



Big Brothers Big Sisters

SERVING SOUTHEASTERN PA & SOUTHERN NJ

Volunteer Training Guide





Big Brothers Big Sisters

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We appreciate your interest in volunteering as a Big Brother or Big Sister! As a resident or employee in Southeastern PA or Southern NJ, you recognize the new perspective that adult mentors can bring to children who need an extra friend and role model.

We know that you have filled out a lot of paper work and invested time for your volunteer interview. You are halfway through the process to becoming a Big! Over the next few weeks we will review your interview, contact your references and process your background check. During this time, please read this Volunteer Training Guide.

This Guide will give you more information about our programs and policies. It provides best practices for mentoring and will help you to understand:

- Realistically what it takes to be a Big Brother or Big Sister.
- How our professional staff is here to guide and support you.
- Common challenges and tested solutions.
- Why Big Brothers Big Sisters is the leading one-to-one mentoring organization.





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Thank You!

Thank you very much for your interest in volunteering with Big Brothers Big Sisters Independence Region. We know how many opportunities there are in our community for volunteerism, and we are extremely grateful of your consideration to volunteer as a Big Brother or Big Sister.

Far too many children in our region need an additional adult to talk to and just have some fun with. By signing up to be a Big, you have already taken the first step in Starting Something for children in our area.

This Volunteer Guide is written to help you understand your role; however our professional Match Support Specialists are available to answer any questions you may have about being a mentor. Our job is to make your role as a Big the most rewarding experience it can be.

Again, thank you for volunteering with Big Brothers Big Sisters Independence Region. Our community is now stronger because of you.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marcus Allen".

Marcus Allen
Chief Executive Officer



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About Big Brothers Big Sisters INDEPENDENCE REGION Programs

Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) has been making a positive difference in the everyday lives of children by matching them with adult volunteers in fun and rewarding relationships since 1904. We are very excited that you are applying to be a volunteer with our agency. Mentoring is a powerful thing. Experiencing activities with an adult friend and forming a trusting bond can have a powerful and positive effect on a child.

Key Terms

Big Brothers, Big Sisters or Bigs: We call our volunteer mentors Big Brothers and Big Sisters, or Bigs, for short.

Little Brother, Little Sisters, or Littles: We call the children who are mentored in our programs Little Brothers and Little Sisters, or Littles, for short.

Match: We call each Big and Little a mentoring match.

Match Support: This is our team of trained professionals who are dedicated to ensuring the health and success of each of our mentoring relationships. Our Bigs, parents/guardians, and Littles call their Match Support Specialists once a month to discuss their match. Additionally, Match Support is available day and night to answer questions, talk about concerns, and provide advice.



Results

Research confirms that children with a Big Brother or Big Sister are:

- 52% less likely to skip school
- 37% less likely to skip class
- 33% less likely to hit someone
- 27% less likely to begin using alcohol
- 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs



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Our Programs

Big Brothers Big Sisters Independence Region (BBBS Independence) has various programs, all designed to bring volunteers together with children who can benefit from the time a Big and Little spend together.

- **Community-Based Mentoring:** Community-Based mentoring is the “original” BBBS program, where volunteers are matched one-to-one with a child, age 7-18, providing friendship, guidance, and fun. Most community matches meet during the weekends or after school.
- **School-Based Mentoring:** Volunteers spend one hour per week during the school year with a child who could benefit from guidance, support, and assistance. During the visits, matches may share lunch, play games, hang out in the computer lab, or just talk. School-Based programs fall into one of the three following categories:
 - **College Bigs:** Volunteers from local colleges visit with their Littles on-site at the Littles’ school, usually for an hour during lunch, recess or right after school.
 - **Corporate Programs:** Volunteers from local corporations visit with their Littles on-site at the Littles’ school, usually for an hour during lunch, recess or right after school.
 - **Beyond School Wallssm:** Volunteers meet with their Littles at the Big’s workplace. The Littles are bussed to the corporation weekly or bi-weekly.
 - **High School Bigs:** High school student volunteers visit their elementary school mentees once a week during school year.

