



**Big Brothers  
Big Sisters®**  
OF NORTHERN NEVADA

# **BIG Training Guide**

## **Community Based**

**Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northern Nevada**

1300 Foster Dr., Suite 210  
Reno, NV 89509  
(775) 352-3202 phone  
(775) 322-8898 fax

[www.bbbsnn.org](http://www.bbbsnn.org)

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Page(s)</b>
About BBBS—Vision, Mission and History	3
Our Lingo and Our Littles	4
Program Options	5
How to Get Involved – Enrollment	6
Your Role: What You Are	7
Developmental Relationships	8
Your Role: What You Are Not	9
Child & Parent/Guardian’s Role	10
Our Role: The Match Support Specialist	11-12
Expectations	13-15
Building a Relationship with Your Little	16
Building a Relationship with Your Little’s Family	17
Appropriate Boundaries with Your Little’s Parent/Guardian	18
Valuable Relationship Stages	19-21
The Match Closure Process	22-24
Effective Relationship Strategies	25-30
Culture: Challenges and Opportunities	31-33
Strategies for Common Problems	34-38
Youth Development	39-41
The Assets Approach	42-47
Child Safety- A Top Priority	48-49
Emergency Contact Information	50
Ground Rules	51-55
You CAN Make a Difference in the Life of a Child	56
Infographic: Relationships & Outcomes of BBBS	57
Other Ways You Can Help Start Something	58-59
Summary	60
Thank You	61

## **Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based**

### **About BBBS**

#### **Vision:**

All youth achieve their full potential.

#### **Mission:**

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

We work with parents/guardians, volunteers and others in the community and hold ourselves accountable for each child in our program achieving:

- Higher aspirations, greater confidence and better relationships
- Avoidance of risky behaviors
- Educations success

#### **History:**

The original inspiration for Big Brothers Big Sisters came when a man in Philadelphia found a homeless child eating from a garbage pail. The man befriended the child and recruited his friends to befriend the child's friend. Around the same time in NY a judge in juvenile court became aware that most of the young boys appearing before him were from "fatherless homes." He asked people at the courthouse to become mentors for the boys and the program grew. In 1904 that clerk, Ernest Coulter, founds Big Brothers.

Around the same time, the Ladies of Charity were befriending girls coming through the New York Children's Court. This would become Big Sisters. The two programs eventually merged in 1977 to form Big Brothers Big Sisters.

In Nevada, BBBS began in 1973 in Las Vegas. Over the years the services in Nevada grew to include Clark County, Ely and Pahrump. In June 2001 BBBS opened in the Reno/Sparks area as a branch of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Nevada. Our local branch of BBBS became its own agency, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northern Nevada, in the summer of 2005.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northern Nevada serves over 600 youth annually. We currently have \_\_\_\_\_ active matches.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Our Lingo & Our Littles:

#### Lingo:

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Abbreviation</b>
Big Brothers Big Sisters	The program and agency	BBBS
Match Support Specialist	The staff person who will support and supervise your experience in a match	MSS
Big Brother or Big Sister	An adult, volunteer mentor	Big
Little Brother or Little Sister	A youth mentee	Little
A Match	A Big and Little paired together	

#### Who are our Littles?

- Children from our community who are facing adversity and who could benefit from having a positive adult role model.
  - Children living in poverty
  - Children usually from a single parent home
  - Children may also be in foster care, in family in which a member has been arrested and jailed, or live with both parents
- Children who like to have fun & who chose to participate.
- Ages 6 and older.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Program Options

Big Brothers Big Sisters has been bringing a little magic into the everyday lives of children by matching them with adult volunteers in fun and rewarding relationships since 1904. We are very excited that you are considering being a volunteer with our agency.

Mentoring is a powerful thing. It's fun, most anyone can be a mentor, and it's important.

**Experiencing fun activities together and forming a trusting bond with a child can have a powerful and positive impact on the child.**

We have two basic ways you can become a Big.

1. As a Big you can meet with a Little in the **community** at a time convenient for both you and the child. You can take in a movie, go wash your car or whatever else might be a fun way to spend some time together.

OR

2. Bigs and Littles can meet at the Little's **school/site** typically at the same day & time each week.

#### **Programs:**

We have several agency programs that are either community-based or site-based. These include:

#### **Site Based (currently ON HOLD):**

Bigs, 18 or older, are paired with an elementary school student at one of our site partners, often schools and after school programs. They meet once a week for 1 hour at lunch or after school. We have a temporary Virtual Program option for 1hr per week where matches are only permitted to meet through virtual means such as video chat, phone call, text, or BBBS app.

#### **Community Based:**

Bigs, usually 21 or older, are paired with Littles, 6-14 years old. They meet once a week, for an average of 1-3 hours.

#### **Partners:**

Married couples can team up to be Bigs to a Little Brother. One or both of the spouses can participate on the weekly outings. It is a great option for busy people who may not be able to commit each week themselves. It also is fun for couples to work together for a common cause.

Little Sisters are matched with Big Sisters.

Little Brothers can be matched with Big Brothers or Big Sisters.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based



### How to Get Involved – Enrollment

1. BBBS will gather information to learn more about you.
  - **Interview**
    - Scheduled at your convenience, usually within 2 weeks of first contact
  - **References**, at least three
    - You can provide reference names and numbers at any time, we can usually complete the checks in a few days
    - References must include information for another BBBS agency or other organization where you have worked with children in the last 5 years
  - **Criminal history record check** that include fingerprinting
    - Results after being fingerprinted can take 2-12 weeks
  - **Training**
    - Scheduled after your interview and usually done in a group format
2. **Review** and approval by the agency.
  - Program Supervisor reviews all applications once complete
  - You will be notified of your approval as soon as possible
    - BBBS has the right to deny any applicant we feel is not suitable as a mentor
3. **Little selected** based on preferences, shared interests, your strengths & experience, and general compatibility.
4. If agreeable to all parties, **you get matched**.
  - A Match Support Specialist will call and tell you about your Little and then work with you to arrange the day, time and location for the introduction
  - You are usually introduced to your Little as soon as possible, usually within two weeks of being approved.
5. Start having FUN, making a difference in the life of a child, and enjoying your new relationship.

**Safety is our top priority.** As a result, it can take several weeks for us to collect the information we need. We appreciate your patience while we collect the information. **Total time between first contact and match introduction is usually about 2 months.**

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Your Role

The success of mentoring depends greatly on the efforts of the Big, the Little, and the parent/guardian. Each one plays an important role in helping build a meaningful mentor/mentee relationship.

#### What is a “Big”?

It won't be long before you meet your Little Brother or Little Sister for the first time. When you do, it will help for you to understand your role as a Big. A Big is a mentor and friend\*.

Big Brothers Big Sisters suggests three roles:

1. Trusted adult friend
2. Positive role model
3. Nurturer of possibilities/Defender of potential

\*It is important to note that while mentoring includes elements of friendship, you and your Little are not peers. We use the word friend and mentor somewhat interchangeably, but it is important to understand the difference between a *peer* friend and an *adult* friend. There is information, jokes, stories, and ways of behavior that define your adult friendships that is never appropriate with a Little. Similarly, expectations about reciprocity that you have for adult friendships are inappropriate for youth mentoring. As the adult, you should take initiative for making plans and maintaining communication. It is not appropriate to ask your Little will help you through adult problems or challenges; nor is it appropriate to ask or imply that your Little to keep a secret for you. Your actions towards your Little should be age appropriate for the child.

The Search Institute, “a nonprofit organization that studies and works to strengthen youth success in schools, youth programs, families, and communities,” has identified five key factors of Developmental Relationships:






1. Express care
2. Challenge growth
3. Provide support
4. Share power
5. Expand possibilities

Your Role: Developmental Relationships



The Developmental Relationships Framework

Young people are more likely to grow up successfully when they experience developmental relationships with important people in their lives. Developmental relationships are close connections through which young people discover who they are, cultivate abilities to shape their own lives, and learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them. Search Institute has identified five elements—expressed in 20 specific actions—that make relationships powerful in young people’s lives.

