



**Big Brothers  
Big Sisters.**  
OF CENTRAL  
MINNESOTA

# COMMUNITY-BASED

## Parent/Guardian & Child Handbook



**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.

**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

## THE BIG DETAILS ABOUT BBBS

### **About Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS)**

Big Brothers Big Sisters has been matching Littles with caring Bigs in fun and rewarding relationships since 1904. By participating in mentoring programs, young people are:

- 75% more likely to receive a four-year college degree
- 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs
- 53% less likely to skip school
- 37% less likely to skip a class

### **Who are Big Brothers and Big Sisters?**

- People who work and live in your community
- High school and college students from nearby schools
- Retirees, military personnel, members of faith communities or civic organizations
- Ordinary people that are extraordinary

**What they all have in common is a sincere interest in being a friend and mentor to a Little. They are not paid – all of their time is volunteered.**

### **How do we select Bigs?**

BBBS staff make a professional decision about whether an applicant is eligible to mentor a Little after the applicant has completed an extensive screening process that includes:

- An application
- A criminal background and motor vehicle check
- At least three reference checks
- An in-person interview
- An orientation and training that helps prepare a mentor to support your child's healthy development

### **Who are Littles?**

- Youth who would benefit from having a positive adult role model.
- All Littles and their parents/guardians choose to be in our program and are able to commit to the program for one year.

- All interested applicants must submit an application and complete an in-person interview/orientation with a Program Coordinator. Information collected in the enrollment process will help our staff determine eligibility for our program. Upon acceptance, Littles are placed on a waiting list. Some Little's take longer to match than others depending on volunteer availability.
- Although the matching process may take some time, please know that we work hard to find appropriate matches for all waiting Littles. While waiting for a match, waiting Littles and their families are able to still participate in many of our agency activities and events.

### **When Bigs and Littles get together, what do they do?**

Matches typically meet 2-4 times a month (no more than once a week or 4 times per month) to enjoy low/no cost activities, such as playing catch, going to the park, doing arts/crafts, cooking, playing board games or attending agency sponsored activities.

## MY ROLE AS A PARENT/GUARDIAN

### **Parents/guardians should know about each activity and give approval in advance.**

When your child returns home from an activity with their Big, it's very important that you talk openly about the activity. Make sure that your child feels okay spending time with their Big.

## BBBS MATCH SUPPORT

### ***How we work with you, your child, and the Big***

**BBBS works hard to support the relationship between Bigs and Littles.**

**Our goal is for the relationship to be as successful as possible for everyone.**

It is required for us to talk with you and your child every month for the first year of the match. This allows us to provide support, feedback, coaching and for your child's safety. After the first year we will contact you on a quarterly basis.

**Your Program Coordinator is the main link between you, your child, the Big the agency. They will...**

- Find information and resources that you might be interested in
  - Connect you with community resources
  - Keep you updated on activities offered by the agency
  - Help you communicate with your child and their Big
- Work with you on any conflicts or challenges that may arise

**Why Match Support is required:**

- To discuss your child's safety or well-being; this is our number one priority
- To discuss general concerns, you may have about your child's Big
- To report any changes in address or phone number
- To report any important family changes
- To share success stories about your child's progress or special honors

*\*If we are unable to reach you or your child after three attempts, the match may be suspended or even closed. Please be sure to return phone calls within 3 business days to stay in good communication with your Program Coordinator.*

**Your Role: We need you to be an active partner!**

Parents/Guardians are important partners in helping to build a successful and meaningful friendship between your child and the Big.

## BIG THINGS YOU COULD DO TO HELP

- Be welcoming to your child's Big!
- Share your concerns, hopes and wishes for your child with your Program Coordinator.
- Help find the best times for outings to occur, and make sure that your child is prepared: wearing proper clothing, ready on time, limited spending money if needed, etc.
- Make sure that you know details of each planned activity (and have given your approval in advance), when your child will be picked up and when you can expect them back. Make a point of being home.
- Always ask about what the activities were, where they took place, who else was involved and your child's feelings about the visit.
- During the first year, monthly calls from your BBBS Program Coordinator are required. After one-year quarterly contacts are required with the Parent/Guardian, Little and Big. You can discuss your child's experiences: what activities have they been involved in, what does your child say about the outings? What makes you happy about being in the program?
- Please don't talk about your child with the Big when the child is present. If there is something you think they should know, call them when your child is away.
- Please don't ask that siblings be included. This is special 1:1 time for your child.
- Participate in agency sponsored events and activities. You can view and sign up for these events through our activity emails or by visiting our website: **BigDefenders.org**.
- Big Brothers and Big Sisters are "older friends." They are not substitute parents, babysitters, disciplinarians, financial support, a taxi service or counselors.
- Time with a Big is special. Don't punish your child by saying they can't see their Big. Often, this 1:1 time will actually help your child's overall behavior.
- Be flexible. Remember that the Big is a volunteer and has a busy schedule, too. Both you and the Big should make sure to call ahead to cancel any planned visits.

