



**Big Brothers
Big Sisters.®**

OF CENTRAL
MASS & METROWEST

**Site-Based Programs
Volunteer Handbook**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMS</u>	<u>1</u>
• MISSION	
• VISION	
• SITE-BASED PROGRAM	
• SITE-BASED PLUS STATUS	
• COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM	
<u>MATCH SUPPORT SPECIALIST</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>OUR BIGS / ACTIVITIES</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>CHILD ABUSE</u>	<u>4-6</u>
<u>SOCIAL NETWORKING POLICY</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>MENTOR AGREEMENT</u>	<u>8</u>

Overview of Programs

Mission

Our Mission is to provide children facing adversity with strong and enduring, professionally supported 1-to-1 relationships that change their lives for the better, forever.

Vision

That all children achieve success in life.

Site-Based Program

Launched in 2000, Bigs in our site-based programs visit their Littles at their school or at an after school program such as the Boys and Girls Club. Visits are once per week, and Bigs help their Littles with homework, play sports, do arts and crafts, play board games, or just talk. Activities are usually restricted to the school or site grounds, but special permission may occasionally be granted by site and BBBS staff as well as parents/guardians for off-site visits. Site-based programs take place during the school calendar year.

Site-Based Plus Status

After Site-Based matches have been meeting regularly for a recommended time of at least 6 months, they may have the opportunity to progress into a Site-Based Plus status match. In Site-Based Plus matches, Bigs and Littles continue to meet at their regular site once a week, but have permission to arrange additional off-site visits directly with the child's parents.

Interested matches may apply for Site-Based Plus status with their BBBS Match Support Specialist. Permission for Site-Based Plus status is up to the discretion of both the BBBS Match Support Specialist and parent, and may be denied or revoked at any time for any reason. **Child Safety is our #1 priority.**

Community-Based Program

After Site-Based matches have been meeting regularly for a recommended time of at least 1 year, they may have the opportunity to progress into a Community-Based Match. In Community-Based Matches, Bigs and Littles generally do not meet at the site. Instead, "Bigs" and "Littles" share activities they both enjoy in the community. That might include playing sports, doing arts and crafts, baking cookies, seeing a movie, fishing, going to a sporting event, taking walks, going to a museum, or just hanging out. In this program you schedule your visits at a time that is convenient for you and your "Little" and you get to enjoy these fun activities three or four times per month.

Interested matches may apply for Community-Based status with their BBBS Match Support Specialist. Permission for Community-Based status is up to the discretion of both the BBBS Match Support Specialist and parent, and may be denied or revoked at any time for any reason. **Child Safety is our #1 priority.**

Match Support Specialist Contact Information:

ADD BUSINESS CARD HERE

Your Match Support Specialist...

- ✓ Is your main contact for any and all questions or concerns you have in your role as a mentor such as
 - Questions about rules at your specific site/school
 - Struggling to connect with your Little
 - Concerns about the safety and physical/emotional wellbeing of your Little (see Mandated Reporting below)
 - If you have any suggestions for how your program could be improved
- ✓ Will professionally match you with a compatible Little
- ✓ Will check in and observe match meetings weekly
- ✓ Will email match support monthly throughout the year with questions that need to be completed and returned within **48 hours**. This is completed monthly to verify how things are going within the match and to address any concerns you may have
- ✓ Will offer you trainings and educational opportunities related to youth mentoring
- ✓ Is a resource for activity ideas and problem solving
- ✓ Is available to write recommendation letters, sign off on community service hour logs
- ✓ Is your main contact for **Mandated Reporting:**
 - If your Little discloses information that you believe requires further attention (victim of abuse or neglect) or if you suspect that your Little may feel unsafe in home or at school, please let your Match Support Specialist know **IMMEDIATELY**.
 - These situations are uncommon but they need to be dealt with appropriately

Our Bigs

Based on years of extensive research, Big Brothers Big Sisters requires our volunteers to be capable of the following commitments. Our professional staff work with volunteers to ensure these commitments can be met by providing coaching, training and activities to help you develop in your role as a Big.

- Commit to a minimum of one calendar year as a Big
- Commit to spending consistent, significant time with your Little every week during match season
- Follow all agency policies, procedures and ground rules. Because child safety is a top priority, we consider violations of policies, procedures, and ground rules to be grounds for match suspension or termination.
- Maintain regular communication with Match Support staff, including returning all calls and emails within **48 hours**. Failure to maintain contact may result in closure of the match.
- Participate in required surveys and assessments related to the match relationship and youth outcomes.
- Complete assigned training.
- Encouraged to attend additional field trips throughout the year.
- Encouraged to maintain contact with Little over the summer through letters.

Activities

How will we spend our time together?

An hour flies by! Try to plan out some activities for you and your little to do together before you arrive. See our example below:

- 10 minutes- Reconnect by talking about the past week
- 10 minutes- Read together or work on some homework
- 15 minutes- Play a board game / work on a craft project
- 15 minutes- Do something active
- 10 minutes- Provide encouragement and plan for the next meeting!

