



**Big Brothers  
Big Sisters®**

OF EAST CENTRAL OHIO

# **School Based Parent/Guardian Orientation**

**Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Ohio**

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330-339-6916  
or  
888-364-5965**

*Serving Tuscarawas, Carroll & Harrison Counties*

## About BBBS

**B**ig Brothers Big Sisters has changing the lives of children by matching them with

**volunteers in fun and rewarding relationships since 1904.**

Friendship is a powerful thing. Experiencing fun activities together and forming a trusting bond with a mentor can have a powerful and positive impact on a child.

### **OUR Vision**

All youth achieve their full potential.

### **OUR Mission**

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

### **OUR Outcomes**

We partner with parents/guardians, volunteers and others in the community to help children with:

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

### **What is School Based Mentoring?**

Bigs and Littles can meet at **school** or another **site** typically on the same day & at the same time each week.

The participating school has provided a space for the child and mentor to meet. The mentor will spend 45 minutes once a week supporting his/her Little in a variety of ways. During these weekly meetings, you might work on homework, eat lunch together, play board games, participate in an arts & crafts project, or simply hang out together.

These supervised meetings usually take place during the school day or after school. The match is supplied with grade-appropriate activities. In addition, students are always encouraged to bring their homework and/or classwork to the weekly sessions.

### **Criteria for Mentors**

- At least 14 years of age, or a Freshman for high school
- Willing to meet a face-to-face with Little once a week during the school year
- Must be willing to make at least a school-year commitment
- Complete required training
- Must Submit a background check (if over 17 years old)
- Maintain regular contact with BBBS Staff for Match support

### **Criteria for Littles**

- Child is grades K-8 (matches do not begin after grade 8)
- Live in Carroll or Tuscarawas counties
- Willing to meet a face-to-face with Volunteer once a week during the school year
- Child and Parent/Guardian must be willing to make a 2-year commitment.
- Must complete required training
- Child and parent/guardian must be able and willing to maintain regular match support contact with the match support coordinator
- Child cannot require physical restraint for behavioral issues
- Child cannot require assistance with restrooming
- Child cannot be violent
- Child cannot be uncomfortable spending time away from the parent/guardian
- There may be no unresolved cases concerning custody or the child

Big Brothers Big Sisters reserves the right to reject a Little for any reason that the association, in its sole judgment, determines will or may affect either the best interests of a Little or Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Ohio. Furthermore, Big Brothers Big Sisters reserves the right to withhold the reason(s) for such refusal. If your child is rejected our agency will attempt to connect you and your child with resources that are more beneficial.

### ***How do Children come into the program?***

Most children in our community-based programs come to us through their parent or guardian. Most children in our school-based programs come to us through a guardian, teacher or counselor. We also reach out to involve children through churches, youth service agencies, and other referrals. All children and their parents must want to be in our program.

# Ground Rules

1. I understand that consistency is one of the most important factors to a mentoring relationship; therefore, I will ensure my child attends the school based program regularly.
2. I understand that all contact my child has with his/her mentor is restricted to school grounds and only during the scheduled mentoring sessions. This means that my child's mentor will not have contact with my child outside of the school setting. If I wish for my child to have a match outside of school, I will enroll him/her in the community based program through Big Brothers Big Sisters.
3. I understand that the relationship between my child and his/her mentor is a one-to-one relationship.
4. I understand that my child's mentor may be privy to personal information about my child and family, this information will be kept confidential.
5. I will maintain regular contact with the Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring Coordinator by responding to calls and letters.
6. If a problem arises in my child's match relationship, or if my residences, or telephone number changes, I will notify the Big Brothers Big Sisters Agency immediately.
7. I understand that I will be asked to complete a satisfaction evaluation.
8. I understand my child and his/her mentor will adhere to school procedures for match visits.
9. I understand that if my child's mentor has three unexcused absences or no shows during sessions, my child's mentor will be dismissed from the program and my child will have the opportunity to be re-matched with a new mentor.
10. I understand my child and his/her mentor will attend pre-match training that will include child safety information prior to meeting. I will review the pre-match training information that is included in my child's application.