Elements	Actions	Definitions
 <p><b>Express Care</b> Show me that I matter to you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Be dependable</b>.....Be someone I can trust.</li> <li>• <b>Listen</b>.....Really pay attention when we are together.</li> <li>• <b>Believe in me</b>.....Make me feel known and valued.</li> <li>• <b>Be warm</b>.....Show me you enjoy being with me.</li> <li>• <b>Encourage</b>.....Praise me for my efforts and achievements.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>Challenge Growth</b> Push me to keep getting better.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Expect my best</b>.....Expect me to live up to my potential.</li> <li>• <b>Stretch</b>.....Push me to go further.</li> <li>• <b>Hold me accountable</b>.....Insist I take responsibility for my actions.</li> <li>• <b>Reflect on failures</b>.....Help me learn from mistakes and setbacks.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>Provide Support</b> Help me complete tasks and achieve goals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Navigate</b>.....Guide me through hard situations and systems.</li> <li>• <b>Empower</b>.....Build my confidence to take charge of my life.</li> <li>• <b>Advocate</b>.....Stand up for me when I need it.</li> <li>• <b>Set boundaries</b>.....Put limits in place that keep me on track.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>Share Power</b> Treat me with respect and give me a say.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Respect me</b>.....Take me seriously and treat me fairly.</li> <li>• <b>Include me</b>.....Involve me in decisions that affect me.</li> <li>• <b>Collaborate</b>.....Work with me to solve problems and reach goals.</li> <li>• <b>Let me lead</b>.....Create opportunities for me to take action and lead.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>Expand Possibilities</b> Connect me with people and places that broaden my world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Inspire</b>.....Inspire me to see possibilities for my future.</li> <li>• <b>Broaden horizons</b>.....Expose me to new ideas, experiences, and places.</li> <li>• <b>Connect</b>.....Introduce me to people who can help me grow.</li> </ul>	

NOTE: Relationships are, by definition, bidirectional, with each person giving and receiving. So each person in a strong relationship both engages in and experiences each of these actions. However, for the purpose of clarity, this framework is expressed from the perspective of one young person.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Your Role

#### What a “Big” Is Not

- Parent
- Financial support or ATM
- Uber, Lyft or taxi service
- Babysitter
- Peer
- Therapist
- Social worker or case manager
- The family’s mentor
- Perfect

## **Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based**

### **Child's Role**

1. Kid
2. Learner
3. Partner

The Littles want to have fun and want to feel safe. Sometimes, giving our Little time to just be a kid is the most important thing we can do as a Big.

### **Parent/Guardian's Role**

1. Contact
  - a. In person or by phone
  - b. Permission for each activity

Be respectful of the parent's wishes and preferences. It is also important to respect the relationship a child has with their parent.

2. Supporter

Keep in mind how much trust is given to our Bigs by families and schools. They do this because of the reputation of Big Brothers Big Sisters. We rely on our Bigs to help us maintain our reputation as a safe and positive mentoring program for youth.

3. Partner

Focus on common goals & work as a team.

4. Provides feedback

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Our Role: Your Match Support Specialist

The Match Support Specialist (MSS) is your connection to Big Brothers Big Sisters during the time you are matched. The MSS is there to support, encourage and help matches from the initial introduction until the match closes. The MSS is an important piece in providing the safest and most successful matches possible.

**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.**

Your first contact with you MSS will be when they call to tell you about the Little we have in mind for you. Your MSS will set up your introduction at our office or the child's home. They will introduce you to your Little as well as the parent.

Your MSS will contact you within the first two weeks you are matched. Like any relationship, it can be awkward at first and we want to be there to help get through this first stage. We also want to help you in setting up your schedule and routine while the match is still new.

Then, your **MSS will keep in touch monthly**. These monthly contacts are how we get feedback from you, your Little, and their parent about how the match is going and what we can do help you have the best match possible that will help your Little achieve success in life. Contacts may be by phone, in person or by email. **Monthly communication is required** for the first year of the match and at least quarterly communication is required after the first year throughout the life of the match. You can think of your MSS as the main link between you, your Little, your Little's family and the agency.

You don't need to wait to hear from your Match Support Specialist--they love to be contacted by their Bigs. Here are some good reasons for calling your Match Support Specialist:

- Get feedback.
- Share fun stories about your match.
- Discuss concerns you are having with your match or the safety of your Little.
- Ask for activity ideas and find out about current events at BBBS.
- Report any emergency situations.

**On the next page is a list of how your Match Support Specialist can be a resource for you as a Big.**

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Our Role

Contact your MSS as often as you need by phone, in person, and/or email. We make it a priority to serve you when you need it.

- **Give you ideas** about low cost, fun and learning activities, including agency sponsored events.
- **Provide help** on specific topics to you when you need it. If necessary, help you work through any problems you might have with your Little, the family, and/or the parent/guardian.
- **A Guide** – MSS have experience in helping volunteers be successful mentors. He/she can help problem-solve any time things are not going well in your match. Please tell you MSS of any violations of the guidelines or general concerns right away. Seemingly small issues may grow into bigger problems down the line, so it's better to strategize early.
- **A Support** – He/she can help matches set and accomplish goals for child development. He/she can also listen if you just need to talk about your match.
- **An Observer** - Someone who you will need to check in with regularly to talk about the progress of your match and to monitor for and advise on child safety.
- **A Liaison** – He/she will be in regular contact with your Little and his/her family, so can help facilitate communication and reconcile any misunderstandings.
- **A Link to Community Resources** - As a Big, there may be times you feel that the family or child you are working with needs additional help or resources; however, it is not your responsibility to provide these resources for the family when this occurs. Contact your Match Support Specialist for needs you may observe, such as:
  - Tutoring services
  - Counseling services
  - Shelter
  - Clothing
  - Youth programs
  - Food pantries
  - Legal assistance
  - Utility assistance
  - Financial Aid
  - Medical Needs
- **A Cheerleader** - Someone who is always excited to hear about your successes and pass along positive feedback!

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### What Will You Do? Expectations for Bigs

We all had someone in our lives, other than a parent, who made a difference to us. This is what you can do for a child in our program. It's really pretty simple—**it's a matter of making yourself available on a consistent basis. It's showing you care. It's having fun with a child. It's listening to them talk about whatever is going on in their lives.** It's a series of small, teachable moments that, in the end, make a BIG difference.

Changes in your Little tend to occur slowly. Your Little may not say much or suggest activities for you to do—this is normal behavior. Often Littles won't say “thank you” —but this doesn't mean they aren't enjoying the time with you. *It just takes time for the relationship to form.*

To make the most of your relationship:

- **Be a good friend:**
  - Listen, have fun, take time to get to know this new person in your life.
  - Choose activities that you both enjoy and that will strengthen the bond between you.
  - Don't set out to impose mandatory changes in the Little. Positive behaviors will flow after your Little trusts you, not by your declaring mandatory new behaviors that the Little has to do.
  
- **Be Consistent:**
  - Show the child you think your time together is important.
  - Give your Little something to look forward to.
  
- **Be Safe**
  
- **Be realistic about your expectations**
  
- **Be involved and participate in agency activities:**
  - This connects you with other Bigs & Littles and allows your Little to interact with other kids in the program.
  
- **Regularly communicate with your Little, the parent/guardian and your Match Support Specialist:**
  - We will contact you every few weeks at first, and then each month to provide assistance and give feedback on how you're making a difference.
  - Anytime you are unsure about what to do or how to handle a situation, your Match Support Specialists are here to help.
  - You will be meeting with your Little in person each week.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

- **Work for a long-lasting relationship.**
  - Research has shown that high-quality mentoring relationships lasting for twelve months or longer can have positive impacts on youth, but that mentoring matches lasting less than 6 months, and especially those that are three months or less can have harmful effects on youth.

“Youth who were in **relationships that lasted a year or longer reported improvements** in academic, psychosocial, and behavioral outcomes; and progressively fewer effects emerged among youth who were in relationships that terminated between six months and a year or between three and six months. Additionally, adolescents who were in relationships that terminated within a very short period of time reported decrements in several indicators of functioning.”

Rhodes, J. (2001). Youth mentoring in perspective. *The Center* (Summer). Republished in *The encyclopedia of informal education*.

[www.infed.org/learningmentors/youth\\_mentoring\\_in\\_perspective.htm](http://www.infed.org/learningmentors/youth_mentoring_in_perspective.htm).

- **Realize that problems may come up:**
  - It's normal for problems to arise in a match relationship
  - Try to balance your expectations of what it will be like with your Little and be realistic about how fast the relationship will take to develop.
- **Recognize how culture and other differences may impact relationship development:**
  - Language
  - Religion
  - Socioeconomic situation
  - Origin
  - Race
  - Age

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Managing Expectations

We all have expectations: you, your Little, their family, and BBBS. Research shows that your expectations about mentoring will influence how you feel about your mentee and how you behave as well.

