



Big Brothers Big Sisters Site-Based Program General Information & Parent Training

Welcome to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Great Pittsburgh's (BBBS) Site-based Program! We are delighted that you have agreed to allow your youth to partake in this mentoring program. This letter is to you the parent/guardians "training" on site-based program. The hope is that after reading through this "training" you will have a better understanding of the program, know your involvement in the mentoring program, and have any questions answered.

Ground Rules/BBBS Program Rules: Rules are important in order to keep everyone safe and on the same understanding of what is expected and accepted. These ground rules are for the site-based mentoring program:

- **Big and Littles are not permitted to meet/ talk off-site (out of school).**
 - Match should never exchange personal contact info (phone numbers, addresses, etc.)
 - The only time off-site meeting is permitted is during agency sponsored events.
- **Big and Littles are not permitted to network through social media outlets (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.).**
 - They are not permitted to "friend" each other on social networking sites.
- **Confidentiality is very important.**
 - The Big will not use your youth's last name when speaking about them.
 - Information is not shared with others.

Expectations of Match Relationship & Relationship Development: In being part of this mentoring program there are some expectations that BBBS has for the relationship. These expectations are beneficial for the betterment of the relationship. The expectations are:

- **12 Month Commitment:** We ask that the Big and Little commit to at least 12 months. This means that there will be contact, though limited, during the summer months through postcard writing via BBBS. BBBS' goal is that the match will continue into the second year or more.
- **Regular Meetings:** It is important for the relationship to grow. In order for this to happen, there needs to be regular meetings between the Big and your youth. At most site-based programs the matches will meet once a week or once every other week depending arrangement with the school.
- **Communication with BBBS:** Site-based programs require that your youth meet with the Match Support Specialist (MSS) bi-monthly. Also, the Big will meet with the MSS bi-monthly during scheduled meetings.
- **Be a Good Friend & Mentor:** At BBBS, we want our matches to listen to each other, have fun, and take time to get to know each other. BBBS encourages the match to choose activities that they both enjoy.
- **The Relationship:** Relationships have ups and downs, relationships take time to develop, and relationships do not happen by chance. It is important to keep this in mind during the entire process.

What a Volunteer Big Is and Is Not: Although a Big serves many positive purposes to your youth, it is important to understand that a Big is **not** a parent, financial support, peer, or therapist. Instead a Big is encouraged to form a bond more like a friendship. A Big is a resource, a support system, a confidante, a role model, and a mentor. A Big will be open, dependable, patient, loyal, and fun.

Parent/Guardian Partnership: As a parent/guardian of the youth you also serve as an integral part in making sure this is a positive experience and allowing the process to continue. As the parent/guardian, there are some guidelines and responsibilities that must you adhere to.

- You as the parent/guardian are willing to allow your child to participate in the mentoring program.
- You as the parent/guardian want a Big match relationship for your youth.
- You as the parent/guardian agree to abide by the agency policies and guidelines.
- You as the parent/guardian complete and sign a Parent Permission Form and return to your youth's school.
- You as the parent/guardian will be involved in your own Match Support. The Match Support Specialist (MSS) from BBBS will contact you via phone **twice during the year**. The MSS will contact you another two times throughout the year via mail. This is an opportunity for you to discuss how you feel and believe the match is going.

What is Match Support and Why BBBS does it: BBBS works hard to support the relationship that your youth has with their Big. Our goal of Match Support is for the match to be as successful as possible for everyone. In order for this to happen we utilize someone at BBBS called a Match Support Specialist (MSS).

Your youth will be assigned a MSS who will provide ongoing support to the match. Your youth will meet once a month at their school with the MSS throughout the life of the match. During this time, your youth and the MSS will talk about how the match relationship is going and any concerns your youth may have. You as the parent/guardian can think of the MSS as the link between you, your youth, the Big, and the agency.

BBBS uses match support as a way to ensure child safety, provide positive outcomes for your youth, assist in helping the match relationship be a strong and a long-lasting one between your youth and their Big, and foster a strong sense of agency relationship on the part of match participants.

As stated above in the "Parent/guardian Partnership" section, you, as the parent/guardian, will also be involved in match support. The same functions and purpose are done for the parent/guardian match support as the youth's match support.

Stages of a Match Relationship: As in any relationship, relationships take time to grow and develop. Our program is no different; we have a 5 stage relationship development model that we follow at BBBS. It is important that you understand these stages so you know where your youth and their Big are in the development of their relationship. Remember, each relationship develops and grows at its own pace, these are just recommended and average time tables.

- **Stage 1-Honeymoon:** (Introduction-4 month match date). Excitement and anxiety are both being produced during this stage as the Bigs and your youth learn more about each other. The Big and your youth are happy with the match and are only showing their good sides. Neither match partner is expressing any expectations of the other; both are "checking each other out" regarding appearance, manners, expressions of interest, and values. During this time, your youth may try to solicit their Bigs approval or impress them.
- **Stage 2- Growth:** (4 months-1 year match date). This is a very crucial time regarding the development of the relationship. Trust is starting to be built by the Big and your youth through reliability and consistency/time together. Boundaries and guidelines will be established by the Big and your youth so your youth knows what is acceptable.

•**Stage 3- Maturity:** (Around 1 year match anniversary date). The relationship is more positive and realistic and the match activities are less structured. As the maturity of the match develops, so will the maturity of your youth.

•**Stage 4- Letting Go:** (Various times). The Big and your youths relationship may end at any time for many different reasons. There is not a typical time frame in which to put this stage. * Some matches may not reach this stage.

•**Stage 5- Closure:** (Various times). It is important that the Bigs and your youth meet say good bye and end the relationship. * Some matches may not reach this stage.

Child Safety/Youth Protection: Here at BBBS, child safety is our number #1 priority. We focus on your youth's safety and well-being throughout the match. We do this by:

- All Big's go through a professional screening.
- Child Safety and child abuse prevention education programs are administered to volunteers.
- Ongoing BBBS Match Support contact with each party in the match. This helps provide up-to-date information about safety issues and early warning signs of potential problems.
- All Big's have appropriate clearances to be working with youth.

The Match Closure Process: As with any relationship there comes a point where it must end, a match relationship is no different. The matches end for various reasons and under different circumstances. When a match ends, BBBS calls this a "match closure."

A match closure is the formal ending of a match relationships' involvement with BBBS. There are several reasons for closing a match, such as one of the match parties moves away from the area, your youth graduates from high school or turns 18, or the match participants no longer feel they are compatible, to name a few. The decision is facilitated through supervision contact with match parties. It can be initiated at the request from either one of the match participants.

There is a procedure involved in closing a match. The match closure process is flexible for each match relationship developed. It is also clear that a good match closing process is significant to ensure that the gains of the relationship are maintained and remain undiminished.