



**Big Brothers
Big Sisters.**

OF THE CENTRAL
UPPER PENINSULA

SITE-BASED VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK



BIG BROTHER BIG SISTERS OF THE CENTRAL UPPER PENINSULA

Mission: Create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth.

Vision: All youth achieve their full potential.

Our Agency

Big Brothers of Big Sisters of the Central Upper Peninsula
97. South Fourth Street, Suite D
Ishpeming, MI 49849

Office phone number: (906) 475-7801

Website: www.bbbsmgt.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/bbbscentralup>

Instagram: @bbbscentralup

Agency Staff

The staff at BBBS of the Central Upper Peninsula are here to give you support and to help you be an effective mentor. Please communicate with us about any problems or concerns you have.

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ALWAYS REMEMBER: We are not uncovering or granting potential. We are not saviors or heroes. Instead, we invest in meaningful interactions with kids to help them ignite and harness their own potential – the potential that they have had all along.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO CREATE POTENTIAL. YOU JUST HAVE TO DEFEND IT.

OUR PROGRAMS

BBBS is a nationwide organization that has been matching children with volunteer mentors in fun and rewarding relationships since 1904. We are so excited that you have chosen to volunteer with our agency!

Community Based Mentoring: When Big Brothers Big Sisters programming comes to mind, most people think of our Community Based Program. This program creates one-to-one relationships between "Bigs" (an adult mentor 21+) and "Littles" (a child between the ages of 7 and 15). Bigs & Littles (Matches) focus on low to no-cost activities and have outings that typically take place in the community, doing things they both enjoy together, like:

- Bowling
- Getting pizza or ice cream
- Hiking or going for a walk
- Spending time at the beach
- Cooking or baking together
- Playing a sport
- And so much more!

Some matches meet on the weekends. Others get together in the evenings after school/work. Each match is unique and develops a reliable schedule that works for them.

School/Site-Based Mentoring: This program is supervised by BBBS staff on-site at local schools or other community settings. Bigs meet with their Littles once a week for the entire academic school year (Fall & Winter Semester). During these sessions, a professional staff member will guide the match through activities designed to strengthen the match relationship and help youth build important strengths such as motivation, resilience, self-esteem, and social skills to help them succeed in life.

THE ROLE OF A BIG

ALL BIGS ARE LIFE QUALIFIED: Every potential Big has what it takes to help our kids. Being a Big is not the same for everyone.

A Friend

- Someone who will suspend judgement and unconditionally care for the child the way they are.
- Someone who shows they care by sharing, and giving verbal praise.
- Someone who provides emotional support and a non-judgmental ear.
- Someone who enhances the child's feelings of self-worth.

A Mentor

- Exhibits a standard of behavior for modeling honesty, truth and respect for others
- Involves their Little in safe and healthy activities within the school environment.
- Supports growth and skill development through tutoring, activities at recess or in the classroom.
- Encourages projects and developing hobbies.
- Is consistent, dependable, and honest with their Little.
- Shares their thoughts, feelings, fears and dreams to enhance openness
- Arrives at Little's school in appropriate attire on time and when scheduled.

A Positive Resource

- Helps their Little explore options, values, careers, and educational opportunities.
- Helps their Little deal with changes and issues affecting their life.
- Helps their Little sort out feelings and channel them appropriately.
- Helps their Little to focus and concentrate in the classroom.

A Responsible Volunteer and Program Member

- Commits to the match relationship as long as they are able.
- Communicates regularly and in a timely manner with BBBS staff.
- Shares and discusses problems/concerns regarding the match with BBBS staff.
- Attends scheduled meetings with BBBS staff.

FOR NEW BIGS

There's something unusual happening. Two people are being connected with the expectation that they will like each other, be compatible, and want to spend time together. It's not the way people normally meet, especially an adult and a child. If it makes you nervous and a little uncomfortable think about how it makes your Little feel. Suddenly there's this new person in their life.

You're probably different from people your Little knows. Your Little might not know how to react to you. Your behavior could be intimidating or discomfoting or seem just a little strange to your Little. So, remember to go slow and be prepared for reactions you might not like or anticipate. It's okay. It's part of the learning process... part of getting to know each other.

You always need to be very observant of the reactions of your Little, but initially you need to be even more observant. Pay careful attention to what you do and say and to the reactions you get. Work at modifying your actions in ways that lead to smiles and your Little reaching out. Try not to do those things that lead to withdrawal and disengagement. We know this seems obvious. We mention it here to bring it into your thinking and planning.