Positive expectations can help provide enthusiasm and direction to the relationship. Having high, but realistic, expectations and expecting that everyone tries their best will set the framework for a challenging and rewarding experience.

However, unrealistic or inflexible expectations can be problematic. Really high expectations, especially in the beginning of the relationship, can be overwhelming. When expectations are not met, you or your Little may be discouraged and give up on the relationship too quickly.

We recommend that you maintain modest expectations, so that goals can be achieved, or even exceeded. That sense of accomplishment and success will help strengthen your bond with your Little and your confidence as a mentor.

If you find that your expectations are not being met or if you feel frustrated, keep these five steps in mind:

1. **Be objective.** Often the way your Little responds or reacts is not about you.
2. **Keep your expectations modest.** Keep in mind the age of your Little, how much time you have spent together, and what other influences may impact this child.
3. **Don't focus on the change.** Change happens slowly. Learning new skills and developing new habits is a process.
4. **Focus on the relationship.** Get to know your Little's likes, their dreams, who the important people in their life are, their school mascot, a favorite song, etc. You're your Little time to get to know you too. Have fun.
5. **Be patient.**

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Building a Relationship with Your Little

- **Consistency** is the most important way to build trust with your Little. Be there every time, do what you say you will do, and when things go awry, **be flexible**.
- A warm **smile** and good eye contact go a long way to let your Little know you like him/her and he/she can trust you.
- **Include your Little in planning your activities**, but make sure you provide adequate parameters for appropriate activities. Deciding together what activities to do fosters a stronger relationship.
- Include plenty of time in your selected activities to talk and exchange ideas.
- Choose some **activities that will allow your Little to show or teach you something**. Ask to see his/her neighborhood/school/church/park.
- Sometimes your quest to let your Little know you care can feel like a barrage of questions to your Little. **Take it easy on the questions** and do some sharing about yourself.
- Give your Little and yourself **permission to make mistakes**. Talk about them and what you/he/she might do next time to have a different outcome.
- **Offer choices, not solutions**.
- **Include your Little and his/her guardian in scheduling** time together. Ask for their input and plan a schedule that works for all. When changes occur (and they will!), again **make sure all parties agree**. Confirm your plans several days in advance of the event.
- It's okay to **do silly things** in front of your Little. Allow him/her to laugh at your silliness by laughing at yourself.
- **Allow your Little a lot of time to learn to trust you** and communicate openly with you. Relationships do not happen overnight.
- **Ask your Little about their dreams and help them to set goals**.

Making a difference is pretty simple. Even if you don't realize it, by building a trusting friendship with a child you can make a powerful impact in his/her life. That's what it's all about.

If you're concerned about not making a difference, talk it over with your Match Support Specialist, who may be getting feedback from your Little or his/her parent that you haven't.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Building a Relationship with Your Little's Family

Parents have entrusted their child to you. They remain the leaders in their family and it's important that we respect and honor that. Our role is to support them whenever we can when appropriate. The parent's support is critical to the success of the match & it may take a while to establish your role with the parent.

- **Communicate with them. Describe what you plan to do and what you've done together with their child.**
- **Make sure they are aware of and OK with activity plans. Let them know about any changes in plans.** Call if you will not be able to see your Little one day or if you plan to change days.
- **Consider a reminder call and confirm pick up & drop off plans.** Both where this will be and who will be there.
- **Make sure that you follow the family rules & respect the parent's decisions.** Remember that everyone has their own values and beliefs about family and parenting.
- **Respect the privacy and confidentiality of your Little and his or her family.**
  1. Share information about your Little's life situation only with those who need to know such as BBBS staff, law enforcement, teachers or parents.
  2. It is OK if you do not tell your Little's parent everything you discuss, unless safety is a concern. Littles need to trust their Bigs and have someone to talk to outside of their family or other authority figures.
  3. Your MSS should be kept in the loop. Let your MSS know what you and your Little talk about.
  4. Let your MSS know right away if your Little may be in danger or is going to harm themselves or others. If your Little is involved in unhealthy situations, talk to your MSS, and encourage your Little to talk with his or her family.
  5. We cannot use the Little's names or photos publicly without written consent from the parent/guardian.
  6. We cannot ask or imply our Little's keep a secret for us.
  7. Talk to your MSS about any concerns you have about your Little/Little's family or your Little's well-being.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Appropriate Boundaries with Your Little's Parent/Guardian

- Remember that **your relationship is with your Little**, not the Little's parent/s. Maintain a primary relationship with your Little. Do not become overly involved with your Little's family.
- Your Little may withdraw if you allow yourself to be drawn into helping or befriending his/her parent/guardian too much, or siding with the guardian against your Little. If you support the guardian's stance, talk this over with your Little at a later time, rather than team up with the guardian during an incident.
- Maintain "cordial but distant" contact.
- Resist families' efforts to extract help beyond being a mentor for their child. If you are asked to provide babysitting, groceries, rides, etc., let the parent/guardian know that unfortunately, program rules do not allow you to.
- Be cautious when telling the family about anything your Little has disclosed to you and when telling your Little about things that family members might say to you about him or her.
- If your Little criticizes his or her parent/s, be careful not to join in. Listen without judgment and assure your Little of your empathy and caring.
- Often, values around how we were parented, or how we would parent our own children dictate our belief about the appropriateness of another's parenting and we need to be careful not to allow those values to create friction.
- As difficult as it may seem, it is not the role of the Big OR the agency to teach or demand good parenting skills—when possible we encourage parents to take parenting classes or give them suggestions.
- Let your MSS know of any concerns you have regarding your Little's care, and then let us help to determine whether or not it falls into the categories of abuse or neglect and will require reporting. The professional staff of Big Brothers Big Sisters, as well as you, are required by law to report child abuse or neglect—whether actual or suspected.
- Parenting behaviors with which you disagree do not necessarily constitute child abuse or neglect.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Valuable Relationship Stages

**As you get ready to be matched with your Little you may be thinking what comes next and how fast will it happen?**

As every experienced Big will tell you, a bond takes time to develop. It is a unique experience for every Big and Little, and no doubt your interaction will be unique.

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

#### **CONTEMPLATION STAGE**

**From first inquiry to first meeting your Little.**

*What does this stage look like?*

- You are learning about mentoring, anticipating meeting your mentee, and beginning your relationship.

*What can you do to move it along?*

- Be sure to provide all required information to BBBS to complete your enrollment process.
- Ask any questions that you may still have or for more information on topics that you feel you may need additional training.

#### **INITIATION & HONEYMOON STAGE**

**From the first meeting to approximately the four-month date.**

*What does this stage look like?*

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

*What can you do to move it along?*

- Without prying, learn facts about your Little and reference them in your conversations: e.g. favorite things, best friend, where they've traveled.
- Be consistent and flexible, do what you said you were going to do.
- Be patient and remember that relationships have ups and downs, and don't "happen" by themselves.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### **GROWTH & MAINTENANCE STAGE**

**From approximately the four-month date to the one-year date.**

*What does this stage look like?*

- This is the most crucial time regarding the development of the Big/Little relationship.
- This is the time that may be a turning point in the relationship.
- It is common, around the four-month date, that your Little will begin testing you to see what you are really about and how much he/she can get away with.
- Your Little may be observing you to find a reason not to trust you.

*What can you do to move it along?*

- Show your Little that he/she can trust you, through your reliability, consistency, and time together. As trust develops, your Little will probably begin sharing bits of information with you.
- Keep in close contact with your Support Specialist for ideas.
- Recognize and praise accomplishments.
- If you need to give advice or address behavior problems, give reasons; avoid "shoulds."

### **MATURITY STAGE**

**This stage begins somewhere around the one-year anniversary date.**

*What does this stage look like?*

- You will notice your relationship with your Little has become more positive and realistic and match activities are less structured.
- Most Bigs have shed their preconceived notions regarding the match and their Little.
- As the relationship matures, you will see the maturity of your Little as he/she grows and develops.

*What can you do to move it along?*

- Identify past shared experiences and enjoy shared "inside jokes."
- Learn something new to both of you, together.
- Establish concrete and measureable goals to work toward.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### **MATCH REDEFINITION OR CLOSURE STAGE**

**This stage can begin somewhere around an anniversary date, as your Little reaches new developmental milestones, or when other life changes occur.**

*What does Redefinition look like?*

- You may realize that our relationship has evolved into something different from the original intent.
- You may realize that the goals or expectations for the match no longer match the needs of the child.
- Schedules or other life events may require a change in meeting time, frequency, or location.
- This stage may happen more than once during your match.

