

PARENT/GUARDIAN ORIENTATION GUIDE



**Big Brothers
Big Sisters®**
OF LUBBOCK

3416 Knoxville Ave
Lubbock, TX 79401
T (806) 763-6131
Fax: (806) 472-0057
www.bbbslubbock.org



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ABOUT BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

Through continuous partnerships with local school districts, community service organizations and various businesses, Big Brothers Big Sisters has been able to serve thousands of children with meaningful and life-changing professionally supported one-to-one mentoring services. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lubbock is recognized as a 501c (3), has a governing board, completes an annual independent audit and is a community partner of Lubbock Area United Way.

Our Mission & Vision

Create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth. All youth achieve their full potential.

Enrollment Criteria

- The child resides within the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lubbock service area as defined by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.
- A child must be 6 to 15 years old to enroll in our program. Matched youth in the program can remain enrolled until their 18th birthday or they graduate high school.
- Both the child and parent must be open to forming a relationship with the volunteer, if the child is from a family with shared custody, both parents must agree to the child's participation in the program.
- The parent and child must maintain consistent communication with the agency and the volunteer (Big Brother/Big Sister).
- The parent and child must follow agency rules, procedures, and guidelines at all times.

** BBBS has the right to deny or terminate program participation of a volunteer or child at any time if deemed necessary.*

Who are the Mentors?

- Men and women who work and live in your community
- College students from nearby schools
- Ordinary people that are extraordinary in their service to others

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

How do we select a Big Brother or Big Sister?

Each volunteer must complete a screening process that includes:

- A written application
- A comprehensive criminal history check
- Three or more references
- An in-person interview
- Questions about their home environment
- A professional decision about whether they should volunteer with a child
- Orientation and training that will encourage your child's healthy development

ABOUT THE MATCH

When do they meet and what activities will they do (Expectations)?

- Matches typically meet once a week for 1-2 hours and may go biking, fishing, to a movie, go walking in the park or to a ball game. Together they will pick an approved activity they will both enjoy.
- Low or no-cost activities are encouraged.
- Mentors are not required to pay for costs incurred during outings.
- Parents are encouraged to contribute to the cost of outing activities.
- As a parent or caregiver you should know about each activity and give your approval in advance.
- When your child returns home from an activity with their Big, it's very important that you talk openly with them about the activity. Ask: What did they do? Where did they go? Who else was there?
- Make sure that you and your child feel safe and comfortable with the match interactions and activities.
- Both the child and parent/guardian must agree to be in our program.



Children are not excluded from the program on the basis of race, religion, national origin, gender, marital status of parents, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. Volunteer Mentors, Board Members, and Staff are not excluded on the basis of race, religion, national origin, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, or disability.

BBBS SUPPORT - HOW BBBS WORKS WITH YOU & YOUR CHILD

BBBS works hard to support the friendship between the Little and Big. Our goal is for the match to be as successful as possible for everyone. Bigs, Littles and Guardians will work with their Match Support Specialist on a regular basis.

In our effort to form a safe and lasting friendship, your Match Support Specialist will be in contact regularly. Sometimes they will call, meet you in person, text or email you to make contact. Monthly communication is required for the first year of the match and quarterly communication is required after the first year throughout the life of the match. This allows staff to provide support, ensure safety, etc.

Regular communication is a requirement of program services.

The Match Support Team:

- Finds information and resources that may be of interest
- Connects you with community resources
- Keeps you updated on activities offered by the agency
- Helps you communicate with your child and their Big
- Works with you on any conflicts that might come up

Reasons for calling your Match Support Specialist:

- To question your child's safety or well - being
- Discuss general concerns you are having about the Big Brother or Big Sister
- Report any changes in contact information (address, phone, email, employer, etc.)
- Report emergency situations or your child's illness
- Report important family changes (relocation, incarceration, etc.)
- Report success stories about your child's progress or special honors

Contact your Match Support Specialist by phone and/or email, whichever is most convenient for you. Should your Specialist be unavailable, please contact the agency for assistance.

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Office Hours

Monday - Thursday 9:00am - 6:00pm

Friday 9:00am - 12:00pm

YOUR ROLE AS A PARENT/GUARDIAN

We know it takes a special parent/caregiver to get a Big Brother or Big Sister for their child. You have an important role in helping to build a meaningful friendship between your child and his/her mentor.