- Help make sure that your child returns phone calls and stays in regular contact with the Big and the Program Coordinator. Regular contact is important to the success of the match.
- Parents/guardians are expected to pay for their portion of the activities and the Big will pay for their own portion. We encourage matches to do low or no cost activities and utilize the discounts that are offered to matches by agency partners in the community. We have many great community partners that offer discounts to matches.
- Give it time: This relationship needs time to develop – at least three months – so don't judge it too quickly.

**In summary, the top 3 rules are:** 1. Know what your child is doing with their Big.  
2. Communicate any concerns to BBBS staff. 3. Be an active partner!

## SPECIAL INITIATIVES

**Mentoring Children of Incarcerated Parents** – The objective of this initiative is to create quality, lasting, one-to-one relationships that provide children of offenders with caring role models for future success. Mentors provide opportunities for youth to gain new skills and interests and expand their experiences beyond their families, schools, and neighborhoods by acting as a trusted friend.



**Bigs in Blue** – This initiative allows on-duty police officers to mentor youth who are facing adversity. This initiative was developed to create positive and respectful relationships with people who have authority, including officers. We currently have partnerships with the St. Cloud, Sartell and Waite Park Police Departments and are looking to expand to other departments in our service area.

**Bigs in Brown** – With this initiative we partner with local Sheriff's Offices to provide mentors for youth facing adversity. The mentors are made up of employees of the Sheriff's Office which may include deputies, corrections staff, dispatchers, administrative staff, etc. We currently partner with the Stearns County Sheriff's Office and hope to expand to other counties in our service area.

**Operation Military Mentoring** – Big Brothers Big Sisters supports children from military families and engages active duty, reserve, and retired military personnel as volunteer mentors. It's an opportunity to provide support and friendship to families who give so much to protect our freedom.

**Faith-Based** – Our Faith-Based mentors help the youth explore their faith journey while engaging in fun activities they both enjoy. Mentors may share about their faith to help the youth with their own faith journey and teach/model the importance of serving others. As with all of our mentors, this has to be prior approved with the parent/guardian and an interest of the youth.

**College & Career Readiness** – Big Brothers Big Sisters provides activities for our youth to help prepare them for college and career. This includes such activities as: scholarship opportunities, College Night, college visits, FAFSA Workshop, Career Exploration Night, etc. These activities are open to all current and past Littles as well as High School Bigs.



**Dr. Potter Bigs on Campus Mentoring Initiative** – We are partnering with St. Cloud State University, Spanier Bus Service and the St. Cloud School District (ISD 742); AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) students will be bussed to SCSU where they will be matched with an employee of SCSU or business professional from the community. They will meet twice a month on campus. The AVID program works primarily with students of color, low income, or those whose families are first generation college

students. The purpose of this initiative is to introduce the students to college and provide professional adult mentors to the students.

**Bridging Generations** – Big Brothers Big Sisters recruits and engages volunteers age 55+ to share their time and life experiences thru youth mentoring. This initiative makes a positive impact across the generations and offer long-lasting effects. Often we hear potential mentors say, “I wish I would have done that when I was younger,” thinking they are, in their opinion, “too old.” We have found great success in mentors age 55+, both for the mentor and the youth.

**Sports Buddies** – The Sports Buddies program is a fun way to mentor through participating and spectating sports. In the program one-to-one mentoring friendships between an adult and child are formed while engaging in athletics. Bigs make a 6-month commitment with the option to continue their match after the 6-month mark. They will attend 1-2 events per month organized by BBBS staff. Activities take place on weeknights and Saturday’s and last on average 2-4 hours. Big will only spend time with their Little at BBBS Sports Buddies events. The Little’s family is responsible for coordinating transportation to and from activities. The BBBS Program Coordinator will conduct all scheduling and communication between Big, Little, and Little’s family. Sports Buddies is a great way to mentor and build community with other matches that love sports!