* Activity ideas can be found on our website or by talking to your Match Support Specialist. *

Child Abuse

Types of Abuse

The four major types of child abuse include **physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect**. Although behavioral indicators and physical symptoms from the four areas may overlap, it is important to understand the signs that are specific to each area.

Physical Abuse is defined by the laws of the Commonwealth as “the non-accidental commission of any act by a caretaker upon a child under eighteen which causes, or creates, a substantial risk of physical or emotional injury, or constitutes a sexual offense under state law, or any sexual contact between a caretaker and a child under the care of that individual.” When these physical signs are insufficiently explained by the child, or occur at an unusually high rate, the volunteer should take notice and discuss this information with the BBBS staff.

○ **Behavioral Signs**

- Child is uncomfortable with physical contact.
- Child demonstrates self-destructive behavior, including self-mutilation (cuts), alcohol and substance abuse, promiscuity.
- Arrives at school early or stays late, as if afraid to be at home.
- Chronic running away behavior, particularly in adolescents.
- Body movements appear uncomfortable, or child complains of soreness.
- Child becomes apprehensive when other children cry.
- Demonstrates extremes in behaviors
- Wears layers of clothes that are not compatible with the weather, to cover up his/her body.
- Seems to be fearful of parents.
- States he or she is afraid to go home or cries when it is time to leave.

Emotional Abuse It is defined as “an impairment to, or disorder of the intellectual or psychological capacity of a child, as evidenced by observable and substantial reduction in the child’s ability to function within a normal range of performance and behavior.”

○ **Behavioral signs**

- Habit disorders thumb-sucking ,rocking or eating disorders
- Conduct disorders including social withdrawal, and anti-social behavior
- Neurotic traits such as sleep disorders and inhibition to play
- Hysteria; obsessive or compulsive behaviors; phobias: or hypochondria
- Behavior extremes
- Over-adaptive behaviors
- Delays in emotional or intellectual development
- Suicide attempts or self-destructive behavior
- Alcohol or substance abuse
- Promiscuity

Sexual Abuse is defined as “any type of sexual contact or interaction between a child and adult when the child is being used as an object of gratification for an adult’s sexual needs or desires; this includes

intercourse (oral, genital, or anal sexual penetration), sexual exploitation, and molestation (verbally enticing, fondling, masturbating, exposing of sexual organs).” Sexual abuse is not only performed by adults on children. Older or bigger children may force younger, smaller children into some types of “sex play”. This type of coercive behavior is different from normal sexual curiosity between young children. Sexual abuse is motivated by the abuser’s desire for power and control, rather than sexual fulfillment. Sexual abuse can occur in any setting in which the child is totally alone with the abuser, even when other people are in the same house or apartment. Caretakers who are sexually abusing children often inflict abuse when putting children to bed.

○ **Behavioral Signs:**

- Frequent psychosomatic complaints (headaches, abdominal pains, etc.)
- Social withdrawal or chronically depressed mood
- Overly submissive reactions
- Infantile or immature behavior
- Seductive behavior or promiscuity
- Role reversal with caretakers
- Poor self-esteem, lack of confidence, or devaluing/berating oneself
- Peer interaction problems, or lack of interest/involvement in peer activities
- Extreme weight changes (gaining or losing)
- Suicide attempts or self-injurious behavior (especially with adolescents)
- Extreme variation in emotional responses – hysteria, lack of emotional control
- Sudden difficulties in school setting
- Inappropriate sexualized behavior, language, premature understanding of sex acts, or promiscuity
- Discomfort with physical contact, closeness, or displays of affection

Neglect is defined as the “failure of a caretaker to take those actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability and growth, or other essential care. Neglect can be deliberate, through negligence, or unintentional, as in a person’s inability to provide for a child’s necessities.”

○ **Behavioral Signs:**

- Lack of supervision: children are without adult supervision for long periods of time
- Inadequate clothing or consistently poor hygiene: children are constantly dirty or unbathed; clothing is not appropriate for the weather, and children suffer from health symptoms (persistent respiratory problems, frostbite, or sunburn) that are associated with excessive exposure.
- Lax medical and/or dental care: medical or dental needs are unmet, including unfilled medications; symptoms due to poor medical and dental hygiene (skin conditions, excessive dental cavities or bleeding gums).
- Lack of a routine with regard to school: children are chronically absent or late to school; children have total responsibility for getting themselves ready for school.
- Inadequate nutrition: children are lacking sufficient quantity and quality of food; no attention to balance and/or variety in diet; children constantly complaining of hunger or rummaging for food; poor nutrition is resulting in severe developmental delays in children.