Who are our Littles?

- Children and youth in Southeastern Pennsylvania and Southeastern New Jersey who could benefit from having a positive adult role model in their lives.

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 teacher or counselor. We also reach out to involve children through churches, youth service organizations and other referrals. All children and their associated parent/guardian opt in to our program – we do not serve children who do not want to participate.



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Your Role as a Volunteer Mentor

The success of the match friendship depends greatly on the efforts of the Big, the Little, and the parent/guardian. Each person plays an important role in building a meaningful friendship.

What is a “Big”?

A Big is a friend and role model.

What makes a successful “Big”?

Successful Bigs...

- Put a child’s safety and well-being first.
- Are consistent and dependable.
- Emphasize friendship instead of changing the child’s behavior.
- Initiate phone contact and activity planning with their Little.
- Decide activities together with their Little.
- Are not authoritarian.
- Have realistic expectations.
- Are patient.
- Focus on having fun.
- Set boundaries and limits with Littles and parents/guardians.
- Know that the positive impact on the child starts to show after the relationship is already built.
- Contact their Match Support Specialist monthly.



Successful Bigs ARE NOT...

- Parent substitutes.
- Financial support.
- “Taxi” services.
- Babysitters.
- Peers.
- Therapists.



Best Practices in Mentoring

Many of us have had someone in our lives, other than a parent, who made a difference for us. They coached us, listened to us, and modeled good behavior. This is what you can do for a child in our program. It's not what you do together - it's a matter of doing something together on a consistent basis. It's showing you care. It's having fun with a child. It's listening to them talk about whatever is going on in their lives. It's a series of small moments that, in the end, make a BIG difference.

To make the most of your relationship:

- **Be consistent.**
 - Show your Little you think your time together is important.

- **Be a good friend:**
 - Listen, have fun, take time to get to know this new person in your life. Choose activities that you both enjoy and that will strengthen the bond between you. Don't set out to impose changes in your Little. Positive behaviors will develop after your Little trusts you and your Little becomes more secure with you.

- **Be involved and participate in agency activities:**
 - This connects you with other Bigs and Littles and allows your Little to interact with other youth in the program.

- **Communicate regularly with your Little, your Little's parent/guardian, and your Match Support Specialist (also, see page 14):**
 - Coordinate each outing with your Little's parent/guardian.
 - Maintain monthly contact with your Match Support Specialist to discuss the match, troubleshoot any challenges and get feedback on how you're making a difference.
 - Contact your Match Support Specialist anytime you are unsure about what to do or how to handle a situation.
 - We love to hear good stories too! Give us a call to tell us about your great outings or how you're making a difference in the life of your Little.

- **Work towards a long-lasting relationship.**
 - While we require at least a one year commitment, we encourage and strive for long-lasting relationships.

- **Realize that problems may come up, and be patient:**
 - It's normal for problems to arise in any relationship.
 - Try to balance your expectations of what it will be like with your Little and be realistic about how long the relationship will take to develop.



Child Safety

OVERVIEW

Child safety is our number one priority. We focus on the child's safety and well-being throughout the entire match. BBBS Independence has expectations and guidelines relating to Child Safety that we expect you to know and follow.



The following topics are covered in these guidelines:

- Monthly contact with your Match Support Specialist
- Supervision and transportation of your Little
- What to do if your Little gets sick on an outing
- What to do if an accident or injury occurs on an outing
- Public restroom safety
- Dropping off your Little at home after an outing
- Driving and bike safety
- Movies, video games, media and internet safety
- Activities that are NOT permitted
- What to do before you engage in high risk activities with your Little
- Firearm safety
- Pet care/control
- Involving family members/friends in match activities
- Personal boundaries
- Discipline/setting limits
- Gift giving, donations
- Use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco
- Reporting suspicion of abuse, neglect, mal-treatment, safety issues
- Personal stressors/life changes

Please familiarize yourself with the complete list of Child Safety Guidelines on the following pages. If anything is unclear after reviewing the packet, please talk to your Match Support Specialist.



