make an album.
18. Visit a farm.
19. Research healthy eating habits: nutritious meal preparation and wellness.
20. Research simple first aid skills.
21. Attend a play together.
22. Help your Little with homework and school projects.
23. Teach your pet a new trick.
24. Practice swimming.
25. Try a new recipe.
26. Make fresh squeezed-orange juice.
27. Play board games.
28. Update and/or develop your resumes.
29. Talk about career interests.
30. Use a magnifying glass to examine all sorts of things.
31. Learn how to program a computer.
32. Learn new games using math skills.
33. Ask your Little for help with a project you have been working on.
34. Make a book together. Cut out magazine clippings for pictures and write a fictional story.
35. Learn how to canoe.
36. Learn a simple magic trick.
37. Tour the State Capitol.
38. Start a stamp/coin collection.
39. Plant a vegetable or flower garden.
40. Buy a yo-yo and learn some tricks.
41. Go on a camera scavenger hunt at the arboretum.
42. Learn a dance.

**POSITIVE VALUES:**

43. Volunteer in the community.
44. Help with a Habitat for Humanity project.
45. Read to residents in a nursing home.
46. Deliver Meals on Wheels.
47. Ring bells for the Salvation Army.
48. Teach respect of the environment. Pick up litter together. Recycle.
49. Engage with charitable organizations during the Holiday season.
50. Do something together for an elderly friend or neighbor.
51. Read biographies of people who did great things; talk about how your Little is a great person.

52. Teach your Little how to care for pets.
53. Set up a roadside lemonade stand and give the proceeds to a local cause.

#### **SOCIAL COMPETENCE:**

54. Use a globe to locate friends and talk about places you would like to visit.
55. Plan an imaginary trip around the world.
56. Make food from around the world and learn about different cultures.
57. Research a foreign country.
58. Ask your Little to share their opinion about an important topic.
59. Write letters to the editor of your local newspaper about issues that are important.
60. Teach one another customs and rituals from your backgrounds.
61. Teach your Little about voting.
62. Dine at a restaurant and talk about manners.
63. Share family pictures.
64. Discuss what qualities make a good friend.
65. Explore your Little's career interests and shadow someone in that career.

#### **POSITIVE IDENTITY:**

66. Use a book of names to find the meaning of each of your names.
67. Help your Little write a letter to the President. Request a photo so your Little will receive a picture and packet of information in the mail.
68. Invite your Little to sell old clothes and toys at a garage sale.
69. Role-play meeting new people so your Little gains confidence in possibly unfamiliar situations.
70. Engage in activities that require creativity.
71. Work out at home or at a gym.
72. Volunteer to visit your Little's classroom and talk to them about your career.
73. Talk with your Little about what they want for their future.
74. Write a poem about one another and share.
75. Help your Little make a list of all the people who love them.
76. Write a letter to your Little on your anniversary: explain how much this friendship means to you.
77. Let your Little teach you something new.
78. Make something to celebrate your friendship.
79. Eat lunch with your Little at school.
80. Take your Little to a sporting event to the high school/college of their dreams.
81. Write letters to your congressional representatives regarding an issue of importance to your Little.

**For a current list of area businesses, restaurants, and organizations who offer discounts for our matches, check out <https://fundraise.givesmart.com/e/cJtaGA?vid=13kl45>.**

## **MATCH SUPPORT**

**Program Coordinators will discuss your match with you every month for the first year and quarterly after that.** Contact with your Program Coordinator is required on a regular basis to keep your match open with BBBS. Communication will primarily happen over the phone but can also be done in person or via email. It is essential that you return phone calls and emails from your Program Coordinator in a timely fashion. If we attempt to contact you 3 times and do not receive a return call, your match could be suspended. If there is still no contact, your match will be closed.

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.**

## BIG HAPPENINGS

**Big Happenings** is a bi-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. Past issues of the Big Happenings are available [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](http://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](http://BIGDEFENDERS.ORG) for agency news, activity information, merchandise, photo galleries, and more.

## TAX DEDUCTIONS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer Bigs of Big Brothers Big Sisters may be able to deduct certain expenses incurred while doing volunteer work as well as other contributions to the agency for federal income tax purposes. An accountant or tax lawyer should be consulted to answer any specific questions pertaining to individual situations.

## SPREAD THE WORD

Becoming a Big/Big Duo/Big Family is a wonderful, exciting experience. Tell your friends, family, and co-workers about your experiences with your Little! 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!**

# RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

## Valuable Relationships

As every experienced Big will tell you, friendship takes time to develop. It is a different experience for every Big and Little, and no doubt your friendship will be unique. However, there are some common stages that most match friendships will go through at different times, usually depending on the level of trust that has been established.