It can take some time for each of you to get comfortable with the other. Small things can have a big impact on this process, a word of praise, a friendly smile, a warm greeting. Try and keep from making value judgments which can distance you from your Little.

Don't rush yourself... or your Little.

SHOWING UP IS A BIG DEAL. Each time you meet you'll gain a little more understanding and your Little will become a little more comfortable. Think of it as a journey to a new country. "Each day you see something new and wonderful and learn a new thing about the people who live there. You begin to understand and then speak the language. The 'we and they' you began with gradually turns into 'us.'

It's not a straight path. It's a twisting path with some bumps in the road and a few dead ends that you need to get past. Luckily there are lots of people with great experience and advice to help you out. Take advantage of these people. They've traveled the path and can guide you past the potholes. A fabulous future awaits you and your Little. Enjoy the journey. Have fun, be fun.

STAGES OF THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

There are some **common stages** that most friendships will go through at different times, usually depending on the level of trust that has been established.

The Honeymoon Stage – From the first meeting to approximately 4 months.

What does this stage look like?

- You both are trying to figure each other out.
- Littles may try to get their Big's approval or impress them.

What can you do to move it along?

- Without prying, learn facts about your Little and reference them in conversation. i.e. favorite things, best friend, where they have traveled.
- Be consistent and flexible: do what you said you were going to do.

A common phenomenon in early match development is the expectation that we are going to immediately impact our little's life.

For example:

- Our Littles' grades jumped from F to A!
- Our Littles' became perfect kids!
- Our Littles' trusted us completely!
- Our Littles' showed sincere appreciation!
- Our Littles' realized how much investment of ourselves we had in their life!

Beware of the trap of placing expectations on yourself and your Little, this often sets you up for disappointment and you become burnt-out. Results may not be immediate and you may not see an impact for years to come. This is common but be aware that you are definitely making an impact on your Little!

Growth Phase - From the 4-month stage to one year.

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 this relationship.
- Your Little may begin testing you to see what you are really all about and how much they 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 they can trust you through your reliability, consistency and time together. As trust develops, they may begin to share bits of information here and there with you.
- Recognize and praise accomplishments.
- If you need to give advice or address behavior problems, give reasons and avoid "shoulds".

SCHOOL AGE CHILD DEVELOPMENT

<u>Physical</u>	<u>Cognitive</u>	<u>Social</u>	<u>Emotional</u>
<p>Use physical activities to develop gross and fine motor skills</p> <p>Motor & perceptual motor skills better integrated</p> <p>10-12 years; puberty begins for some children</p>	<p>Use language as a communication tool</p> <p>Perspective taking: 5-8 yr: can recognize others' perspectives, can't assume the role of the other 8-10 yr: recognize difference between behavior and intent 10-11 yr: can accurately recognize and consider other's viewpoints.</p> <p>Can remember events from months, or years earlier</p> <p>More effective coping skills</p> <p>Understands how his/her behavior affects others</p>	<p>Friendships are situation specific</p> <p>Understands concepts of right and wrong</p> <p>Rules relied upon to guide behavior and play, and provide child with structure and security</p> <p>5-6 yr: believe rules can be changed</p> <p>7-8 yr: strict adherence to rules</p> <p>9-10 yrs: rules can be negotiated</p> <p>Begin to understanding social roles; regards them as inflexible; can adapt behavior to fit different situation; practice social roles.</p> <p>Takes on more responsibilities at home</p> <p>Less fantasy play, more team sports, board games</p>	<p>Self-esteem based on ability to perform and produce</p> <p>Alternative strategies for dealing with frustration and expressing emotions</p> <p>Sensitive to other's opinions about themselves</p> <p>6-9 yr: have questions about pregnancy, intercourse, sexual swearing, look for nude pictures in books and magazines</p> <p>10-12 yr: games with peeing, sexual activity (e.g., truth/dare, boy-girl relationships, flirting, some kissing)</p>

A TOP PRIORITARY: CHILD SAFETY

Child safety is our #1 priority. We focus on the child's safety and wellbeing throughout the match, not just at the beginning.