Parental Expectations

- Be welcoming and willing to initiate contact with your child's mentor.
- Communicate regularly with your match support staff.
- Share your concerns, hopes and wishes for your child with your Match Support Specialist and the Mentor to help them in planning activities that are fun and educational.
- Help find the best times for outings to occur, and make sure that your child is prepared: proper clothing, ready on time, limited spending money if needed.
- 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 at the time of pick-up and drop-off and be sure to leave contact information should there be an emergency.
- Always ask about what the activities were, where they took place, who else was involved and your child's feelings about the outing.
- During the first year, monthly calls or visits from your Match Support Specialist are required. 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 Brother or Big Sister when the child is present. Should there be something you think they should know, call them when your child is not present.
- Do not ask that siblings be included.
- Do participate in events and agency sponsored activities that invite Parents to attend.
- Be flexible. Remember that the Big Brother or Big Sister is a volunteer, and has a busy schedule too. Both you and the volunteer should make sure to call ahead to cancel any planned visits.

YOUR ROLE AS THE PARENT/GUARDIAN (Continued)

- Help make sure that your child returns phone calls and stays in regular contact with their Mentor. Regular contact is important to the success of the match.
- Overnight activities are not permitted.
- Do not assume that the volunteer has money and will pay for your child's program activities. Mentors must seek low or no cost activities.
- Mentors are not:
 - *A parent to the Little*
 - *Financial support to the child and/or family and friend*
 - *A “Taxi” service*
 - *Babysitter*
 - *Therapist*

Give it time: This relationship needs time to develop – it takes at least three months to develop so don't judge it too quickly.



CHILD SAFETY - A TOP PRIORITY

The safety of children is our number one priority – No Exceptions. Our staff carefully screens each volunteer mentor, board member, staff and others who work directly with the children in our programs. As the Parent, it will be your role to make sure the friendship is healthy and the Mentor is making good judgments about your child's safety on outings.

Here's how you can further promote safety:

- You should know about and approve all activities; if you are not comfortable with an activity that the mentor suggests, do not allow and make other suggestions. Talk to your Match Support Specialist when you have questions.
- During an outing the match participants must always stay together and the child should never be left in the care of someone else. After the match has been active for 3 months, the spouse, roommate, or child of the mentor can occasionally be part of the outing. However, parents must approve any additional person(s) participating in the outing that the mentor wishes to involve prior to the outing.
- The mentor should not use alcohol or other drugs before or during activities with your child.
- The mentor should not use physical discipline or yell at your child.
- If an activity involves changing clothes such as swimming, there should be separate changing and showering places.
- Mentors should never ask a child to keep a secret.
- Mentors may want to buy an occasional gift for your child. They should ask your advice about this first.
- Mentors should not engage in tickling, wrestling, giving back rubs, or asking a child to sit on his/her lap.
- Showing pornography or sexual material is never acceptable.



CHILD SAFETY - A TOP PRIORITY (Continued)

Here are some patterns that you should immediately discuss with an agency staff member:

- Your child's mentor wants to spend excessive time with your child.
- Your child's mentor often invites other children or adults to join them in activities (siblings, child's friends, etc).
- Activities always take place in private settings (homes, hotels, remote areas, etc.) instead of in public areas.
- Your child's mentor takes an excessive amount of pictures or videos of your child. You must approve all pictures and/or social media postings involving your child.
- The mentor looks for reasons to buy gifts or spends excessive amounts of money on the activities/outings for your child.

We know you work with your child to teach him/her skills that will help keep them safe from violence, whether it's on-line, at school, at home and in your community. Please feel free to discuss these and any others issues related to child safety with your Match Support Specialist.

We want to work with you to keep your child safe!

REQUIRED REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Big Brothers Big Sisters staff members are required to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child. Our staff and volunteers are trained to respond if a child tells them about abuse. A report will immediately be filed with authorities.

Should you have any questions or would like more information on violence prevention, please don't hesitate to ask our staff for additional resources.

Should you suspect that your child is being harmed, immediately contact law enforcement and an agency staff member.