*What can you do to move it along?*

- Be thankful of the chance to grow in your match.
- Be open to setting new goals and parameters.
- Learn more about the typical development for someone your Little's age and plan match activities, modify goals, and set expectations accordingly.

*What does Closure look like?*

- You may realize that it is time for the relationship to end.
- A closure may happen for many reasons

*What can you do to move it along?*

- This transition should be handled in a sensitive, thoughtful, and caring way. If the transition of closing the match is not approached carefully, a child can be hurt by the experience. Our staff will work with you, the child and his/her school to help you with this transition.
- Never just stop and disappear from the match as this can be very damaging to the Little.
- Recognize that you have made an impact at some level on your Little.
- The Little you now know is probably not the same Little with whom you were initially matched. Celebrate the experience as much as you can together - highlights and hurdles.
- At the time of closure, BBBS "closes" the file and does not continue to provide professional support or guidance to the matched parties. At that point, the match is no longer considered an "active" match.
- If continued contact would be appropriate to your match's circumstances after closure, it is encouraged, but would be independent of BBBS. This may be as limited as exchanging greeting cards at holidays or as intensive as continued regular contact throughout the Little's life.
- You have invested a lot into each other. You want to communicate to your Little your appreciation of him/her and your hope and expectation that he/she will be successful and happy.
- Closures are just as important as beginnings, so the following pages have additional information about this process.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### What is the Match Closure Process?

Termination is not something unique to a Big/Little relationship. Many examples from life show that growth and change usually imply or involve some sort of termination from the old to the new, from something past to something future. Changing jobs, leaving school, moving, losing a spouse are all types of terminations. Often these relationships are allowed to fade away, and a person moves on relatively unscathed. **Your relationship with your Little, due to his/her age and level of vulnerability, is somewhat more complicated and requires more than a “fade out.”**

By working together with your Little when termination is imminent, you show him/her that your relationship was worth the effort, and you better ensure your Little's ability to handle future “terminations” that he/she will encounter.

#### Reasons for termination in the Big Brothers Big Sisters' program:

- Mutual agreement of both Big and Little with Match Support Specialist's consultation
- Indications that such a relationship is no longer needed, like the child graduating
- Personal reasons, including marriage of Big, change of employment, financial pressures, lack of time, a move, etc.
- Changing situation of Little, including moving, institutionalization (hospital or alternative school), family problems, etc.
- Violation of program rules or guidelines

The reasons will vary, but there are feelings involved for both Bigs and Littles in all of the above cases. The feelings developed and encountered during the match include:

- Affection and dependence - Both the Big and Little will share affection for each other and may be mutually dependent on each other. During the relationship, your Little may have developed a dependency that has helped him/her in his/her environment.
- Understanding and patience - Throughout the relationship, there may have developed some understanding of each other. Unfulfilled expectations may have been handled through patience.
- Guilt - The Big may feel unsuccessful or defeated but unable to admit it. Guilt sometimes accompanies termination and the Big may feel he/she did not help or that the Little did not benefit from the relationship.
- Anger and frustration - During the relationship, the Big may have experienced some frustration, including an inability to manage or control the relationship, too many or too few phone calls from the Little, a feeling of being “used” by the Little, etc.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Feelings involved for both Bigs and Littles during termination:

The termination process is significant because it deals openly with the feelings associated with it:

- Denial
- Depression
- Anger, hurt
- Behavioral issues
- Acceptance and positive growth

The Little may feel frustrated and rejected. They may even be angry at losing their friend. The reason for the termination has little to do with the kinds of feelings that may be evoked. Bigs may consider the reasons for termination genuine and valid, but the Little may still feel hurt.

Feelings of anger when termination is discussed are very real. Why are you leaving? Will you no longer be my friend? What have I done to cause you to leave? I must be bad or you would not be leaving. All of these and many more questions and comments/remarks indicate some deep feelings of regret and anger.

### Termination Process

It is clear that each relationship is different, the gains and successes are different, and the feelings are different. The termination process is flexible for each match relationship developed. **It is also clear that a good termination is significant to ensure that the gains of the relationship are maintained/remain undiminished.**

- Each termination should be done with the consent and supervision of your Match Support Specialist. There are not just two people involved; there are parents, siblings, schoolteachers, social workers, and staff involved in the lives of almost every Little. It is important that you do not attempt to terminate the relationship on your own.
- Give yourself a minimum of four weeks to terminate the match. That is, begin to involve your Little in discussions regarding termination four weeks prior to separation. Do not rush it. Do not attempt to initiate and conclude the termination process in one visit. It is advisable to merely mention it the first visit of the termination. Then discuss it in more detail during future visits.
- The best way to terminate is to be honest. Tell why you are officially terminating the match and share your feelings about the relationship. Admit your feelings of affection, guilt, or disappointment. Then, give the Little the opportunity to talk about his/her feelings.
- Inform your Match Support Specialist of any pertinent information regarding termination. If you need help in approaching your Little, ask your Match Support Coordinator for advice. He/she is there to help.

## **Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based**

It is helpful to evaluate the relationship. This should be done by the Big and the Little through an open-ended conversation about the past years and what the relationship has meant to each of you. It is a way of reminding each other that the relationship was worthwhile to you both.

Your communication may last beyond your official termination as a Big. Some matches keep in touch by phone, mail, or e-mail if all parties included agree. Activities or interactions, such as exchanging pictures, keeping and sharing journals, making a scrapbook, etc. will keep memories bright for you and your Little.

You have shared many positive moments in your relationship with your Little. Let termination be another.

### **Volunteer Re-engagement on Match Closure**

At the end of a match you may be asked if you're interested in remaining involved with the agency.

BBBS has a volunteer retention process in place to reengage volunteers through:

- A new match
- Other volunteer role (administrative, fundraising, etc.)
- As a donor

When a match is nearing closure, staff encourages appropriate volunteers to remain involved with the agency. If the match support staff has been effective, your individualized needs and interests have been identified and addressed during regular communications, and hopefully we have laid the groundwork for you to continue as a Big or in another role.

In order to be considered for a new match, Bigs complete an update process. This may include an update interview, new background checks, new references, and/or additional training.

While Bigs can be considered for a re-match numerous times, Littles may only be matched a total of two times in our program. Multiple match closures can be difficult for anyone, but it is especially hard on children. We work for the longest matches possible and hope that children are with their first Big for a long time.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Effective Relationships: “Big” Communication Skills

Below are some communication tips for use in your Match relationship.

- Listening:
  - **One of the most overlooked aspects of communication is the act of listening.** Listening in the true sense means not talking, not lecturing, and not advising.
  - **Many times, a few minutes spent really listening will defuse much of the frustration of adult-youth communication.**
  
- Attitude:
  - **Another important aspect of communication is attitude.** During communication, youth often react not to what adults are saying, but the way they say it. This is especially true with teenagers.
  - **Be aware of your attitude after a particularly tough day; it may negatively affect the way you talk or listen to your Little.**
  
- Humor:
  - **Humor is often the missing link in many adult/youth relationships.** Sometimes even the most intense discussions can use an injection of humor. It can serve to relieve a particularly stressful moment and, at the least, can indicate that things are still okay in the world.

**Basic rules of communication** (Source: Students In Business, Inc., Be A Mentor Program)

- Make your communication positive--be supportive and accepting
- Be clear and specific
- Recognize that individuals see things from different points of view
- Be open and honest about your feelings
- Accept your Little's feelings and try to understand them
- Do not preach or lecture
- Learn to listen
- Maintain eye contact
- Allow time for your Little to talk without interruption; show you are interested in what he or she has to say
- Get feedback to be sure you are understood
- Listen for feeling tones as well as for words
- Ask questions when you do not understand
- Set examples rather than giving advice

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Effective Relationships: Setting Limits with Your Little

Bigs and their Littles require limits. Defining the structure and limits in your relationship with your Little can help you avoid confusion and misunderstandings and build a stronger relationship with each other. Limits can help give Littles a sense of security, because it lets them know what to expect when they meet with their Big. By defining the limits of your relationship, you and your Little will develop mutual understanding and respect. Here are some typical scenarios related to boundaries, the corresponding agency rule/guideline, and suggested responses. **Remember that consistently applying rules and boundaries is important to a safe & an effective relationship.**

#### Spending Time Together:

**BBBS Rule/Guideline:** BBBS asks that matches meet at least one hour each week, with 1-3 hours being average. More than 3-4 hours should be limited to special activities.