Child Protection in Big Brothers Big Sisters:

- When you go outside with your Little, always stay with them & do not leave them with someone else.
- Do not use alcohol or other drugs before or during activities with your Little; Bigs are not to smoke when with their Little.
- Do not use physical discipline or yell at your Little.
- Bigs should never ask a Little to keep a secret from their parents/guardian.
- You may want to buy an occasional gift for your Little. Please get approval from a BBBS staff member prior to purchasing your gift.
- Be sensitive to whether a hug or other form of physical touch would be comfortable to your Little. Always respect your Little's personal boundaries.
- No personal contact information should be given between a Big and Little (phone number, social media accounts, home address).
- No communication and/or outings should take place outside of the scheduled BBBS sessions.
- Discussion of any inappropriate material is prohibited.
- Child abuse and neglect is a serious subject. BBBS staff members are required to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child. It's important for you to report to us if at any time you suspect your Little is being harmed in any way. Please refer to the guidelines & MI Child Protection Law in your Volunteer Handbook. If you have any questions/concerns at all, please contact our office.
- If you ever feel that your Little is in imminent danger, contact BBBS staff immediately.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT - REPORTING SUSPECTED OR ACTUAL ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Michigan
Child Protection Law
Act 238 of 1975

"Child abuse" means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare that occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment, by a parent, a legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare or by a teacher, a teacher's aide, or a member of the clergy.

"Child neglect" means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare that occurs through either of the following:

- Negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.
- Placing a child at an unreasonable risk to the child's health or welfare by failure of the parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for the child's health or welfare to intervene to eliminate that risk when that person is able to do so and has, or should have, knowledge of the risk.

"Sexual abuse" means engaging in sexual contact or sexual penetration as those terms are defined in section 520a of the Michigan penal code, 1931 PA 328, MCL 750.520a, with a child.

"Sexual exploitation" includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution, or allowing, permitting, encouraging, or engaging in the photographing, filming, or depicting of a child engaged in a listed sexual act as defined in section 145c of the Michigan penal code, 1931 PA 328, MCL 750.145c

Except for records available under section 7(2)(a) and (b), the identity of a reporting person is confidential subject to disclosure only with the consent of that person or by judicial process. A person acting in good faith who makes a report, cooperates in an investigation, or assists in any other requirement of this act is immune from civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred by that action. A person making a report or assisting in any other requirement of this act is presumed to have acted in good faith. This immunity from civil or criminal liability extends only to acts done pursuant to this act and does not extend to a negligent act that causes personal injury or death or to the malpractice of a physician that results in personal injury or death.

Every volunteer who discovers or suspects an abusive situation with their mentee has the responsibility to report the situation to the appropriate authorities. Child abuse, child sexual abuse and neglect are criminal behaviors. Individuals who report suspected victimization have the right to confidentiality and immunity from prosecution.

If you suspect any form of child abuse/neglect contact BBBS staff immediately!!

For more information on this subject, visit www.michigan.gov/mdhhs, www.childhelpusa.org (Child Help); www.preventchildabuse.org (Prevent Child Abuse America), or www.aap.org (American Academy of Pediatrics).
If you suspect any abuse or neglect call (855)444-3911.

VOLUNTEER BIGS RULES & GUIDELINES

Acknowledgement of Obligation

I agree to take an active part in the BBBS Site-Based Program, and visit my assigned Little as scheduled. I understand that this will not obligate me financially or legally.

I further acknowledge and agree that Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Central Upper Peninsula may, without incurring liability of any nature whatsoever to the undersigned, refer to the proper authorities any deviant behaviors relating to illegal drugs or sexual or other misconduct on my part.

I understand it may be necessary for Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Central Upper Peninsula to investigate my background regarding character references, employment records, and criminal history. I give my consent for any agency to release my records and to furnish it to Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Central Upper Peninsula.

Agreement to Protect Confidentiality

I agree to keep information discussed with me regarding a potential Little confidential. I will not discuss this information with any person other than the assigned Big Brothers Big Sisters staff, or the assigned counselor at my Little's school. I will further protect my Little's confidentiality by not sharing names and other specific details with anyone but Big Brothers Big Sisters staff.

Consent to Share Matching Information

I understand information about me will be prepared by the staff of Big Brothers Big Sisters and I consent to its disclosure to a potential Little. This may include personnel at the Little's school.