**Big Couples** – Two adults can team up to mentor a youth. “Couples” may be a spouse, significant other or close friend. As a Big Couple, 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 the second semester of their freshman year or older.

## CHILD SAFETY Our Top Priority

Children's safety is our number one priority. We focus on the child's safety and well-being throughout the match, not just at the beginning. We want to work together to keep your child safe. While our staff carefully screens each volunteer, we need your help to make sure the relationship is healthy and the volunteer is making good judgments about your child's safety on outings.

- Your approval is necessary for all activities. If you are not comfortable with an activity that the Big suggests, do not approve it and notify your Program Coordinator.
- The Big should never ask your child to keep a secret.

### **If the following patterns arise, you should discuss them with your Program Coordinator:**

- Your child's Big wants to spend more and more time with your child.
- Your child's Big is frequently buying them gifts.
- Your child's Big often invites other children to join them in activities (siblings, child's friends, etc.).
- Activities always take place in private settings such as the volunteer's home, a camping setting, overnight visits, instead of more public settings.
- Your child's Big takes an excessive amount of pictures or videos of your child.

We know that you work with your child to teach them skills to help keep them safe. Please feel free to discuss these issues and any other issues related to child safety with your BBBS Program Coordinator. We want to work with you to keep your child safe.

As a parent/guardian, you recognize the potential of your child better than anyone. By giving them the opportunity to be part of BBBS, you're starting them down a path to an even brighter, more promising future. We look forward to working with you and your child!

***If at any time you have concerns regarding your child's match, please contact BBBS staff for support.***

# OFFICIAL POLICIES & GUIDELINES

**Here are the policies Big Brothers Big Sisters requires all volunteers who work with children to abide by while they are involved in our program.**

**If you have questions about these policies/guidelines or if the Big violates any of these, please contact the Program Team at 320.253.1616 immediately.**

## **USE OF CHEMICALS BY VOLUNTEERS:**

Bigs are prohibited from being under the influence and/or using any substance that could potentially affect: judgment, driving, reaction time, or otherwise jeopardize a child's safety and well-being, while their Little is in the Big's care or company. This includes, but isn't limited to: alcohol, illicit drugs, and legal drugs, including opiates, Ambien, medical marijuana, and other prescription medications. If there is any use of alcohol or mind-altering substances, the volunteer will be subject to termination. Volunteers are prohibited from the use of any illegal substances while matched with a child in the program.

Volunteer Bigs are prohibited from the use of tobacco products and electronic cigarettes (including vaping) 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.*

## **GIVING MEDICATION:**

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

## **FIREARM/WEAPON SAFETY**

- Bigs must disclose ownership of any weapons or firearms to BBBS staff. BBBS staff will notify the parent/guardian of this ownership.
- In the home: All firearms must be locked/secured and inaccessible to the Little.
- Personal firearm/carry and conceal – Bigs are prohibited from carrying, possessing or using firearms including but not limited to, pistols or other weapons while Littles are in the Bigs' 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 volunteers, including but not limited to those who have a valid permit to carry a pistol. An exception to this policy would be in the case of Law Enforcement Officers who are employed by a Law Enforcement Agency.
- No Little is permitted to use a firearm until they have completed a gun safety course and are at least 12 years of age.

- Parent/Guardian must give their consent for a child to use a firearm on a match activity (target shooting, hunting) and must have a signed release on file with the Program Coordinator. Game farms and target ranges are preferred locations for this type of activity.
- Parent/Guardian must also provide the Program Coordinator with a firearms safety course completion certificate (or a copy of the card) for the Little.
- Violation of this policy could result in the Big being released from the program.

### **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 child. In order 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:

- Anytime a Big is concerned about the health or well-being of the Little they should discuss 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

### **ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING**

BBBS recognizes that online social networking (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, Kik, Instagram, blogs, etc.) has become a very popular communications tool and that many of our Big Brothers/Sisters and Little Brothers/Sisters use these. In general, personal use of social networking sites is typically for communication 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 types of social networking are designed to support mentoring relationships.

### **BIG /BIG COUPLES/BIG FAMILIES**

Please proceed thoughtfully when inviting or accepting an invitation from your Little to a social networking site. Please make sure you have their parent/guardian's permission. If you have any doubts, please contact your Program Coordinator, and/or postpone your invitation or acceptance. If you do choose to participate in a social networking 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 or Program Coordinator and have received their approval.