- Inadequate housing: structurally unsafe housing (exposed wiring, general disrepair); inadequate heating; unsanitary conditions.
- Child talks about the fact that there is no one to care for or look after him/her
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Involvement in delinquent behavior, drops out of school, or is frequently absent or late to school
- Demonstrating self-destructive behavior
- Steals food or begs from classmates
- Regularly fatigued, listless, lacking energy, or falling asleep in class

It is important to be aware of cultural expectations and your own personal values when considering a situation that you perceive to be neglectful. Families have different practices with respect to child rearing, and you may learn about beliefs that are different from your own. Do not mistake poverty for neglect. Overall, be careful not to place judgment on a family's lifestyle. If you do have any concerns, please contact the BBBS office immediately.

What to Do If your Little discloses abuse:

- Remain calm, and deal with the disclosure on the child's conversational level – allowing the child to communicate the incident in his/her own terms.
- Maintaining eye contact is important while talking with the child; he/she is putting a great deal of trust in you by talking to you, and your attentiveness is crucial.
- Remind the child of your “unconditional positive regard” – you will care about her/him no matter what has happened.
- Stress that the child is doing the right thing by talking to you, and reinforce that you believe her/him.
- Emphasize to the child that the incident was NOT his/her fault.
- Express that you are concerned and want to help.
- Tell the child that you have the responsibility to report the incident to people who can also help.
- Call your match Support Specialist ***IMMEDIATELY***. If you are unable to reach your Match Support Specialist, call the Big Brothers Big Sisters office at 508 752-7868.

Remember, if you suspect your Little is the victim of any type of abuse, that IS enough to file and you should contact your Match Support Specialist IMMEDIATELY.

**We DO NOT expect you to handle this situation alone.
As a Big Brother/Big Sister, you are a Mandated Reporter.**

Social Networking Policy

Big Brothers Big Sisters recognizes that online social networking (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Tumblr, Blogs, etc.) has become a very popular communications tool and that many of our Big Brothers/Sisters and Little Brothers/Sisters use these websites. In general, personal use of social networking sites is typically for communications between peers, including friends and family. BBBS wants to reiterate that your relationship with your Little is that of a mentor in addition to a friend.

Not all social networking sites are designed to support mentoring relationships. Please proceed thoughtfully when inviting or accepting an invitation from your Little to a social networking site. If you have any doubts, please contact your Match Support Specialist and/or postpone your invitation or acceptance. If you do choose to participate in a social networking site with your Little, you must adhere to the following guidelines regarding any postings related to your match or affiliation with BBBS:

- Do not participate in any online communication with/about your Little unless you have discussed this with the parent/guardian and Match Support Specialist and have received their approval.
- Never post any pictures of your Little online unless you have the written consent of the child's parent/guardian. That consent form should be filed with BBBS.
- Never post the last name of your Little, his/her parent/guardian or BBBS staff.
- Never post any contact information for your Little.
- Never post any identifying information about your Little (ie: child's home address, school the child attends, where the parent works, etc).
- Make sure that your page settings are set to private, so that only people you approve can view your online content. Ensure that BBBS and the parent/guardian are approved if you plan to post content related to your match.
- Snapchat is never to be used at the match sites by either Bigs or Littles.
- Set your social media accounts to private so that your Little and/or their parent or guardian cannot view your profile without your permission.
- When in doubt about whether or not something is appropriate to post, consult with your Match Support Specialist prior to posting.
- **Refrain from using your phone and/or electronics when you're with your Little unless it is an emergency.**

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

Mentor Agreement

As a BBBS Volunteer, I agree to:

- **Commit** to at least one academic year plus occasional summer contact
- **Take** advantage of training opportunities offered by BBBS staff throughout the year, including reading my Volunteer Handbook cover-to-cover
- **Consistently** visit my Little and **arrive on time** each week.
- **Dress** appropriately at all times when I'm with my Little and/or on school/site grounds. I will wear appropriate attire that I can be active in.
- **Refrain** from texting, receiving calls, and/or spending time on social media while meeting with Little.
- **Notify** BBBS staff as soon as I know I cannot make a scheduled meeting time. I will try to reschedule within the same week. I understand that if three meetings are missed, my match will be closed.
- **Maintain** all communication with BBBS staff by returning phone calls, texts and emails which includes Match Support, within 48 hours.
- **Contact** staff with all questions, concerns and problems (i.e. child asking for money, changing schools, etc.)
- **Be respectful** of the discussions with my Little and share when appropriate. If any concern about safety, wellbeing or abuse arises, I will contact staff IMMEDIATELY
- **Out of school/site** visits must be approved by BBBS staff and parents (see page 1 of volunteer handbook for match status explanations)
- If I decide to give gifts, I will only do so when appropriate (birthdays, holidays, etc.) within a \$25 limit and understand that it is voluntary.

Additionally, I understand and agree that when I apply to be a BBBS Volunteer:

- 1) I am in no way obligated to perform any volunteer services.
- 2) The information I provided will be used to conduct a background check.
- 3) BBBS of Central MA/Metrowest is not obligated to match me with a Little Brother or Little Sister.
- 4) I understand that volunteer Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Board Members, and Agency Staff as Volunteer Bigs are not excluded on the basis of race, religion, national origin, color, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, or disability.

Print Name

Affiliation

Signature

Date