VOLUNTEER BIG'S SITE – BASED AGREEMENT

I understand that as a volunteer in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, it is my responsibility to provide guidance and friendship to my Little Brother/Little Sister. I understand that my Little will look up to me as his/her role model, and that I must set an example. Therefore, I:

- Will commit to meeting one-on-one with my Little during the designated time for the next school year and will participate in each activity.
- Will be confidential about personal and family information my Little discloses to me.
- Will follow school rules when on school grounds at all times.
- Will provide regular feedback about my match relationship, activities, and Little's behavior with BBBS staff.
- Understand if a problem arises between my Little and I, I will notify BBBS staff immediately.
- If I decide to buy my Little a gift, I will get prior approval from BBBS staff.
- Agree to stay with my Little at all times. This is a time to be with my Little one-on-one, it is not a time to socialize with friends.
- Will not exchange phone numbers/social media accounts with my Little, nor will I see my Little off school grounds unless through a Big Brothers Big Sisters sanctioned event.
- Will notify BBBS immediately of any changes in contact information, or if I can no longer participate in the program.
- Will actively participate in the closing procedure of the match at any time the match should end.

PROGRAM GROUND RULES

- I will commit to participation for the entire school year, show up on time, and will not skip a session without a legitimate reason.
- I will work 1-on-1 with my Big/Little unless told otherwise.
- I will refrain from texting, receiving calls, and/or spending time on social media during each session.
- I will take responsibility and pick up after myself.
- I pledge to be an active participant in our sessions and have an open mind. I know I will be free to share my views and opinions.
- I will be confidential about personal and family information of all participants.
- I will use polite and appropriate language and always be kind to others.
- I will listen to BBBS Staff and follow all directions given to me.
- I understand that if I have a problem with my Big/Little or am uncomfortable for any reason, I will talk to a BBBS staff person immediately.
- I will complete any surveys as assigned.
- I will feel free to make suggestions for the program to BBBS staff.

I understand that failure to follow BBBS of the Central Upper Peninsula standards, requirements, and expectations may result in match closure and termination of my participation in this program.

BBBS MATCH SUPPORT - HOW BBBS WORKS WITH YOU & YOUR LITTLE

BBBS works hard to support the relationship you have with your Little. Our goal is for the relationship to be as successful as possible for everyone. Bigs and Littles work with all BBBS staff from the agency. This person also works with the Little's parent/guardian.

Along the way to forming a safe and lasting friendship BBBS staff will be in touch with all of you to help you and your Little. They will discuss things in-person during one of the scheduled sessions. Monthly communication is required for the match. This allows us to provide support, answer any questions you may have, etc. You can think of your BBBS staff as the main link between you, your Little, your Little's parents/guardians, and the agency.

That's not all that the BBBS staff provides for your match. They also:

- Provide you feedback on how you're making a difference.
- Find information and resources that you might be interested in.
- Keep you updated on activities offered by the agency.
- Help you communicate with your Little.
- Work with you on any conflicts that might come up.

You don't need to wait to talk to BBBS staff – we love to hear from our Bigs. Here are some good reasons for talking with BBBS staff:

- To get feedback from the Little, and Parent/Guardian about how the match is going.
- Share fun stories about your match.
- Discuss concerns you are having with your match or the safety of your Little.
- Report any emergency situations.
- If you feel you are not connecting with your Little and think you may need some guidance.

Communication with BBBS staff is part of your commitment as a Big and must be fulfilled.

MATCH TERMINATION AND CLOSURE

We know from research on mentoring that when relationship closure is unplanned, abrupt, premature, or handled without care and communication, Littles can be harmed. In addition, mentors may also be left feeling guilty, sad, or lacking closure.

It may seem odd or even pessimistic to discuss this stage when you are contemplating or entering a mentoring relationship with a Little.

However, research shows that when mentors are trained in how to handle match closure well and, in partnership with Match Support staff, actively plan for the end of their match, it can be a positive process that allows for reflection and personal growth for both the mentor and the Little.

At the time of closure, Big Brothers Big Sisters will discuss with you, your Little, and your Little's teacher (and perhaps parent) about the best plan for closing your match relationship with the organization. When a match is closed, Big Brothers Big Sisters officially closes the file and does not continue to provide professional support or guidance to the previously matched parties. At that point, the match is no longer considered an "active" match, or part of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. This means that Big Brothers Big Sisters is no longer responsible for or involved in the relationship.

By this time, you and your Little have most likely invested a lot into each other and the relationship. During the closure process, it is important that you communicate to your Little your appreciation of him or her and your hope and expectation that he or she will be successful and happy.

When your match closes at the end of the school year, talk to BBBS staff about ways in which you can stay involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters. This may include being matched again with another Little, but there are many other ways in which you can support the agency. You and BBBS staff should talk about the best options for you.



**THEY HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CHANGE THE WORLD.
AND WE ARE STANDING TOGETHER TO DEFEND IT.
JOIN US.**



**#DEFENDERSOFPOTENTIAL
#BIGBROTHERSBIGSISTERS**