- Never post any pictures of your Little online unless you have the written consent of the Little's parent/guardian. That consent form should be filed with BBBS.
- Never post the last name of your Little or their parent/guardian.
- Never post any contact information for your Little.
- Never post any identifying information about your Little ( their home address, their school, where the parent works, etc).
- Honor confidentiality guidelines within your match; be cautious when posting detailed information about conversations with your Little, their parent/guardian or with BBBS staff.
- Be aware of other postings on your page that are inappropriate for minors. Know that as a Big you are always a role model .

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

## **PARENTS/GUARDIANS AND LITTLES**

Do not post photos of the Big without approval of the Big and the Program Coordinator (the Big must have a signed release on file with BBBS).

## **Activities in the Big's Home/Cabin**

Home visits and activities in the Big's home are strictly prohibited for the **first three months** of the match to **allow for the healthy development of the match relationship**. To qualify, the following criteria must be met and approved before any home visits or activities in the home/cabin may occur:

- Big, Little, and Parent/Guardian is in compliance with the match agreement and all program policies and ground rules are being followed.
- Big and Little must meet with the Program Coordinator to complete the three month Strength of Relationship Survey.
- The Big, Little and Parent/Guardian consistently demonstrate good judgment, reliability and communication. Big must have prior parent/guardian approval for each activity occurring in the home.

Permission for activities in the home may be revoked at any time by the Big, Little, Parent/Guardian or BBBS staff. Frequent, excessive or exclusive visits to the Big's home will not be permitted. Match activities should include a wide range of activities other than at the home. The Program Coordinator has the authority to restrict the Bigs and Little's activities at the Bigs's home/cabin if there are concerns regarding the safety level or appropriateness of such visits. In that case, the parent/guardian and Big will be informed of the professional staff's decision.

## **OVERNIGHT MATCH ACTIVITIES**

Overnight visits may occur only when the following is met and abided by:

- **Enrolled in the Community-Based Program (not School-Based or Site-Based) for at least 24 months**

- **Those matches transferring from the School/Site-Based Program to the Community-Based program are eligible for overnights 24 months from the date they become a Community-Based match.**
- The Big has demonstrated good judgment and reliability in their commitment to the Little and has adhered to child safety guidelines, program policies and procedures.
- The Match must have annual in-office meeting with all parties before the Match is eligible.
- All overnight permission conversations and interviews will be documented in the Big Brothers Big Sisters database.
- The parent/guardian has approved the overnight three weeks prior to the overnight.
- **A request is made and approved by their Program Coordinator at least three weeks prior to the overnight and the Program Coordinator has completed the Checklist for Approving Overnight Visits.**
- The Program Coordinator will separately interview the Big, the Little, and the Parent/Guardian Based on the results of these interviews, the match support coordinator will exercise one of the following two options:
  - Deny permission for future overnights or
  - Indicate that future overnights may occur only with prior permission from Big Brothers Big Sisters for each overnight.
- Both the parent/guardian and the Big must sign a statement indicating that they have received a copy of the agency's overnight policy and agree to follow its terms.
- Before each overnight visit, the parent/guardian and volunteer (with input/approval from the Program Coordinator) must discuss the following items:
  - Emergency contact information for the child to reach the parent
  - Emergency contact information for the volunteer to reach the parent
  - Emergency contact information for the parent to reach the volunteer
  - Medications the child may be taking and how and when to administer them
  - Sleeping arrangements
  - Other people involved in the visit
  - Itinerary of the visit and scheduled time of return

The Match is always expected to follow BBBS child safety policies and guidelines.

**All overnight visits must adhere to the following 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.
- Their Little is not left unsupervised or in the care of someone else.
- Use of alcohol, drugs, 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 or sleeping bag.
- Private space is used when changing clothing, the Big nor the Little will not undress or change clothing in front of the other.

Special approval must be secured from the Program Director for an overnight that involves any of the following:

- More than one consecutive night

- Children or youth other than the Little and the children or grandchildren of the Big.
- An out of state overnight

No out of country visits will be allowed.