## ***Expectations for the Match Relationship***

School-Based Mentoring is not a classroom program, and it's not tutoring. School-Based Mentoring is one-to-one mentoring that takes place in the schools. Of course, some students talk with their mentors about class, do homework, or read together, but it's really all about friendship and guidance.

Changes in a Little tend to occur slowly. Often Littles won't say "thank you" –but this doesn't mean they aren't enjoying the time with his/her mentor. It just takes time for the relationship to form.

To make the most of a match relationship, we ask that Bigs:

- **Be a good friend:** Listen, have fun, take time to get to know this new person in his/her life. Choose activities that both enjoy and that will strengthen the bond between Big and Little. Don't set out to impose mandatory changes in the Little. Positive behaviors

will flow after the Little trusts the Big and the Little grows in being more secure, not by the Big declaring mandatory new behaviors that the Little has to do.

- **Be Consistent:**
  - Show the child you think your time together is important.
  
- **Regularly communicate with the Little, the school/site and your Match Support Specialist:**
  - We will contact the Big each month to provide assistance and give feedback on how he/she is making a difference.
  - Anytime a Big is unsure about what to do or how to handle a situation, the Mentoring Specialists is there to help.
  
- **Work for a long-lasting relationship.**
  
- **Realize that problems may come up:**
  - It's normal for problems to arise in a match relationship
  - Try to balance expectations of what it will be like with a Little and be realistic about how fast the relationship will take to develop.

## **Matching Process**

BBBS affiliate is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all program participants. BBBS affiliate matching policy generally allows for traits and characteristics that are inclusive of the diversity of their local community. The matching process is driven by understanding and assessing the unique strengths and needs of the child and how the ability of the volunteer's experiences and strengths can best support the child.

While the match assignments are ultimately at the discretion of agency staff, preferences of the Volunteer, Child, and/or Parent/Guardian are considered during the match making process. The following factors may be considered when making matches:

- Compatibility of values and attitudes
- Mutuality of interests between the Volunteer and Child
- The Child and the Volunteer's ability to engage effectively in the development of their relationship
- Geographic proximity and transportation
- Schedule and availability
- Gender identity
  - Male mentors are generally matched with male youth.
  - When male mentor(s) are involved in a couple's match the couple will generally be matched with a male youth.
  - In an effort to address the fact that BBBS affiliate has a large number of male children on the waiting list, and a limited number of male Volunteer Bigs available, BBBS affiliate preference is to generally match a male Little; BBBS affiliate is willing to accept exceptions.
- Female mentors are matched with female or male youth.

- Gender identity is honored for volunteers and children. Transgender youth and mentors will be matched based on the gender they identify with. In the event a child or volunteer is **non-binary**, staff will prioritize the matching factors listed above.
- We honor the preferences of parents, youth, and mentors when matching.

## ***Relationship Development Cycles***

**Now that your child is about to be matched with a mentor; you may be thinking what comes next and how fast will it happen?**

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

### **HONEYMOON CYCLE**

**From the first meeting to approximately the four-month date.**

*What does this cycle look like?*

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

*What can you do to move it along?*

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

### **GROWTH CYCLE**

**From approximately the four-month date to the one-year date.**

*What does this cycle look like?*

- This is the most crucial time regarding the development of the Big/Little relationship.
- This is the time that may be a turning point in the relationship.
- It is common, around the four-month date, that your Little will begin testing you to see what you are really about and how much he/she 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 he can trust you, through your reliability, consistency, and time together. As trust develops, your Little will probably begin sharing bits of information here and there with you.

- Keep in close contact with your Support Specialist for ideas.
- *Recognize and praise accomplishments*
- *If you need to give advice or address behavior problems, give reasons; avoid "shoulds."*

## **MATURITY CYCLE**

**This cycle begins somewhere around the one-year anniversary date.**

*What does this cycle 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 he/she grows and develops.

*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 and "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 probably have 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 child can be hurt by the experience.* Our staff will work with you, the child and his/her school to help you with this transition.

# ***What a Volunteer Big is and isn't***

## ***What is a "Big"?***

It won't be long before your child meets his/her Big Brother or Big Sister for the first time. And, when they do, it will help for you to understand the role of the Big.

## ***What makes a successful "Big"?***

### ***Successful Bigs...***

- Emphasize friendship over changing the behavior of the child.
- Are not authoritarian.