GROUND RULES

- When matched, parent and mentor will exchange home and work telephone numbers. It is very important that these numbers are up-to-date with the agency office. Should we not be able to contact you due to misinformation, this could lead to the closure of the match.
- The mentor has made a one-year commitment to spend at least 1-2 hours per week with your child. We expect the mentor will be consistent and dependable as well as the parent. It is expected that the parent will make proper arrangements to have the child ready and prepared for all outings.
- Arrangements for outings will be made in advance, as much as possible. Both parent and mentor must agree on the pick-up location, time, and date. It is the parents responsibility to ensure the childs schedule is flexible for outings.
- If an outing must be postponed or canceled, parent or mentor will contact the other as soon as possible.
- The friendship between the child and mentor must have limits that you set. The mentor is not to be involved or be a part of any disciplinary actions. However, the mentor has a duty to report any concerns related to suspected child abuse or neglect. The mentors role is to be a friend, not a parent.
- Be patient. Instant friendship rarely happens and the mentor and child may need several weeks to become comfortable with one another.
- Parent should not deprive the child of regular visits with the mentor as a means of discipline. In order for the match friendship to bring about positive changes, regular contact is needed.

Outings

- Outings will be limited to the child and mentor for the first three months. Should others become involved, they cannot join them more than once a month. The one-to-one friendship is of primary concern. Parent will help siblings understand that they cannot go on outings with the match.
- Activities will be planned by child and mentor with parent approval. Activities should be varied, and free to low cost activities should be considered. It is helpful for the match at times to do everyday activities, including routine chores and errands as long as the activity has learning and growth component.
- The child and mentor will maintain appropriate behavior at all times.

GROUND RULES (Continued)

Outings (Continued)

- No overnight visits are permitted.
- No alcoholic beverages, tobacco (including Vape products) or illegal drugs will be used by the mentor before or during an outing with a child.
- Firearms are not permitted near or around the child despite the possession of a concealed carry license.
- Letters, texts, and phone calls between the child and mentor are important, especially at times when the match cannot meet. However, communication must not be excessive or inappropriate. Parents must monitor communication.

Contact with Agency

- Contact will be maintained with agency two weeks into the match and monthly thereafter. Parent, child and mentor are required to call the Match Support Specialist after the first match activity.
- If problems arise in the match, or if you have any questions, please call your Match Support Specialist immediately.
- While good communication is encouraged between parent and mentor, the mentor will not be involved in family problems/situations. The Match Support Specialists will be consulted for this purpose.
- Lack of contact with your Match Support Specialist will result in match closure.

Reminders

- Parent will inform mentor about areas in which the child may need extra support or encouragement. Parents must avoid discussing the child's misbehavior or concerns with the mentor in the presence of the child.
- Parent, child and mentor are encouraged to express appreciation to one another by saying thanks, remembering birthdays, making telephone calls, etc.
- The mentor is in this program for the child. He or she is a volunteer and is not a trained professional. Parent and mentor are encouraged to get to know one another so that the match is supported by both sides.

*This is a partnership with the agency, parent and mentor.
The partnership only works when there is good, consistent
communication among all parties.*

Mentoring Development Cycle

Once your child is matched; you may be thinking what comes next and how fast will it happen?

The friendship takes time to develop. It is a different experience for every Big and Little, and every friendship will be unique.

Stage 1 - Early Development

From the first meeting to approximately four months.

What does this stage look like?

- Both are trying to learn about each other.
- The Little may try to get their Bigs approvals or impress them.

What can you do to develop this stage?

- Without prying, learn facts about the Big and reference them in your conversations: e.g. favorite things, skills, outings.
- Be consistent and flexible, when planning outings.
- Be patient and remember that friendships often fluctuate and don't happen without investment.

Stage 2 - Growth

From approximately four months to one-year.

What does this stage look like?

- This is the most crucial time regarding the development of the friendship.
- This is the time that may be a turning point.
- It is common, around the fourth month, that Little's begin testing their Big to see what they are really about and how much he/she can get away with.

What can you do to develop this stage?

- Keep in close contact with your Match Support Specialist for ideas and guidance.
- Recognize and praise accomplishments related to the match, if advice is needed or behavior problems arise, contact the BBBS office.
- Maintain communication with your child to determine their satisfaction level.
- Ask what they like about their Big/Match and have them give examples.