Big Brothers Big Sisters permission for overnight activities may be revoked by Big Brothers Big Sisters at any time if there is reason to believe that these policies have not been followed or that the safety of the child may be in jeopardy. Failure to comply with this policy will result in a review which may result in closing the match. This policy supersedes all other agreements made prior to this date.

The agency may at its own discretion plan group events/activities which may include overnight accommodations for a group of matches.

### 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:**

- Bigs must respect their Little's need for personal space and privacy.
- Bigs must provide separate/private areas for their Little to use the restroom, change or bathe.
- Bigs showering with or bathing their Little is not permitted.
- Affection is best expressed through positive or affirming comments.
- Upon their Little's permission, physical affection may be expressed using a handshake, high five, pat on the back or hug.
- Sitting on laps, massage, or touch of any private areas (genitals, breasts, buttocks) is not permitted of either Big or Little.
- Wrestling and tickling are 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 your child's boundaries or expressions of affection.
- Bigs are asked to consult with the parent/guardian before discussing values, sexuality, religion and/or life choices with their Little.
- Bigs are never to come between the parent/guardian and their child; and must respect the parental role/authority.

#### **DISCIPLINE/SETTING LIMITS:**

- Verbally, physically and/or emotionally abusive means of discipline are never allowed by the Big.
- Bigs are asked to state expectations for behavior and any boundaries.
- Bigs are asked to verbally address behavior concerns; clarify what needs to change or happen.

- If the Little does not respond, the Big is instructed to take them home and inform the parent/guardian.

**ABUSE, NEGLECT, MALTREATMENT AND SAFETY ISSUES:**

- Both Bigs and BBBS staff are mandated reporters.
- Bigs are asked to report any suspicions they have to their Program Coordinator for consultation.
- If the Big believes their Little is in immediate danger, they are instructed to contact legal authorities and follow up with BBBS after the call has been made.

**PET CARE/CONTROL**

- Bigs are asked to introduce Littles to pets carefully. Bigs are asked to consider the Little's fears and allergies; establish boundaries and instruct them about appropriate care and treatment of a pet.
- Bigs are asked to make sure a pet is secured if they do not like children.

**GIFT GIVING, DONATIONS AND WORK FOR PAY:**

It is ok for Bigs to give gifts for birthdays, holidays, special events or recognition of personal achievements. They must let the Program Coordinator know if they purchase a gift for your child. Value of the gift should not exceed \$25. Staying in the \$5 to \$10 range is preferred. Giving gifts is not an expectation of our Bigs. It is optional.

- Bigs are asked to discuss and get approval from the Program Coordinator before donations (furniture, clothing, money, computers, bikes, etc.) are given to Little/family. Bigs providing opportunities for the Little to earn money should be discussed with the parent/guardian and approved by the parent/guardian and your Program Coordinator.

**INVOLVING FAMILY MEMBERS/FRIENDS ON MATCH ACTIVITIES:**

- Matches are meant to be primarily one-to-one relationships.
- If another adult will be participating in a match activity, parent/guardian permission is needed.

**IF THE CHILD GETS SICK:**

- Bigs are instructed to take their Little home and inform the parent/guardian of their Little's symptoms.
- Bigs are instructed to never give medication to their Little unless given written permission from the parent/guardian.

**IF ACCIDENT OR INJURY OCCURS BIGS ARE INSTRUCTED TO:**

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.

**WHEN USING THE PUBLIC RESTROOMS:**

- Bigs are instructed to walk the Little to any public restroom to ensure safety and wait for your Little either in the restroom if there are stalls or just outside of the restroom.

**WHEN RETURNING CHILD HOME AFTER A MATCH ACTIVITY BIGS ARE ASKED TO:**

- Walk their Little to the door to ensure their safety.
- Check in with the parent/guardian at this time, letting them know how the activity went.
- Communicate any concerns about your Little privately with their parent/guardian.

**WHEN RIDING IN OR OPERATING MOTOR VEHICLES:**

- General safety rules must be followed.
- Seatbelts must be used.
- 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.
- Effective July 1, 2009, New Minnesota Law states: A child cannot use a seat belt alone until they are age 8 or reach 4'9" tall (whichever comes first). It is recommended to keep a child in a booster based on height, rather than age.

**BIGS SUPERVISION AND TRANSPORTATION OF CHILD/YOUTH:**

- Bigs are responsible for the supervision of their Littles at all times from the start to finish of a match activity.
- At no time should their Little be left unsupervised or left with someone else during a match activity.
- Others are not allowed to transport their Littles (friends, family, roommates, partners, etc.).