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CHILD SAFETY GUIDELINES

The following safety guidelines were designed to protect program participants from harm, identify potential areas of risk and define ways to minimize liability. Volunteer Bigs are required to follow these guidelines while matched with a Little. *Please contact your Match Support Specialist for further consultation or clarification.*

Every month:

- Stay in touch with your Match Support Specialist to advise them of your activities, the development of your relationship with your Little, and to receive coaching and feedback.

Supervision and transportation of child/youth:

- Be responsible for the supervision of your Little and at no time should the child be left unsupervised or left with someone else during a match activity.
- Do not allow others to transport your Little (friends, family, roommate, partner).
- Maintain a working phone number where your Little's parents or BBBS can contact you while on an outing with your Little.
- Create a plan with your Little that you will both follow if you get separated while on an outing.

If the child gets sick:

- Never give medication unless given either verbal or written permission from the parent/guardian.
- Ask if your Little has any allergies to medication.
- Take your Little home and inform the parent/guardian of the child's symptoms.
- Always carry your Little's current medical form, contact information and the BBBS emergency phone number.

If accident or injury occurs:

- Emergency
 - Refer to the emergency contact information form.
 - Make the necessary arrangements to address medical needs, call 911 if necessary.
 - Notify parent/guardian of the injury.
 - Contact BBBS at 215-833-7466.
 - Report accident/injury to your Match Support Specialist.
- Non-Emergency
 - Apply basic first aids (Band-Aid, ice, etc.)
 - Notify parent/guardian of the injury.
 - Decide whether the activity can continue.

When using the public restrooms:

- Escort the child to any public restroom to ensure safety.
- Cross gender matches-escort child to the outside door of the restroom.



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When returning child home after a match activity:

- Ensure that your Little is safely in their home before leaving.
- Check in with the parent/guardian at this time or shortly thereafter, letting him/her know how the activity went.

When riding in or operating motor vehicles:

- Follow state guidelines which state that children ages 4-8 are required to be in a booster seat unless the child is over 80 lbs or at least 4'9" tall. It is also recommended that children under 13 ride in the back seat. Drivers and passengers are required to wear a seatbelt wherever they sit in the vehicle.
- Avoid using a cell phone while transporting your Little in a vehicle.
- Follow state guidelines for wearing a helmet when bicycle riding, skateboarding, roller skating and roller-blading with your Little.
- Ensure that your Little wears a lifejacket when on a boat, dock and anywhere else around the water.

Movies, video games, media, Internet:

- Follow content ratings for all media forms (PG, PG-13, TV-14, M, etc.)
- Viewing content with your Little that contains explicit sex, graphic violence, or pornography is not acceptable.
- Refrain from sharing information or "befriending" your Little if you have adult content on your My Space, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram pages or other similar websites.
- Do not post pictures of your Little on the Internet.

Activities that are not permitted:

- Overnight match activities are not permitted within the first 12 months of a match and must have prior authorization from your Match Support Specialist.
- Contact your Match Support Specialist for further consultation and requirements.

Prior to engaging in high-risk activities (rock climbing, scuba, white water rafting, etc.):

- Contact parent/guardian for his/her approval.
- Contact your Match Support Specialist.
- Identify any specialized skills, training, equipment and supervision needed.
- Teach, practice and develop necessary skills and safety precautions.

Firearm safety:

- Do not carry a firearm or have an unsecured firearm while in the presence of your Little
- If you work in law enforcement and need to carry a firearm contact your Match Support Specialist.

Pet care/control:

- Littles should be carefully introduced to pets. Be aware that Littles may have no experience with animals.
- Consider child's fears, allergies, establish boundaries and instruct child appropriate care and treatment of pet.
- Make sure pet is secured if he/she does not like children.