If your Little states that he/she wants to see you more frequently than is permitted by BBBS, let him/her that there are specific guidelines for the time that you spend with your Little. Similarly, if you have extra time that you could spend with your Little, stick to the guideline anyway. Tell him/her that:

*“We can see each other once a week for about a few hours, on average. That is it, or we would be breaking the rules.”*

There might be special occasions where extra time gets spent together, like if you and your Little already have something planned and they invite you to their school concert that same week but following the rules will protect your Little from uncertainty and disappointment. If your Little is allowed to think that you can spend as much time together as you want to, he or she could easily feel rejected when you spend less time with them than they want.

#### Spending Money and Gifts:

**BBBS Rule/Guideline:** Matches must plan activities within a maximum budget of \$30 each month. Free and very low cost activities should be the bulk of what you do.

Special occasions, like birthdays and holidays, are the only acceptable times to give gifts. A gift should not exceed \$25 and you should discuss the gift with the parent/guardian prior to purchasing.

Being a Big Brother or Big Sister is about spending time with your Little, *not* money. It is not about what you can buy the Little, it is about **the one to one, consistent interaction** with a Big and a Little. Discuss this with your Little. This is an area that, if not handled early, could create problems later in the relationship. Your Little may test you, asking for money or expensive outings. Sometimes Littles think their Bigs must be

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

rich because they have good jobs, nice cars and homes. They assume that means the Big has plenty of money to spend on them. Tips:

- Put \$30 in ones or fives an envelope in your car. Have your Little be in charge of the money when you go out. The visual can be helpful, especially for younger kids.
- Create your activity budget with your Little.
- Brainstorm 10, 20...100! free activities to try together.
- Attend our Group Match Activities.

You might be tempted to “spoil” your Little and give gifts or pay for outings you feel he/she would not get from anyone else. It is important to remember that if your Little begins to focus on receiving gifts and spending money, it takes the focus off the relationship you are building with each other.

### **Bringing Siblings or Friends:**

**BBBS Rule/Guideline:** Relatives or friends, whether invited by the Big or Little, may come along once a month after a match has been meeting at least three months.

Giving in to the requests of your Little to take siblings/friends along can easily erode your relationship. The children then focus their attention upon each other, all but eliminating the opportunity for you to focus upon each other. Be very sparing and deliberate in your consent to this. Further, taking your friends and family on your outings with your Little can easily give the impression that he/she is not special to you. Consider this on special occasions only. Tell him/her that:

*“I want to be sure to spend time with you. It’s fun to get to know each other’s’ friends and family but having someone come along is something we can do just once in a while.”*

### **Bringing Your Little to Your Home:**

**BBBS Rule/Guideline:** Spending time in the Big’s home is not permitted by the agency.



*“There are so many cool things to do in our community, we don’t need to spend time at home.”*

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Discussing Your Personal Life:

**BBBS Rule/Guideline:** Conversations should be age-appropriate and Bigs should encourage Littles to make healthy, age-appropriate decisions. Acknowledging mistakes or challenges you have had can be helpful in connecting with your Little; however, providing too much about your personal life with a child is not appropriate. Keep in mind that a Little may consider your self-disclosure as permission for them to do the same thing.

As your relationship with your Little develops, your Little may be curious and want to know more about you. Having a friend who is an adult may be a new experience for your Little, and he/she may ask questions or make statements that put you on the spot. As a Big, you have every right to your privacy, as does your Little. Be upfront with your Little. Be straightforward about your limits and your personal space. Encourage your Little to tell you about his/her limits as well. Your Little will have the opportunity to experience having his/her own boundaries and privacy respected and valued. Tell him/her that:

*“There are some subjects that are private and it is important to respect other’s privacy.”*

Be open to the possibility that your Little may be asking questions for reasons other than curiosity. He or she may want advice on a personal problem or information on how other people handle situations and is not really trying to pry into your private life. You can ask them if something similar may be happening in their life or to someone they know.

### Communication: Calling, Texting, Social Media

**BBBS Rule/Guideline:** Parents should be aware of any methods that a Big and Little may be communicating. Calling and texting are most common. Communication through social media can create unforeseen challenges. If your Little is too young to have a social media account but has one anyway (violating the user agreement), do not engage with them through the social media platform. If they are old enough, keep in mind what information they will see about you and you will see about them before agreeing to friend, follow, message, etc. Often the intended audience in social media is peers and you and your Little are not peers.

**Remember: BBBS guidelines are here to help you and give you structure and your Match Support Specialist is here to support you, so do not hesitate to call with any questions or concerns.**

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Effective Relationships: Conflict Resolution Strategies

Things may not always go as we expect. Here are some possible ways to diffuse tension or conflict with your Little or their parent/guardian.

- **Negotiating:**
  - Bigs and Littles listen to the others' points of view and discuss which position might be the best.
- **Compromising:**
  - Meeting halfway -- both parties agree to sacrifice something in order to resolve the conflict.
  - The Bridge Solution—lets you take your best intentions & your Little's ideas to find a solution somewhere in the middle of your two sets of goals. It may take a little adjustment of your goals to make sure that your needs and your Little's needs are met.
- **Active Listening:**
  - Big shows that he or she understands the Little's wishes.
  - Sometimes being heard is all someone really wants.
- **Distracting:**
  - Helping Littles to forget about the conflict by focusing their attention on some other interesting activity. (Especially useful for young kids with shorter attention spans, and when the conflict doesn't need a lot of discussion.)
- **Humor:**
  - Diffusing negative emotions by looking at the brighter side of the situation. It's amazing how quickly a mood can change with some humor.
  - Use humor thoughtfully. When emotions are high a joke can feel like teasing.
- **Chance:**
  - Flipping a coin or drawing straws.
- **Sharing:**
  - Working together to meet the needs of both parties.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Effective Relationships: Developmental vs. Prescriptive Bigs

In 1995, the research firm, Public/Private Ventures, completed a \$2 million evaluation of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. Among other findings, the research found that participants in BBBS also found that the length and intensity of the matches affects those outcomes and that in sustained matches, the Big saw him/herself, the Little and the match from a particular viewpoint. Those Bigs in the more successful matches were labeled “Developmental” Bigs and those in the less successful matches were labeled “Prescriptive” Bigs. Not surprisingly, the Bigs and Littles in the prescriptive matches found the relationship frustrating and non-supportive. Of these prescriptive relationships, only 29% met consistently (compared to 93% of the developmental) and at 18 month follow up, only 32% were ongoing (compared to 91% of the developmental). Continuing research confirms what P/PV found in 1995.

#### Developmental Bigs:

- ★ Sees themselves as an adult friend, more than a teacher or preacher
- ★ Believe they are there to meet the developmental needs of the youth
- ★ Believe they can provide support and opportunities youth does not have
- ★ Ultimately hope youth will improve in school and be more responsible, but center their involvement and expectations on developing a reliable, trusting relationship
- ★ Placed priority on having the relationship enjoyable and fun for both
- ★ Listened non-judgmentally
- ★ Looked for youth’s interests and strengths
- ★ Incorporated the youth in the decision-making process
- ★ Saw risks as existing in the environment, not in the youth

#### Prescriptive Bigs:

- Believed primary purpose was guiding youth towards specific values, attitudes, behaviors
- Set the goals, the pace and/or the ground rules
- Basically there to fix the kids
- Most shared time spent in conversation not fun activities
- Believed risk lay within the child and less in the deficiencies of the environment
- Most matches found these relationships frustrating and non-supportive
- These matches probably do more harm than good

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Culture and Mentoring: Challenges & Opportunities

**Culture:** *“the total system of values, beliefs, attitudes, traditions and standards of behavior that regulate life within a particular group of people”* (Institute for Human Services, August 2000)

Bigs and Littles come from different cultures. At very least, you and your Little are coming from different age groups. This alone can impact how you each view and respond to the world around you.

Awareness, understanding, and appreciation of these differences can prevent the differences from becoming problems. We cannot change someone’s culture, but we can show them new things and new ideas.

Remember that your Little may be growing up with a different value system. Model new behavior, but don’t criticize the choices their parents make.

#### Tips for Making the Most of Cultural Differences:

- Be curious.
- Be humble.
- Research on your own.
- Research with your Little.
- Apologize sincerely if you offend.
- Speak up kindly if offended.