**MOVIES, VIDEO GAMES, MEDIA, INTERNET**

- 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 their Little is under the age of 13, the Big must get the parent/guardian's permission first.
- Viewing any media content with explicit sex, graphic violence or pornography is not acceptable while with their Little.
- Consult with your Program Coordinator for further consultation or clarification of these rules.

**Activities that are not permitted (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.

**The following activities are permitted but extreme caution must be used at all times and all safety guidelines must be followed. Parent/Guardian permission is also required before the Little can participate:**

- Activities that involve shooting a projectile at another person such as paintball, airsoft, etc. Protective gear must be worn.
- Boating, wake boarding, and water skiing but no aerial tricks. Littles cannot operate a personal watercraft without the proper certification (which can be obtained at age 12). Life preservers must be worn on any watercraft.
- Riding all-terrain vehicles, including three-wheelers and 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.
- Littles can be certified to operate an ATV and snowmobile at the age of 12. For more information on certification classes check out <https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/safety/vehicle/index.html>.
- Rock climbing (no free climbing), scuba (pool only), and white water rafting only with a professional/certified guide or proper certification.

## REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

### **Who should report suspected child abuse or neglect?**

Anyone may voluntarily report suspected child abuse or neglect to the 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 (this applies to BBBS staff and all of our Bigs):

- A child is being neglected or abused.
- A child has been neglected or abused within the preceding three years.

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.

It is against the law to **not** report suspected abuse or neglect to a local child protection or law enforcement agency.

**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 right away.

**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-hour time period 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 the child resides.

## BULLYING

Bullying is a widespread and serious problem that can happen anywhere.

It is not a phase children have to go through, it is not "just messing around", and it is not something to grow out of. Bullying can cause serious and lasting harm.

**Although definitions of bullying vary, most agree that bullying involves:**

- **Imbalance of Power:** people who bully use their power to control or harm and the people being bullied may have a hard time defending themselves
- **Intent to Cause Harm:** actions done by accident are not bullying; the person bullying has a goal to cause harm
- **Repetition:** incidents of bullying happen to the same the person over and over by the same person or group

### TYPES OF BULLYING

**Bullying can take many forms. Examples include:**

- **Verbal:** name-calling, teasing
- **Social:** spreading rumors, leaving people out on purpose, breaking up friendships
- **Physical:** hitting, punching, shoving
- **Cyberbullying:** using the Internet, mobile phones or other digital technologies to harm others

**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](#).

## MY CHILD'S MATCH

**E-Newsletter** – If you use email, you will receive a weekly activities email newsletter from us which highlights upcoming activities being offered by our agency for matches and various other opportunities in the community that your match can take advantage of.

**Agency Activities** – BBBS offers several agency-sponsored activities. 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 activity emails or by visiting our website: [bbbscentralmn.org](http://bbbscentralmn.org).

## CONNECT WITH US ONLINE

There are more ways than ever to connect with the BBBS community online. Share ideas and receive agency updates by joining us on Facebook. Just search for "Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Minnesota." You can also find us on:



Like us on **Facebook @BigDefenders** and visit **BIGDEFENDERS.ORG** for agency news, activity information, merchandise, photo galleries, and more.

## Top 10 recommendations for a SUCCESSFUL MATCH

### 1. KEEP APPOINTMENTS & BE CONSISTENT.

- When you follow through in having your child on time for activities, it sends a positive message to the Big that you value the match and the time your child spends with them, which will help build trust in the relationship.
- If there is a time when your child can't keep an activity appointment with their Big, please call or email the Big to keep communication open and honest.

### 2. COMMUNICATE OPENLY & REGULARLY.

- As the parent/guardian, all activity plans are to be scheduled through you, not your child, and be sure to let your child's Big know of any schedule changes.
- Be honest about match activities or actions you are not comfortable or happy with.

- Keep your child's Big informed if there are things going on in your child's life that may affect their mood or behavior while on an activity.

### **3. MAINTAIN MONTHLY CONTACT WITH BBBS.**

- Monthly check-ins with your Program Coordinator are required to ensure that your child is safe and happy in the match. If BBBS does not have contact with you on a monthly basis, is unable to help the match through any challenges, and is unable to reach you after 3 attempts your match may be suspended. If BBBS is still unable to reach you, the match may be closed.
- Returning all phone calls, emails or letters from BBBS will help ensure a strong, healthy match.