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Involving family members/friends on match activities:

- Remember match relationships should be primarily one-to-one.
- Be aware that Bigs assume total responsibility and liability for any other person who attends a match activity who is not enrolled in BBBS and are responsible for his/her behavior, supervision and safety.
- Secure permission from Littles' parent /guardian before inviting a friend or relative on a match activity. If inviting another minor child, Bigs must also get his/her parent's permission before the activity takes place.

Personal boundaries:

- Respect your Little's personal space and privacy.
- Provide separate/private areas for your Little to change or bathe.
- Appropriate swimwear and changing facilities are required for swimming.
- Affection is best expressed through positive /affirming comments.
- Physical affection may be expressed using a handshake, high five, pat on back or hug.
- **Wrestling, or tickling and children sitting on laps is prohibited.**
- Never sleep or nap with your Little in the same bed, sleeping bag, or sofa.
- Contact your Match Support Specialist if there are any concerns about a Little's boundaries, expression of affection, or if a Little's family member shows a romantic interest in a Big.
- Consult with the parent/guardian before discussing values, sexuality, religion, life choices with a Little.
- Never come between the parent/guardian & child; respect parental role and authority.
- Keep personal information regarding your Little confidential and discuss this information only with BBBS Independence staff.
- Excessive contact over the agreed upon schedule should be discussed with your Match Support Specialist.
- Communicate any concerns about your Little privately with the parent/guardian.

Discipline/setting limits:

- Physical discipline is never allowed.
- State expectations for behavior and any boundaries.
- Verbally address behavior concerns, clarify what needs to change or happen.
- If your Little does not respond, take him/her home and inform parent/guardian.

Gift giving, donations, work for pay:

- Gifts are permissible but not necessary for birthday, holiday, special events or recognition of personal achievement.
- Gifts should never be purchased and kept at the volunteer's home without the permission of the parent/guardian and Match Support Specialist.
- Donations of furniture, clothing, money, computers, bikes or any professional services to Little/family are not sanctioned by BBBS Independence.
- Providing opportunities for your Little to earn money should be discussed with the parent/guardian.



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Use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco:

- Do not purchase or consume alcohol, drugs, or tobacco or engage in any illegal activity while in the presence of your Little.

Reporting suspicion of abuse, neglect, mal-treatment, safety issues:

All volunteers of BBBS Independence are mandated reporters. As a Mandated Reporter, volunteers of BBBS Independence are required to make reports to the Child Abuse Hotline, ChildLine, when they have reasonable suspicion that a child is the victim of abuse (bodily injury, medical abuse, serious mental injury, child sexual abuse and serious physical neglect). When calling ChildLine, volunteers should be prepared to provide the following information:

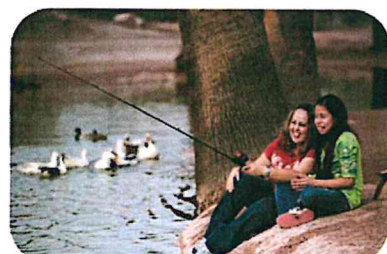
- Basic contact information of the family
- Names and locations of parties involved in the alleged incident
- Details about the alleged abuse and resulting actions
- When and where the alleged abuse occurred

Pennsylvania volunteers should call the 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline, ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313. **New Jersey** volunteers should call 1-877 NJ ABUSE (1-877-652-2873).

Please notify your Match Support Specialist or Program Coordinator if you file a report at any time for the duration of your match.

Personal stressors / life changes:

- Update Match Support Specialist of changes in Little's family, living situation, placement, health issues, safety issues, availability, inappropriate requests, etc.
- Update your Match Support Specialist of changes in jobs, address, phone, e-mail, work schedule and availability etc.
- Inform your Match Support Specialist of changes that occur in life such as job loss, relationship break-up, pregnancy, marriage, health/mental health, finances, DUI, driving privileges suspended, auto insurance cancellation, etc.





Partnering with the Parent/Guardian

Parents/guardians have entrusted their child to you. They remain the leaders in their family and we respect and honor that. The parent's/guardian's support is critical to the success of the match. It may take a while to establish your role with the parent/guardian. Listed below are some ways you can work with the parent/guardian.

