

Families as Partners

When it comes to the future of our children and the well-being of our communities, we're all in this together. So it should come as no surprise that we need the parents and guardians of Littles to be involved every step of the way, starting with the initial match. Once your child's mentoring match is made, you remain closely involved in many ways.

Here are some specific ways that you can help make your child's mentoring experience successful:

With Your Child:

- Encourage your child to keep all meetings with the mentor.
- Encourage your child to be ready and on time for outings.
- Be positive about the relationship. Let your child see you are happy that they have a mentor in their life.
- Talk to your child after every outing and be aware of how they are feeling about the match relationship.
- Ask open-ended questions about their outings and how things are going. For example, "What was the best thing you did with your mentor today?" can yield more results than "Did you have a good time with your mentor today?"
- Remind your child to thank their mentor and show appreciation for the time they spend together.
- Tell your child when you notice positive changes because of having a mentor. Your praise means a lot!
- Participate in training on child safety offered by Big Brothers Big Sisters staff and communicate with your child about the training he or she receives.

With your child's Mentor:

- Develop and keep strong communication with the volunteer as communication between Parent/Guardian and Big is a strong basis for the growth of the relationship.
- Approve activities and outings for your child and his or her mentor.

- Let the mentor know about any important rules, food limitations, or times that your child is usually unavailable.
- Let the mentor know right away about any changes in your contact information or other changes that may affect the mentoring relationship.
- Remember that the mentor is there for your child, not for you or other children in your family.
- Don't withhold meetings with the mentor as a form of punishment. Remember that you and the mentor are a team. If your child is being "grounded," work out a plan to ensure that the mentor can continue to see your child.
- Show the mentor your appreciation! Write a thank-you note now and then, or share improvements you've noticed in your child's behavior.
- If you have a concern you want to share with the mentor, do it when your child is not present to avoid the child's being embarrassed or uncomfortable.

With BBBS Staff:

- Develop and keep ongoing communication with your Match Support Specialist.
- Complete and turn in any needed paperwork in a timely manner.
- Tell us anything you think we should know about your child that may not be covered in the application.
- Help us remain aware of your child's progress and milestones. Your Match Support Specialist will contact you on a regular basis, but we welcome your feedback at any time.
- Let the Match Support Specialist know right away about any changes in your contact information or other changes that may affect the mentoring relationship.
- Participate in training on child safety offered by Big Brothers Big Sisters staff and communicate with your child about the training he or she receives. We appreciate your interest and involvement, and so will your child!

Common Concerns for Parents:

How do you ensure child safety in a match?

Before we even begin the matching process, Big Brothers and Big Sisters' National Standards of Excellence require that we screen each potential volunteer. This screening includes:

- A formal, written application,
- A background and reference check,
- An in-person interview,
- An orientation and training process that outlines the individualized needs of each child and provides information and resources on how to encourage positive youth development, and provision of child safety tips to you, your child and family.

To ensure a safe match relationship, it is essential to maintain ongoing and open communication between our professional staff, you, your Little, and his or her parent/guardian. Healthy communication is the best way to address any questions or feedback participants may have.

What kind of support can I expect from BBBS once my child is matched?

Throughout the entire mentoring relationship, a Match Support Specialist from Big Brothers Big Sisters remains in regular contact with you. They are there to answer questions, provide assistance, offer ideas for activities, give feedback, help you handle difficult situations and offer support in any way they can.

What if it doesn't work out?

We do everything in our power to make matches that last. However, we realize that sometimes situations change or things don't work out. If this happens we'll try to mediate and resolve the problem first, but if mediation is unsuccessful we will end the match. Your Match Support Specialist will support you and your child every step of the way, working toward the best possible outcome for everyone.

Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?

Your main point of contact will be your Match Support Specialist. The Match Support Specialist conducts all check-ins, provides solutions to problems as they come up, and coordinates the support you receive from other staff.