### **BEGINNING/EARLY STAGE: (From the first meeting to approximately the four-month mark)**

*What does this stage look like?*

- You both are trying to figure each other out.
- Littles may try to get their Big's approval or impress them.

*What can you do to move it along?*

- Without prying, learn facts about your Little and reference them in your conversations (favorite things, best friend, where they've traveled).
- Be consistent and flexible, do what you said you were going to do.
- Be patient. Remember that relationships have ups and downs, and don't "happen" by themselves.

### **GROWTH STAGE: (From approximately four months to one year into the match)**

*What does this stage look like?*

- This is the most crucial time regarding the development of the Big/Little relationship.
- It is common, around the four-month mark, that your Little will begin testing you to see what you are really about and how much they can get away with.
- Your Little may be observing you to find a reason not to trust you.

*What can you do to move it along?*

- Show your Little that they can trust you – through your reliability, consistency, and time together.
- As trust develops, your Little will probably begin sharing additional bits of information you.
- Keep in close contact with your Program Coordinator for ideas.
- Recognize and praise accomplishments.
- If you need to give advice or address behavior problems, give reasons; avoid "shoulds."

### **MATURITY STAGE: (This stage begins somewhere around the one-year match anniversary)**

*What does this stage look like?*

- You will notice your relationship with your Little has become more positive and realistic and match activities are less structured.
- Most Bigs have shed their preconceived notions regarding the match and their Little.
- As the friendship matures, you will see the maturity of your Little as they grow and develop.

*What can you do to move it along?*

- Identify past shared experiences and enjoy shared "jokes."
- Learn something new to both of you, together.

### **TRANSITION & CLOSURE:**

- This transition should be handled in a sensitive, thoughtful, and caring way.
- Recognize that you have made an impact at some level on your Little.

- The Little you now know is probably not the same Little with whom you were initially matched. Changes have likely occurred. Celebrate the experience as much as you can together – highlights and hurdles.
- If the transition of closing the match is not approached carefully, a Little can be hurt by the experience. Our staff will work with you and your Little to help you with this transition.
- 

## 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 the Little

Next, consider how ending the relationship may affect your Little. Your Little 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 Little.

#### Acknowledge Emotions

It is helpful to acknowledge your own emotions and the emotions of your Little. 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 Little's parent/guardian 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 is also difficult for you as the Big. Use this event as an opportunity for a teachable moment. Discuss how moving on is a part of life.
- Be clear with your Little about what they can expect from you next. If you tell them you are going to write or call them, make sure you follow through with your promise.

*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.*

## 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](mailto: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.

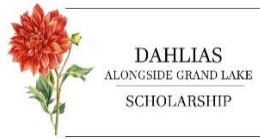
BriAnna's family would like to honor her memory by awarding a current/past Little or High School Big with a \$500 scholarship to a college of their choice. Payment of scholarship will be awarded after submitting proof of completion of first semester of college.

### **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 through 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](mailto:Ann@BigDefenders.org) or (320) 258-4517 with any questions.



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.

"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](mailto:Ann@BigDefenders.org) or (320) 258-4517 with any questions.

## AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

General Line	320.253.1616	Address	203 Cooper Avenue North
Fax	320.253.1702		Suite 162
Toll Free	1.888.600.1616		St. Cloud, MN 56303

## PROGRAM SUPPORT TEAM

[www.bigdefenders.org/our-leadership-team](http://www.bigdefenders.org/our-leadership-team)

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

**After hours emergency contact: Jackie Johnson 320.257.4510 or Ann Matvick 320.258.4517**

## HUMAN SERVICE AGENCIES/CHILD PROTECTION

Benton County	320.968.5087
Morrison County	320.632.2951
	or 1.800.269.1464
Stearns County	320.656.6000
Sherburne County	763.765.4000
Wright County	763.682.7400

## 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](http://www.bigdefenders.org/resources)

## LGBTQ RESOURCES

[www.bigdefenders.org/lgbtq](http://www.bigdefenders.org/lgbtq)

## COMMUNITY HELP LINE

United Way 2-1-1



# REPORT OF CHILD MALTREATMENT

- 1. Date and Time of Report: \_\_\_\_\_  
To Whom Reported: \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Reporter's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title or Position: \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. Name of Alleged Victim: \_\_\_\_\_  
DOB: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Parent(s) Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Names and DOBs of other children in the home (if known):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- 6. Name of Alleged Offender: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Maltreatment: (Include specific information, statement of child, dates, description of any injuries, witnesses, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Reporter