- Make sure they are aware of activity plans, and ask if the activity is okay. Do not rely on the Little to tell the parent/guardian about plans.
- Communicate with them before and after an activity. Describe what you plan to do and what you've done together.
- Let them know about any changes in plans.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of your Little's family with those outside of BBBS Independence.
- Maintain a primary relationship with your Little, and do not become overly involved with the rest of his/her family.
- Talk to your Match Support Specialist about any concerns you have regarding your Little's family or your Little's well-being.

Supportive Parents/Guardians:

- Return phone calls and stay in regular contact with you.
- Work with you to find the best times for outings to occur and make sure that their child is prepared: proper clothing, ready on time, limited spending money if needed.
- Do not use you as a form of punishment. It is important that your Little knows that you will be in their life even if they have not been meeting their parents'/guardians' expectations.
- Never ask that siblings or friends be included your outings.
- Do not expect you to purchase anything for their child.
- Do not discuss your Little with you when he/she is present.

Building a partnership with your Little's parent/guardian takes time. For more information see Strategies for Common Challenges on page 19 or contact your Match Support Specialist.



How Match Support Works with You and Your Little

BBBS Independence's goal is for the relationship to be as successful as possible for everyone, and we work hard to support the relationship you have with your Little. Bigs and Littles work with their Match Support Specialist from BBBS Independence. This trained professional also works with the Little's parent/guardian.

Your Match Support Specialist will:

- Provide you with feedback and coaching about your match.
- Ask questions regarding the health and safety of your relationship.
- Find information and resources that might interest you and your Little.
- Help you communicate with your Little and their parent/guardian.
- Help you work through problems with your Little and/or his/her parent/guardian when they arise.
- Discuss concerns you are having with your match or the safety of your Little.
- Work closely with all match parties during the match closure process.

Regular Contact with your Match Support Specialist is a REQUIREMENT of being a Big. It enables us to ensure that Littles are safe and well-treated:

- Regular (monthly for the first year, quarterly thereafter) contact with your Match Support Specialist is REQUIRED. Without this regular contact, your match will be in jeopardy of closing.
- Call your Match Support Specialist MONTHLY and respond to any phone calls, emails or letters you receive.
- As a learning organization, we ask for feedback, conduct surveys, measure outcomes and value your input. Please respond to our requests for your feedback.

Match Activities and BBBS Independence Events:

- BBBS Independence organizes monthly activities for matches to enjoy together. These activities are either free or offered at a discounted cost.
- BBBS Independence often receives donated tickets to area sporting and cultural events. Your Match Support Specialist will be in touch with you about these offers.
- Your Match Support Specialist will be happy to help you with activity ideas for you and your Little.
- Check out the "For Bigs Only" section our website for more activity ideas and special discount offers: www.independencebigs.org

If your Match Support Specialist is not available, please speak with another member of our Match Support team. We make it a priority to serve you promptly. **If you have an emergency, please report it to our emergency line immediately at 215-833-7466.**



Common Stages of Match Relationships

As every experienced Big will tell you, your friendship with your Little 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 relationships go through at different times, usually depending on the level of trust that has been established.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT STAGE

What does this stage look like?

- You both are trying to figure out each other.
- Littles may try to get their Bigs' approvals or to 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 say you are going to do.
- Be patient and remember that relationships have ups and downs, and don't "happen" by themselves.

GROWTH STAGE

What does this stage 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/she 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 Match Support Specialist for ideas.
- Recognize and praise accomplishments.



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- If you need to give advice or address behavior problems, give reasons; avoid "shoulds."

MATURITY STAGE

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 he/she grows and develops.

What can you do to move it along?

- Develop long term shared interests, activities that you will do frequently together and that you both enjoy.
- Identify past shared experiences and enjoy shared "jokes."
- Learn something new to both of you, together.

TRANSITION AND "CLOSURE" STAGE

What is Match Closure?

- Match Closure is just another name for ending your match relationship.
- While Match Closure is a natural part of the relationship, we anticipate that this won't happen within the first year.