Mentoring Development Cycle (continued)

Stage 3 - Advanced

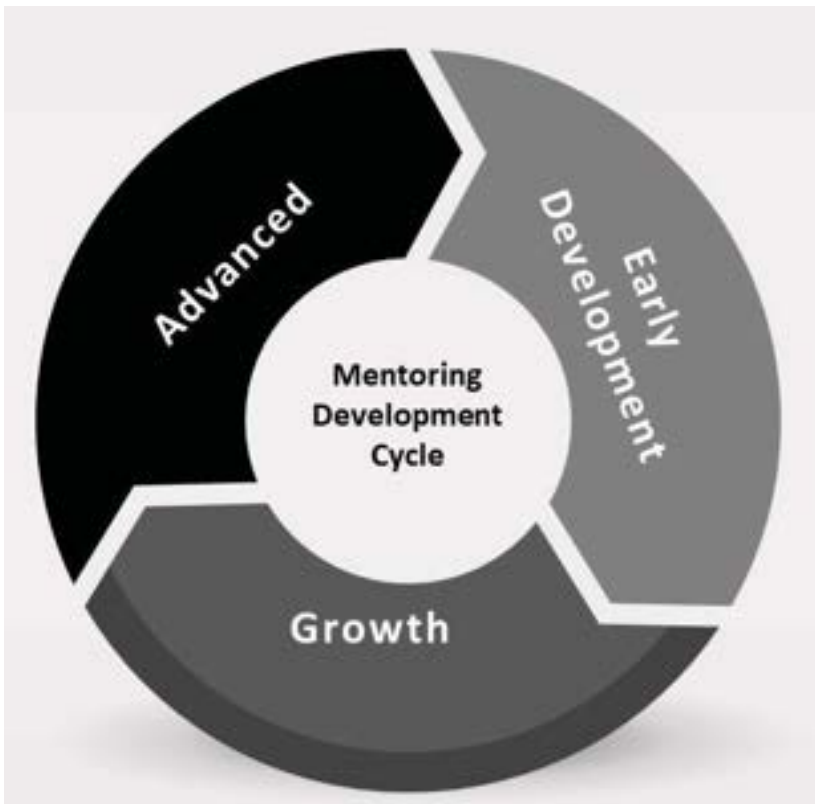
From the one-year mark and beyond.

What does this stage look like?

- The friendship is more positive and realistic and match activities are less structured.
- Bigs have shed their preconceived notions regarding the match and their Little.
- As the friendship advances, you will see your child mature as he/she grows and develops.

What can you do to develop this stage?

- Determine long term shared interests, activities that they will do frequently and that they both enjoy.
- Identify past and shared experiences that have been meaningful.
- Take steps to ensure the bond will continue to be positive long-term.



Match Closures

The pattern of activities together may become less frequent for a variety of reasons including: Your child or their Big has experienced a big life change, such as relocation, declining interest as your child grows older, schedule changes, challenges in the match, etc. When one of these circumstances occurs, the Big or your child may decide it is time to close the match.

It may seem odd or even pessimistic to discuss this stage when you are contemplating or beginning your enrollment, however, it can be a positive process that allows for reflection and personal growth for both your child and their Big.

A few closure guidelines:

- Should you decide to stop meeting or close the match, you are **REQUIRED** to notify the agency and your Big. A final meeting with the Big followed by a final match support with the agency must be completed.
- Failure to properly end the match can lead to a negative outcome for your child and will impact any future references or recommendations for other community resources.

Ideally, this transition period can be a positive time for setting up patterns that will be long-lasting for the friendship between Big and your child. You may decide to keep in touch and to get together regularly as the friendship continues into the adulthood of the child. You may decide to contact each other occasionally by phone, emails, cards and gatherings such as for birthdays.

It's important to note that any continued contact outside of the formal program guidelines should only occur at your discretion. This means the agency is no longer responsible for or involved in the friendship.