- Decide activities together with Littles.
- Are consistent & dependable.
- Have realistic expectations.
- Are patient.
- Focus on having fun.
- Set boundaries and limits.
- Acknowledge that positive impact on the child comes after the relationship is built.
- Put a child's safety and well-being first.

#### What a "Big" Is Not

- Parent
- Financial support
- Peer
- *Therapist*

## ***Expectations for Parent Partnership***

### We need you to be an active Partner.

Working together, Parents/Caregivers, volunteers, and BBBS staff members plan activities and opportunities that can have a powerful and positive impact on your child.

- The Big Brother Big Sister volunteer is a **special friend** who will spend time with your child. We ask them not to be a babysitter, disciplinarian or counselor.
- **Matches are more successful when parents are involved in the relationship.** This includes knowing what activities they are doing, how often they see each other, and how your child feels about the match.
- Your child will speak with his/her BBBS Mentoring Specialist at his/her school site once a month to update them about the match. **The BBBS Mentoring Specialist will also be contacting you, as a parent, once a semester to receive feedback regarding the match. This is required in order to keep the match open.** We will also be **administering surveys to your child a couple times a year!** BBBS needs to gather this information to measure our impact on Children. **We must have these contacts to keep your Match in Compliance with our Standards of Practice.** Remember that your Mentoring Specialist is here to support your child's match, **without these supervision contacts your match can not remain open.**
- Help your child remember scheduled meeting days at his/her school. Because your child's match is only meeting one day a week, his/her attendance is important.
- Most of the time, Bigs and Littles will spend time one-on-one. Occasionally the matches will participate in group activities.
- Parents or children should not ask Bigs for money or favors.



- Please do not use attendance in the school program as a means of disciplining your child. Talk with your child's BBBS Mentoring Specialist about alternative activities.
- Help your child think of ways to thank their volunteer. A simple note or card is always appreciated!
- Please call your child's BBBS Mentoring Specialist back when they call and remember to let us know of any changes in your address or phone number.
- Inappropriate contact will not be tolerated between matches (i.e. wrestling, tickling, roughhousing, sitting on laps, etc.)
- Thank you for supporting your child's involvement with Big Brothers Big Sisters!

## ***BBBS Match Support – Why we do it***

**B**BBBS works hard to support the relationship between Big and Little. Our goal is for the relationship to be as successful as possible for everyone. Bigs and Littles work with their Mentoring Specialist. This specialist also works with the Little's school.

Along the way to forming a safe and lasting friendship your Mentoring Specialist will be in touch with all of you to offer support. Sometimes they will call, meet you in person, or email you to make contact. Communication will initially happen two weeks after your child is first matched and then every semester throughout the life of the match. This allows us to provide support and give you details regarding the match. You can think of your mentoring specialist as the main link between your child, your child's mentor, your child's school, and the agency.

That's not all that the Mentoring Specialist provides for your child's match. They also:

- Provide you feedback on how the mentor is assisting your child.
- Find information and resources that you might be interested in.
- Provides activities for Big and Little.
- Help your child communicate with his/her mentor.
- Work with you on any conflicts that might come up.

You don't need to wait to hear from your Mentoring Specialist--they love to be contacted by parents. Here are some good reasons for calling your Mentoring Specialist:

- To get feedback from the Big, and school about how the match is going.
- Share fun stories about your child's match.
- Discuss concerns you are having with your child's match or the safety of your child.
- Report any emergency situations.

Contact your Mentoring Specialist by phone and/or email--whichever is most convenient for you.

**If your Mentoring specialist is not available, please contact the agency for assistance. We make it a priority to serve you when you need it.**



**Child Safety/Youth Protection Information**

**Parents/Guardians: We are providing this handout in an attempt to provide more information to both you and your child about child safety and abuse prevention. Please share the information with your child and keep this for your own reference.**