What are some reasons that could lead to a Match Closure?

- Once a Little is 18 years old or completes high school, BBBS Independence no longer supports the Big/Little relationship. However, we encourage the relationship to continue!
- Changes in the Big or Little's situation, including moving, changes in family structure, etc.
- Bigs and parents/guardians not following the rules and guidelines of BBBS Independence, including keeping in contact with your Match Support Specialist.
- **It is important that, if any of these changes or situations occur within your match, you contact your Match Support Specialist to discuss the Match Closure process.**

How do I handle the end of a match?

- Ending a relationship is not unique to a Big/Little match. **But it's important to remember that your Little's age and level of vulnerability will make it necessary to use special care and attention at this stage.**



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- When match closure is imminent working through feelings and problems with your Little shows him/her that your relationship was worth the effort. This helps to prepare your Little to handle future transitions.
- The match closure process provides an opportunity to review the great things that happened during the match with all match parties.

Strategies for Common Problems

Over the years we have seen some common challenges that can occur in any match. It's normal for Little/Big relationships to experience some of these situations.

We've collected some examples of these common problems and included them for you in the next few pages, including some tips on how to handle them. If you experience one of these challenges, you can bring the issue up with your Match Support Specialist and discuss in more detail how to proceed in a successful way.

“What do I do if...”

“My Little doesn't show appreciation?”

Situation: Your Little may not say “please” and “thank you” when you first start meeting, and even after many times together he/she may still not respond in a way that you deem appropriate. Remember that your ideas about how a Little “should” appreciate you can set you up for a big let down.

Strategy: While it's normal to want some feedback and feel appreciated, concentrate on getting that from the parent/guardian and your Match Support Specialist. The most important piece here is that you role model good behavior for your Little. “I had a good time” may eventually be a response, but may be a long time in coming. Sometimes he/she might only say, “It was okay.” Be sure you model the behavior you would like your Little to demonstrate and be consistent.

“My Little doesn't share feelings and/or initiate conversation?”

Situation: You may feel that your Little is not putting as much into the relationship as you would like. The relationship may seem one-sided for a long time with you doing the talking, but your Little not saying much.

Strategy: Be patient. Eventually your Little may respond in a more open and honest way, trusting you and confiding in you as an adult who will not disappoint or walk out on him/her. Conversation between you will grow and your Little may share more feelings with you.

“My Little never calls me?”

Situation: Littles love to receive phone calls, but seldom feel comfortable initiating them. Asking your Little to share with you the good feeling that comes from getting a phone call may help him/her to understand that adults also like to receive calls from people they like.



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Giving your Little specific times to call may help, as can enlisting the parent's/guardian's help in encouraging your Little to call.

Strategy: DO NOT stop calling with hopes that they will start calling you. This often backfires and then you will have risked compromising your consistency and possibly your Little's trust. It is important to be patient, and be sure to reinforce the behavior with positive remarks when they do call.

"My Little doesn't act the right way?"

Situation: Your Little may come from a family with a very different value system. It is not your responsibility or role to try to change the values of your Little. Your match is a learning experience for both of you. If your Little has never been to a play, they may not know what behavior is expected of them at a theater.

Strategy: Try to be content with the understanding that, through your example, your Little may come to respect values that you are able to introduce. Recognize this may be a long process.

"My Little doesn't seem to need me?"

Situation: Every child should have someone to bring positive attention to them, but your Little may not respond in a way that makes you feel you are needed. Feeling needed may be expressed by your Little in small ways and may be non-verbal.

Strategy: In time, you may learn to recognize small signs that your Little needs you. This will help you in being content with the knowledge that you are making a difference and are a much needed part of your Little's life.

"My Little doesn't make time for me?"

Situation: Your Little may not seem to have a lot time for you, but be assured that although other activities and family issues may appear to take up time, your Little is benefiting from the interest and involvement of a caring adult friend. You are the person spending one-on-one time with your Little; listening, sharing, and showing your desire to be together on a regular basis.