#### One Framework... Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs



***“We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skins, but we all belong to one human race.”***

Kofi Annan

Ghanaian diplomat, former Secretary of the United Nations, & Nobel Peace Prize laureate

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Culture and Mentoring: Challenges & Opportunities

#### Another Perspective...The Culture of Poverty

The youth in our program are facing poverty. The culture of poverty concept posits that the people in poverty have their own value system. These individuals may feel helpless to climb out of poverty, and so live for the present. They spend their money on tangible things they can enjoy now, rather than save money and delay gratification. Their priorities are often entertainment, relationships, and immediate survival. Poverty is characterized by a lack of any resource:

- **Financial**
- **Emotional and mental resources** - Being able to choose/control appropriate emotional responses.
- **Support systems** - Friends, family, and backup resources to access when necessary.
- **Positive role models**
- **Physical** – Personal health and well-being, living in a safe environment.
- **Spiritual** – Religion or a greater power, sense of purpose.
- **Knowledge of “hidden rules”** - The unspoken cues and habits of the middle-class. The middle class is the class of most school and workplace environments.

#### Why does it happen?

There are two types of poverty: generational and situational. Job loss, a divorce, or the birth of a child may lead a family into situational poverty, but the culture of poverty is passed from generation to generation. Limited resources and the value system of the parents are the only ones they are able to pass along to their children.

#### How can I help?

By growing up in the culture of poverty, your Little is learning culture of poverty values and behaviors. Down the road, they may be unable to take full advantage of opportunities to improve their life conditions without someone teaching them additional skills necessary for other environments. In other words, teaching your Little about the Hidden Rules and developing his or her strengths (assets) puts your Little on the path to success.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Culture and Poverty

#### HIDDEN RULES OF POVERTY

Hidden Rules are the unspoken cues and habits of a group. All groups have hidden rules. An individual brings with him/her the hidden rules of the class in which he/she was raised. Hidden rules help us survive and negotiate. To be successful, we must understand the hidden rules of class and teach others the rules that will make them successful at school, work, and in the community.

HIDDEN RULES	Poverty Class	Middle Class	Wealthy Class
<b>DRIVING FORCES</b>	Survival, Relationships & Entertainment	Work, Achievement, Material Security	Financial, Political, Social Connections
<b>FOOD</b>	Did you get enough?	Did you like it?	Was it presented well?
<b>POWER</b>	Linked to Personal Respect, Can't stop bad things from happening	Power and respect are separate, power in information and institutions	Power in expertise, connections, stability; influences policy and direction
<b>DESTINY</b>	Believes in Fate Cannot do much to mitigate chance	Believes in choice Can change the future with good choices now	Noblesse oblige
<b>TIME</b>	The present is most important Decisions for the moment	Future most important Decisions made against future ramifications	Traditions and history most important, decisions made partially on basis of tradition/decorum
<b>MONEY</b>	To be used - spent	To be managed	To be conserved and invested
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Valued as abstract, not a reality	Crucial for climbing success ladder and making money	Necessary tradition for making and maintaining connections
<b>PERSONALITY</b>	Is for entertainment Sense of humor highly valued	Is for acquisition and stability Achievement is highly valued	Is for connections, financial, political, and social connections are highly valued
<b>CLOTHING</b>	Valued for individual style and expression of personality	Valued for its quality and acceptance into norm of middle class, label is important	Valued for its artistic sense and expression, designer is important
<b>WORLD VIEW</b>	Sees world in terms of local setting	Sees world in terms of national setting	Sees world in terms of international view
<b>HUMOR</b>	About people	About situations	About social faux pas
<b>LANGUAGE</b>	Casual register Language is about survival	Formal register Language is about negotiation	Formal register Language is about networking

*Adapted: Bridges Out of Poverty, Strategies for Professionals and Communities,*

*Ruby K. Payne, Ph.D.; Philip E. DeVol; Terie Dreussi Smith*

[www.BridgesOutOfPoverty.com](http://www.BridgesOutOfPoverty.com) .... [www.ahaprocess.com](http://www.ahaprocess.com)

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Strategies for Common Problems: Appreciation

Over the years we have seen some common problems that can occur in any match. These are called common because they are, well...*common*. It's normal for Little/Big relationships to experience some of these situations.

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

#### ***“My Little doesn't show appreciation.”***

- Coming into the match with a preconceived notion of how your Little should show appreciation will set you up for a letdown. Your Little may not say “please” and “thank you” when you first start meeting, and even after many times together he/she may still not respond in a way that you deem appropriate.
- Developmentally, some children lack the understanding associated with expressing gratitude. Not all children are taught the appropriate ways to demonstrate gratitude, and therefore they may not understand its significance to you.
- “I had a good time” may eventually be a response but may be a long time in coming. Sometimes he/she might only say, “It was o.k.” Be sure you model the behavior you would like your Little to demonstrate and be consistent. Keeping the following in mind may help keep you from feeling discouraged:
  - Your Little may show appreciation by expressing interest in your life.
  - When a Little asks you to stay longer or asks when he/she will see you again, it is a good sign that he/she wants to spend more time with you.
  - Although some kids may give hugs as a sign of gratitude, others may never hug their Bigs.
  - Nonverbal messages are of great importance when looking for signs of appreciation. For instance, smiling is a good indicator of happiness.
  - If a Little desires to be in close physical proximity to you, it is a sign they trust you and feel more comfortable being near you.
  - Some Littles have described their gratitude by saying, “We just like to spend time together” or “It shows by the way we treat each other” or even “We just talk to each other.”

### Strategies for Common Problems: Communication

Regular contact is crucial for the growth of the match relationship but can sometimes be the most difficult part. Littles may have poor communication skills, a fear of the phone or of not knowing what to say or may still be working on learning responsibility. Your Little may have never called an adult in his/her life. The parent may not allow the Little to call and “bother” you, your Little may be forgetful, or there may be cultural differences about appropriate communication.

The main thing to remember is that a lack of reciprocation does NOT indicate that your Little is indifferent to the relationship. It is important to let your Match Support Specialist know about the communication issues that arise, and with patience, persistence, and optimism, your Little can improve.

***“My Little doesn’t share feelings and/or initiate conversation.”***

- You may feel that your Little is not putting as much into the relationship as you would like. The relationship may seem one-sided for a long time with you doing the talking, but your Little not saying much.
- Eventually your Little may well respond in a more open and honest way, trusting you and confiding in you as an adult who will not disappoint or walk out on him/her. Let him/her know he can talk to you about anything. Conversation between you two will grow and your Little may share more feelings with you. If this happens, rejoice in it, but remember that no relationship is perfect and relationships are defined in different ways.

***“My Little used to talk a lot, but now my Little is quiet...even moody.”***

- It’s ok to tell your Little what you have observed and express concern. Saying something like, *“I’ve noticed you’re pretty quietly lately. It makes me a little worried. What’s going on?”*
- While you may have said or done something to upset your Little, keep in mind that many other factors can contribute to a change in your Little’s behavior around you. Possible reasons:
  - Age—as your Little approaches the teen years they may want to share a little less with adults and rely more on friends. You still have a significant role to play, but the feedback you get from your Little can change.
  - Bullying or abuse—becoming withdrawn is one indicator of bullying or abuse. Your Little may be embarrassed, scared, hurt, and unsure of what to do, especially if they were threatened too.
  - Other—is your Little just having a bad day? Is s/he tired, hungry, ill?
  - Are you having a bad day? Did you come across as bored or curt at first?

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### ***“My Little never calls me.” or “My Little never calls me back.”***

- Littles may love to receive phone calls, but seldom feel comfortable initiating them. Asking your Little to share with you the good feeling that comes from getting a phone call may help him/her to understand that adults also like to receive calls from people they like. Giving your Little definite times to call may help, as can enlisting the parent’s help in encouraging your Little to call.
- It is important not to stop calling with hopes that they will start calling you. It is important to be patient and be sure to reinforce the behavior with positive remarks when they do call.
- Remember that messages left with a sibling or on voicemail may be forgotten or accidentally deleted and never make their way to your Little in the first place.
- If you are trying to make plans with your Little leave the date and time you would like to pick your Little up. If you don’t hear back, try showing up anyway. You can also schedule directly with the parent or older sibling if he/she answers but your Little is out. Parent permission is always required anyway.