### **4. SET BOUNDARIES & KEEP THEM.**

- Before the match begins meeting on their own, sit down with your child and talk about your expectations for their behavior when with their Big. Be sure to make clear that your child is not to ask the Big for gifts or spend money on activities, as the focus of the match is solely on developing the friendship.
- Address concerns as they arise; do not wait until it becomes a larger issue.

### **5. BE PATIENT.**

- BBBS has worked hard to match your child and their Big based on shared interests, but that does not mean friendships form overnight. Take the time to check in with your child's Big before and after each activity when the Big picks up and drops off your child, as your teamwork will help your Big feel more comfortable around your child (and vice versa) more quickly.

### **6. MAKE A CALENDAR.**

- Talk with your child's Big 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 with your child's Big, whether at the Match Meeting or privately on the phone at a later time, 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 child's Big will be in the match.
- Talk with your child about the budget you and the Big decide on, and let them know not to ask for additional activities or money spent beyond what was agreed upon.

### **8. BE FLEXIBLE.**

- Everyone has busy lives these days, including you, your child and their Big. 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 for both yourself

and your child's Big, focus on consistent activities between them and your child's enjoyment in the match.

#### **10. FOCUS ON TRUST AND SAFETY.**

- Big Brothers Big Sisters takes every possible precaution to ensure the health and safety of your child when being matched with their Big, including background and reference checks of each and every volunteer that passes through our doors. Please trust that we are doing everything possible to keep the match, and your child, safe, but remember that you play an important role in this as well. Talk to your child after each match activity to help ensure their safety and satisfaction in the match.

## **MATCH COMPLETION**

### ***Addressing Completion in Your Child's Match***

At some point most mentoring relationships end. Sometimes they end because the match just doesn't fit, one of the parties has moved or changed schools, or life circumstances have changed. Regardless, positive match completion is an important part of healthy relationship management. Consequently, we would like to point out 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 Your Child**

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

#### **Acknowledge Emotions**

It is helpful to acknowledge your own emotions and the emotions of your child. 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 child's Big and the Program Coordinator 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 your child an opportunity to discuss completion if they desire.
- Use this event as an opportunity for a teachable moment. Discuss how moving on is a part of life.
- Discuss with your child's Big what you can expect from them going forward. Do they plan to stay in touch with your child? If so, how? What will it look like? 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.
- Complete closure questions with the Program Coordinator. This is a requirement, especially if your child would like to be re-matched.



## COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

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 its 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 is mid-April (please check website)
- Contact Ann Matvick at Ann @BigDefenders.org or (320) 258-4517 to get a copy of the application.



## WWBD 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 carry forward BriAnna's legacy.

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 in the program. Years later, BriAnna decided to become a High School Big Sister as a way to provide the same 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'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 has some of the same characteristics that BriAnna had. BriAnna was a very hardworking, dedicated student who worked diligently at achieving the best grades that she could. BriAnna may not have received the "A" that she was striving for but 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 that needed 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 anyone 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?" Please check out <http://wwbdinc.org> to learn more about WWBD and BriAnna.

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 Requirements:

- 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 thru Big Brothers Big Sisters for at least 18 months.

***Deadline to apply is April 1<sup>st</sup>. Contact Ann Matvick at [Ann@BigDefenders.org](mailto:Ann@BigDefenders.org) or (320) 258-4517 to apply.***

# RESOURCE PAGE

## AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

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

## PROGRAM SUPPORT TEAM

	Direct Line	Email
Ann Matvick	320.258.4517	Ann@BigDefenders.org
*Program Director		
Jamie Lodermeier	320.258.4532	Jamie@BigDefenders.org
Beth Marquette	763.688.0205	Beth@BigDefenders.org
Robyn Rieland	320.258.4512	Robyn@BigDefenders.org
Rebecca Fonss	320.258.4519	Rebecca@BigDefenders.org
Tasha Bruns-Notsch	320.258.4516	Tasha@BigDefenders.org
Mary Bellefeuille	320.258.4538	Mary@BigDefenders.org
Kayla Meyer	320.241.7996	Kayla@BigDefenders.org

**After hours emergency contact: Jackie Johnson 320.292.9235 or Ann Matvick 320.249.8769**

## 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

## COMMUNITY HELP LINE

United Way            2-1-1