### **Tips for Child Safety**

- Children have the right:
  - not to be touched in ways that make them feel uncomfortable ("safe" vs. "unsafe" touches)
  - to say "no"
  - to get help.
- Answer the children's questions about nightmares, television programs, real-life tragedies, and "what-if"-situations as positively and creatively as possible, without minimizing their feelings or denying reality.
- Encourage children not to keep secrets from you, even if they have been threatened with harm or promised something for their silence.
- Being assertive, or standing up for yourself, may feel a little funny, strange, or even scary at first. It is not always easy to stand up for yourself, but if you want your child to stay safe he/she must learn how. Being assertive means:
  - saying what you think or feel
  - standing tall
  - looking the person in the eye
  - talking in a strong/ clear voice
  - being able to say "no". Sometimes you need to assert yourself with people you don't know well or with your friends. This can be hard because you want people to like you. But people sometimes want you to do things you should not do.
  - walking away
  - **does not** mean yelling, cursing, or hitting anyone. You can be assertive without being hurtful.
- If a child tells you that he/she was sexually abused, listen patiently and respectfully. Avoid being judgmental. Tell the child that you want to help.

### **Things to Know if a Child Discloses Abuse**

- **Create a Safe Place.** Be conscious of the atmosphere in which you approach and talk to your child. A quiet, comfortable, private environment will enhance your child's feelings of safety. Distractions such as noise or interruptions should be kept at a minimum.
- **Remain Calm.** Your reaction makes a difference to a child. Being attentive and responsive, yet calm, is important. A child is likely to feel frightened, confused, and upset. Let the child know that you value what they say.
- **Always Believe the Child.** Never assume the child is lying. The facts may not appear accurate because they may just be telling parts of the story they think you can handle. For example, a child who is assaulted in an abandoned house may say that it happened at school because they are afraid of getting in trouble for entering an empty house.
- **Validate the Child's Feelings.** Do not make assumptions about how the child is feeling. You might believe the child is angry at the offender. However, if the offender is a family member, this may not be the case. The child may have conflicting feelings, loving the person but hating the behavior, which is often more difficult to express. Ask and acknowledge how the child is feeling.
- **Let the child know that they have the right to be safe.** The offender was wrong to take that right away. The child has the right to get help in order to feel protected. Let the child know that they are not to blame for any incidence of abuse, that they are not "bad", and that this will not affect your relationship. Reassure the child that you will do the best to protect and support them.

## Definitions

- Abuse can be physical, sexual or emotional, or it can be any form of neglect.
- The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act defines abuse as “any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; or an act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.” Most states define a “child” as any person under the age of 18.
- Sexual abuse can be defined as any experience during childhood or adolescence, which involves inappropriate sexual attention by another person, usually an adult, but sometimes an older child, teenager, or even a same-aged playmate. This attention might involve sexualized language, sexual touching, being forced to perform manual or oral sex on another person, oral, vaginal, or anal penetration, exposure to sexual behavior or to pornography. The behavior may be forced, coerced, or even willingly engaged in by the survivor, but is understood as abusive because a child cannot truly give free consent. Any activity that a person feels violates her or his boundaries may fall within the realm of sexual abuse

## Resources for Additional Information and to Report Abuse

Prevent Child Abuse Ohio — 614/722-6800  
Child Protective Services TUSCARAWS COUNTY 330/339-7791  
Child Protective Services CARROLL COUNTY 330/627-7313  
Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Central Ohio — 330/330-6916

If you would like more information on child safety please visit Prevent Child Abuse Ohio at:

[www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)

## *Match Closure Process*

About 4-6 weeks before the end of the school year, match support staff will begin to talk to your child and his/her mentor about what will happen at the end of the school year. Matches will have an opportunity to connect over the summer at agency sponsored activities ONLY. The idea is to encourage matches to continue their relationship the next school year.

At the time of transition, BBBS “closes” the file and does not continue to provide professional support or guidance to the matched parties. At that point, the match is no longer considered an “active” match. We hope that your child will stay involved with BBBS and we hope that you might consider re-matching your child.

The Big and the Little have invested a lot into each other. You want to communicate to your child your appreciation of his/her mentor. The hope is that your child models your appreciation and expresses it to his/her mentor.

A few Guidelines:

- We encourage the mentor to never just stop and disappear from the match--this could really have a negative impact on the Little.
- The transition/file closing process gives an opportunity to review the great stuff that happened during the match.
- Your Mentoring Specialist will walk the match through the process—there are several steps to take which can maximize the positive effects.