Match Closures (Continued)

The match closure process will include:

- A.** A detailed match support record showing all attempted and completed communications with the parent/guardian, Little, and Big, individually, to thoroughly explore the reasons for closure such as, safety concerns, level of satisfaction, and youth outcomes associated with the match.
- B.** When no child safety issues are present and parties are available and agree, every effort will be made and documented to have a facilitated final communication or visit with the Big and with the Little (preferably in-person) that provides for:
- 1.** An explanation for the reason(s) for match closure (as appropriate).
 - 2.** An opportunity to reduce any adverse effects from the match closure for the child.
 - 3.** An assessment of the accomplishments of the match in delivering positive outcomes.
- C.** The Agency Staff who had oversight of the match will provide a written assessment and recommendations of the appropriateness for rematch and re-engagement of the parent/guardian, Little and/or Big, either as a Big, Little, donor, board member or other volunteer, based on their successful past service; any need for additional support or training in future match consideration; and to determine further involvement and on-going communication with either party.
- D.** Written notification of match closure to all parties, including, when necessary, clarification of the risks assumed by match parties in continuing to connect outside of the agency's direction.



REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

24-Hour Texas State Child Protective Hot line
1-800-252-5400

Who must report?

The law states that it is the duty of anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that a child is abused or neglected to report this information.

When to report?

When you have any reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect.

Local info:

Lubbock County
Child Protective Services
Mon.-Fri. 8:00am-5:00pm
Local: 762-2680

To report a crime in Lubbock, TX:
775-2865

****Calls are CONFIDENTIAL****

Not reporting could result in a fine!

Unless waived in writing by the person making the report, the identity of an individual making a report is confidential and may be disclosed only: (1) as provided by Section 261.201; or (2) to a law enforcement officer for the purposes of conducting a criminal investigation of the report.

IMPORTANT

If an emergency occurs, please inform your Match Support Specialist ASAP!



COMMUNICATION TIPS

- Notice times when your kids are most likely to talk — for example, at bedtime, before dinner, in the car — and be available.
- Start the conversation; it lets your kids know you care about what's happening.
- Find time each week for a one-on-one activity with each child.
- Learn about your children's interests — and show interest in them.
- Initiate conversations by sharing what you have been thinking about rather than beginning a conversation with a question.
- When your children are talking about concerns, stop whatever you are doing and listen.
- Let them complete their point before you respond.
- Repeat what you heard them say to ensure that you understand them correctly.
- Kids will tune you out if you appear angry or defensive.
- Express your opinion without putting down theirs; acknowledge that it's okay to disagree.
- Ask your children what they may want or need from you in a conversation, such as advice, simply listening, help in dealing with feelings or solving problems.
- Kids learn by imitating. Set a good example.
- Talk to your children — don't lecture, criticize, threaten or say hurtful things.
- Kids learn from their own choices. As long as the consequences are not dangerous, don't feel you have to step in.
- Listen carefully to what they say, encourage them to talk and they may share the whole story.

Listening and talking is the key to a healthy connection between you and your children. Parenting is hard work and maintaining a good connection with your child can be challenging, especially since parents are dealing with many other pressures. Should you have problems over an extended period of time, you might want to consider consulting with a mental health professional to find out how they can help. Your Match Support Specialist can make a referral.



COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Boys and Girls Club

Educational and recreational activities for children ages 6-18.

John W Wilson Center- 3221 59th Street : 762-2889

Phea Branch and J. McWilliams Teen Center- 1801 E 24th : 763-0204

Optimist Branch- 3301 Cornell : 762-4990

Catholic Charities

Assists individuals and families with food, prescription medications, utilities, eye exams and basic dental care.

102 Ave J : 765-8475

Family Counseling Services

Provides high quality counseling services.

22 Briercroft Office Park #10 : 747-3488

Lubbock Children's Health Clinic

Pediatric clinic provides children from birth to age 18 with well checks, sick visits and immunizations.

302 N. University : 749-3803

Parenting Cottage

Provides resources for expectant mothers as well as workshops.

3818 50th Street : 795-7552

Salvation Army

Includes emergency shelter, soup kitchen, and seasonal assistance.

1111 16th Street : 765-9434

Upbring Foster in Texas

Assistance includes food vouchers, utility vouchers and hygiene products.

1318 Broadway : 741-0459

Women's Protective Services

Includes crisis intervention, basic food needs, a child's department, legal department, counseling and referral services.

748-5292

YWCA

Programs include: Y's Kids, Breast and Cervical Health Initiative, Lubbock Interfaith Caregivers, Child Care, Fitness, Taekwondo, and aquatics.

1500 14th Street : 535-7717