### ***“My Little’s family doesn’t have voicemail/frequently changes phone numbers/has no phone at all. It’s really hard to reach them.”***

- If you know your Little is difficult to reach, schedule the next outing at drop-off to avoid phone tag or plan to meet the same day and time each week so that even if you don’t know where you are going yet, you know when.
- If that isn’t a possibility, start calling very early in the week to schedule. Continue to call daily, and at varying times of day.
- Ask for alternate phone numbers like a cousin or an aunt who may be able to pass along a message for you. If your Little says they called from a cousin’s house, ask if you can have that number.
- Stop by the house when you think they’ll be home, either to take your Little out spontaneously or to schedule for next time. Leave a note in the mailbox or taped to the door if the family is out.
- Mail your Little a card that you miss them and would like to hear from them.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

***“I can’t find my Little- I stopped by and the house seems to be empty and none of their numbers work.”***

- Try all of the extended family and friends’ numbers.
- Try mail or email
- Leave a message for your Little at their school
- Contact your Match Support Specialist immediately.

## Strategies for Common Problems: Apathy

***“My Little doesn’t seem to want me there.”***

- Keep in mind that we all demonstrate interest in different ways, and your Little may not know how to communicate that he/she is interested.
- If your Little has difficulty trusting adults, you may find that he/she will test your relationship in various ways. If you continue to come back the next week, even though you may feel rejected, you give the message to your Little that you will be there for him/her, even when he/she is making it tough on you.
- Be sure you do not make assumptions solely based on your Little’s behavior. Talk to the parent and to your Match Support Specialist if you have questions.

***“My Little doesn’t want to improve.”***

- Your Little may have many adults eager to tell what she/he is doing wrong.
- Carefully consider what “improve” means to you and be realistic about how much change you have to see. Going from an F to an A in math is overwhelming and could take quite a while. An F to a D is improvement that should be recognized.
- What your Little will respond to is someone who will point out and praise strengths. These strengths can range from the values that the child holds to things he/she is good at doing. If your Little knows that you are going to be positive, give encouragement and compliments, and appreciate the unique person that he/she is, change will happen in very positive ways, and your Little will grow in confidence, competence and caring.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Strategies for Common Problems: Other Concerns

#### ***“My Little doesn’t act the right way.”***

- Your Little may come from a family with a very different value system than yours. It is not your responsibility or role to try to change the values of your Little. Your match is a learning experience for both of you.
- Try to be content with the understanding that, through your example, your Little may come to respect values that are more positive. Keep in mind this may be a long process, but through consistent positive influences and acknowledgement of his/her positive choices, a child’s behavior may improve.

#### ***“My Little doesn’t seem to need me.”***

- Even children who seem to be doing OK right now can benefit from having another supportive, positive person in their life.
- Your Little may not always respond in ways that make you feel you are needed. Feeling needed may be expressed by your Little in small ways and may be non-verbal.
- In time, you may learn to recognize small signs that your Little needs you. This will help you in being content with the knowledge that you are making a difference and are a much-needed part of your Little’s life.

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

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Youth Development: Teachable Moments

Big Brothers Big Sisters is a prevention oriented program, where you, the mentor, can be instrumental in helping your Little avoid and reduce risky behavior. We do this in two main ways:

1. Developing ASSETS in our Littles
2. Taking advantage of TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Bigs help youth learn skills and develop habits that promote health and wellness. Talking to your Little about being healthy and avoiding risky behaviors like tobacco use and underage drinking is important.

**Teachable Moments are the times when you find yourself in the perfect situation to have a discussion (not a lecture) with your Little about a concern you may have for your Little.**

These moments can happen at any time. Here a few examples:

- Observing someone else engaging in a risky activity
- Media, including ads or song lyrics
- Furthering a discussion about a topic a child has been learning in school

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Youth Development: Avoiding Risky Behaviors

#### What you need to know about youth substance use:

- 32% of Washoe County students said they have had 5 or more drinks in a row in the past 30 days and 26% reported using alcohol for the first time before the age of thirteen.
- Those taking their first drink prior to the age of fourteen have four times the risk of becoming dependent on alcohol.
- Children who drink are 7.5 times as likely to use illicit drugs.
- Studies in humans have detected cognitive impairments in adolescent alcohol abusers weeks after they stopped drinking.
- Underage drinking can hinder a child's "wiring." Teens who admitted to heavy drinking in the past showed far less brain activity in MRIs than non-drinkers.

#### Warning Signs of Alcohol and Drug Use

- Mood changes: flare-ups of temper, irritability, and defensiveness. Physical or mental problems: memory lapses, poor concentration, bloodshot eyes, lack of coordination, or slurred speech.
- School and family problems: poor attendance, low grades, and/or recent disciplinary action. Rebelling against family rules.
- A "nothing matters" attitude: sloppy appearance, a lack of involvement in former interests, and general low energy.
- Switching friends, along with a reluctance to have you get to know the new friends.

#### What Can Bigs Do? Teachable Moments and Healthy Activities

- Work on building as many developmental assets in your Little as you can.
- Build a strong relationship where your Little feels comfortable talking to you about anything. Let him/her know he can talk to you about anything.
- **Talk about any health programs your Little is learning at school.** Ask what he/she learned or what was the most interesting part.
- **Point out habits you both have and discuss how to break bad ones and encourage each other to build good ones.** Research healthy ways to take care of stress like meditation, yoga, or deep breathing.
- **Your Little mentions someone offered them a cigarette.** Talk about the words they can use to refuse and **role play** what they could do next time. *"You're hanging out with your friends a lot more now. How would you feel if someone was smoking? Let's practice some things to say if they offer it to you."*

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

- Look out for **media exposure, for example ads** in a magazine or a story involving a celebrity arrest. *“(Celebrity)’s life style makes it hard to stay away from alcohol and drugs. What do you think will happen to him/her next?”*
- **Talk about stories in the newspaper about an accident involving teens under the influence**, ask your Little if he/she has heard about it.
- **If your Little mentions they know someone who drinks excessively explain that alcoholism is a progressive disease** that is a combination of physical addiction and mental obsession. Tell them there are successful treatment options.
- Participate in contests for youth-created content by local health departments or the drug prevention coalition.



## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Youth Development: The Assets Approach

#### Assets

Research from Search Institute identifies 40 Developmental Assets that have a powerful, positive impact on young people. **Children & teens who have high levels of these assets get involved in fewer risky behaviors and are much more likely to exhibit the positive values**, such as leadership, good health, diversity, and success in school.

- **Youth with 31-40 assets have an average of 6.1 of 8 thriving indicators, compared to only 2.7 for youth with 0-10 assets.** Indicators are school success, help others, value diversity, maintain health, leadership, resist danger, delay gratification, overcome adversity.
- **Over half, 55%, of 9<sup>th</sup> graders with 0-10 assets are *problem* drinkers, compared to only 2% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders with 31-40 assets.**
- **Kids who have 11 or more assets are 27% less likely to smoke by 9<sup>th</sup> grade.**

The Search Institute has put the Assets into eight categories:

1. **Support:** Young people need to be surrounded by people who love, care for, appreciate, and accept them.
2. **Empowerment:** Young people need to feel valued and valuable. This happens when youth feel safe and respected.
3. **Boundaries and Expectations:** Young people need clear rules, consistent consequences for breaking rules, and encouragement to do their best.
4. **Constructive Use of Time:** Young people need opportunities—outside of school—to learn and develop new skills and interests with other youth and adults.
5. **Commitment to Learning:** Young people need a sense of the lasting importance of learning and a belief in their own abilities.
6. **Positive Values:** Young people need to develop strong guiding values to help them make healthy life choices.
7. **Social Competencies:** Young people need the skills to interact effectively with others, to make difficult decisions, and to cope with new situations.
8. **Positive Identity:** Young people need to believe in their own self-worth and to feel they have control over the things that happen to them.

From *Instant Assets: 52 Short and Simple E-Mails for Sharing the Asset Message*. Copyright © 2007 by Search Institute®, 877-240-7251; [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org). and *Research Insights: Assets and Thriving among US Youth*. (2018). <https://www.search-institute.org/our-research/development-assets/current-research-developmental-assets/>. This message may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only. All rights reserved.

Youth Development: The Assets Approach



**40 Developmental Assets® for Middle Childhood (ages 8-12)**

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as **Developmental Assets®**—that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.