Strategy: No group activity, school event or family commitment can take the place of your special relationship with your Little. If you recognize the importance of what you are doing, chances will increase that your Little will recognize this too.

"My Little and his/her family does not seem to value education?"

Situation: You may be frustrated that your Little is regularly late or absent from school, does not spend much time on homework/preparing for exams, or is indifferent about their grades.

Strategy: As with anything, your Little and their parent/guardian may see school in a different way than you do. While you may not be able to change their attitude about school, you can talk with your Little about your educational experiences, the difficulties that you faced, your future goals, and the ways that your education has shaped your life. Don't forget that even though it is important to discuss school and education with your Little, your focus should still be to build a relationship and have fun together.



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“My Little doesn’t seem interested?”

Situation: Keep in mind that we all demonstrate interest in different ways, and your Little may not know how to communicate that he/she is interested.

Strategy: Be sure you do not make assumptions based on your Little’s behavior, and talk to your Match Support Specialist if you have questions.

“My Little doesn’t want to improve?”

Situation: Your Little may have many adults eager to tell what she/he is doing wrong.

Strategy: Your Little will respond to someone who points out and praises his/her strengths. These strengths (assets) can range from the values that the child holds to things he/she is good at doing. If your Little knows that you are going to be positive, complimentary, give encouragement, and appreciate the unique person that he/she is, change will happen in very positive ways. Your Little will grow in confidence, competence and caring.

“I don’t feel like I’m making a difference?”

Situation: The impact your relationship will have on your Little might not be seen or felt for years.

Strategy: Remember those who made an impact on you in your life – sometimes it’s not until much later that we recognize those who were responsible. Know that just by being a positive role model and being there for your Little, those little moments you share together WILL lead to big impact.

“My Little’s parent/guardian does not seem to be supportive of BBBS or me?”

Situation: Your Little’s parent/guardian does not return your calls regularly, does not seem interested in talking with you, and/or does not seem to appreciate the effort that you make for their child.

Strategy: If this situation arises, it is important to talk with your Match Support Specialist to determine the best plan of action. As the situation gets worked out, remain consistent with phone calls and outings with your Little. Keep in mind that their parent/guardian may be supportive and appreciative of your efforts, even though they don’t express it to you.

The most important thing to remember is that you will need to be **patient, consistent** and **persistent** throughout your relationship! Your relationship may take time to develop, but if you are able to manage your expectations, be open to surprises, and accepting of your Little as an individual, you are in for a fantastic ride. Your Match Support Specialist is available to help you through any of the above situations. By talking with your Match Support Specialist regularly, they will help you identify and address common challenges.



Top 10 Tips from Our Match Support Team

By building a trusting friendship with a child you can have a powerful impact on his/her life. Your one year or more commitment is important, since research shows that the positive impact on Littles occurs in matches that last for six months or longer.

1. **Contact your Match Support Specialist** once a month. They will be able to help you with problems that arise and will be able to provide a different perspective on how the relationship is developing. Your Match Support Specialist may have valuable insight from your Little and/or your Little's family.
2. **Be reliable and trustworthy.** Littles are often cautious about trusting others. Making and keeping commitments shows them that they can rely on you.
3. **Set standards for your relationship** early on. It is important that you set boundaries with your Little and their parent/guardian.
4. **Talk** with your Little to decide on the activities that you will do together.
5. **Consistently** share simple activities with your Little. Having lunch or just talking with them are some of the best ways to form a positive relationship.
6. **Collaborate** with your Little's parent/guardian to schedule and get approval for outings.
7. **Bridge the gap** between your visits through a quick phone call or postcard. This will let your Little know you are thinking about him or her and value your time together.
8. **Recognize and appreciate small steps.** Most relationships take time to develop and some of the strongest matches are those that build slowly but steadily. Be patient!
9. **Keep an open mind** and be realistic about your expectations of your relationship with your Little.



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Volunteer Training Guide

10. **Remember** that you are making a positive impact on your Little's life by just being there for them.

How to Contact Us

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