<b>External Assets</b>	<b>Support</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Family support</b>—Family life provides high levels of love and support.</li> <li><b>2. Positive family communication</b>—Parent(s) and child communicate positively. Child feels comfortable seeking advice and counsel from parent(s).</li> <li><b>3. Other adult relationships</b>—Child receives support from adults other than her or his parent(s).</li> <li><b>4. Caring neighborhood</b>—Child experiences caring neighbors.</li> <li><b>5. Caring school climate</b>—Relationships with teachers and peers provide a caring, encouraging environment.</li> <li><b>6. Parent involvement in schooling</b>—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the child succeed in school.</li> </ol>
	<b>Empowerment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>7. Community values youth</b>—Child feels valued and appreciated by adults in the community.</li> <li><b>8. Children as resources</b>—Child is included in decisions at home and in the community.</li> <li><b>9. Service to others</b>—Child has opportunities to help others in the community.</li> <li><b>10. Safety</b>—Child feels safe at home, at school, and in his or her neighborhood.</li> </ol>
	<b>Boundaries &amp; Expectations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>11. Family boundaries</b>—Family has clear and consistent rules and consequences and monitors the child's whereabouts.</li> <li><b>12. School boundaries</b>—School provides clear rules and consequences.</li> <li><b>13. Neighborhood boundaries</b>—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring the child's behavior.</li> <li><b>14. Adult role models</b>—Parent(s) and other adults in the child's family, as well as nonfamily adults, model positive, responsible behavior.</li> <li><b>15. Positive peer influence</b>—Child's closest friends model positive, responsible behavior.</li> <li><b>16. High expectations</b>—Parent(s) and teachers expect the child to do her or his best at school and in other activities.</li> </ol>
	<b>Constructive Use of Time</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>17. Creative activities</b>—Child participates in music, art, drama, or creative writing two or more times per week.</li> <li><b>18. Child programs</b>—Child participates two or more times per week in cocurricular school activities or structured community programs for children.</li> <li><b>19. Religious community</b>—Child attends religious programs or services one or more times per week.</li> <li><b>20. Time at home</b>—Child spends some time most days both in high-quality interaction with parents and doing things at home other than watching TV or playing video games.</li> </ol>

<b>Internal Assets</b>	<b>Commitment to Learning</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>21. Achievement Motivation</b>—Child is motivated and strives to do well in school.</li> <li><b>22. Learning Engagement</b>—Child is responsive, attentive, and actively engaged in learning at school and enjoys participating in learning activities outside of school.</li> <li><b>23. Homework</b>—Child usually hands in homework on time.</li> <li><b>24. Bonding to school</b>—Child cares about teachers and other adults at school.</li> <li><b>25. Reading for Pleasure</b>—Child enjoys and engages in reading for fun most days of the week.</li> </ol>
	<b>Positive Values</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>26. Caring</b>—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to help other people.</li> <li><b>27. Equality and social justice</b>—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to speak up for equal rights for all people.</li> <li><b>28. Integrity</b>—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to stand up for one's beliefs.</li> <li><b>29. Honesty</b>—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to tell the truth.</li> <li><b>30. Responsibility</b>—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to accept personal responsibility for behavior.</li> <li><b>31. Healthy Lifestyle</b>—Parent(s) tell the child it is important to have good health habits and an understanding of healthy sexuality.</li> </ol>
	<b>Social Competencies</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>32. Planning and decision making</b>—Child thinks about decisions and is usually happy with results of her or his decisions.</li> <li><b>33. Interpersonal Competence</b>—Child cares about and is affected by other people's feelings, enjoys making friends, and, when frustrated or angry, tries to calm her- or himself.</li> <li><b>34. Cultural Competence</b>—Child knows and is comfortable with people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and with her or his own cultural identity.</li> <li><b>35. Resistance skills</b>—Child can stay away from people who are likely to get her or him in trouble and is able to say no to doing wrong or dangerous things.</li> <li><b>36. Peaceful conflict resolution</b>—Child seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.</li> </ol>
	<b>Positive Identity</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>37. Personal power</b>—Child feels he or she has some influence over things that happen in her or his life.</li> <li><b>38. Self-esteem</b>—Child likes and is proud to be the person that he or she is.</li> <li><b>39. Sense of purpose</b>—Child sometimes thinks about what life means and whether there is a purpose for her or his life.</li> <li><b>40. Positive view of personal future</b>—Child is optimistic about her or his personal future.</li> </ol>

This page may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only. Copyright © 2003, 2006 by Search Institute, 615 First Avenue N.E., Suite 125, Minneapolis, MN 55413; 800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org. All Rights Reserved.  
 The following are registered trademarks of Search Institute: Search Institute®, Developmental Assets® and Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth®.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### The Assets Approach: Empowerment

The Empowerment Assets Include:

#7 Community Values Youth

#8 Youth as Resources

#9 Service to Others

**Volunteering with Your Little** is a great way to develop Empowerment Assets. There are many benefits to volunteering, including:

- Bigs and Littles who volunteer together to build strong bonds to one another and to the community.
- Volunteering is usually a no cost activity.
- You are leading by example.
- Both Bigs and Littles get the satisfaction of knowing they are helping to make a difference in the community.
- Littles gain a sense of responsibility and a deeper understanding of compassion for others.
- Studies show that children who regularly participate in community service are more likely to do so later in life.
- Community service can help kids discover their talents and learn new skills for the future.
- Children gain a sense of empowerment about their surroundings when they perceive that others value their presence.
- Some basic examples of volunteering are picking up trash at your local park, helping a local food bank deliver food, visiting elderly homes, or participating in fundraising events.

**If you would like our list of specific volunteer opportunities to do with your Little contact your Match Support Specialist.**

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### The Assets Approach: Commitment to Learning

The Commitment to Learning Assets Include:

#21 Achievement Motivation

#22 Learning Engagement

#23 Homework

#24 Bonding to School

#25 Reading for Pleasure

As a Big it is not your job to be a tutor, but you can support your Little's interest in school. Letting your Little know that you are interested in learning, asking about what they are learning, and learning something new together are support these assets.

#### Ideas on how to help your Little be an A+ student at school and in life:

- Ask the Little about what is going on at school, what they are learning, and how things are going.
- Be generous with praise for good grades, finished homework, hard work, or improvements in school.
- Use yourself as an example. Mention a class you may be taking now.
- Inform your Little about colleges (or even middle or high school) by researching them online or bringing in brochures.
- If your Little invites you to a school function, try to attend to show that you are interested in their school too.
- Brainstorm ways your Little's school could be better. It may turn into a fun project to advocate for more playground equipment or come in one day for show and tell and teach the other kids about what you know.
- Do thinking activities together such as researching something that fascinates your Little or trying word games together.
- Help them with at school project, i.e., make a poster, model, create a costume.
- Check out all our cool things at local libraries: UNR's MARS book retrieval robot; Washoe County's Downtown branch's jungle atrium; the Spanish Springs branch STEM toys and computer collection; the Keck (geology, fossils, crystals!!) Museum, located next to the DeLaMare Science & Engineering Library at UNR.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### The Assets Approach: Social Competencies

The Social Competencies Assets Include:

#32 Planning and Decision Making

#33 Interpersonal Competence

#34 Cultural Competence

#35 Resistance Skills

#36 Peaceful Conflict Resolution

#### How to develop the skills of planning ahead and making good choices:

- Brainstorm a list of activities to try sometime and then make a plan for each.
- Think of 2 or 3 activities and let your Little choose between them.
- Let your Little plan an entire day for the both of you.
- Show your Little your calendar and help your Little make a calendar for school and other activities.
- Come up with a project that will take planning across a few activity meetings. Work on a special holiday gift, tune up your bikes, or plan and plant a garden.
- Talk to your Little about what she or he wants to be when grown up. Talk about the steps it will take to get there.
- Give your Little kudos if he or she makes a positive decision in the face of a tough choice. Maybe he or she had to resist peer pressure and tell a friend no or apologize to a friend.
- Talk about choices and consequences. Maybe he or she would like to join a club or play football, but can't until grades are up. Focus on the positive result and attaining *their* goal.
- Role play resistance skills and peaceful conflict resolution.
- Help your Little with tough decisions using the pro/con method (tough decisions can be about what ice cream to choose). Write it down to help them see the process.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### The Assets Approach: Positive Identity

The Positive Identity Assets Include:

#37 Personal Power

#38 Self-Esteem

#39 Sense of Purpose

#40 Positive View of Personal Future

Children begin to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence at a young age when they learn to trust that their parents and others who care for them. This feeling of trust becomes the basis of their feeling wanted, valued, and loved. If your Little has a low self-esteem or low self-confidence, **here are a few suggestions on how you may be able to help them increase their self-esteem and self-confidence:**

- Treat your Little with respect, ask their views and opinions, take their views and opinions seriously, and give them meaningful and realistic feedback. Your Little will more likely respect themselves and others when they learn that what they think, feel and do is important.
- Give honest praise, but make sure it is realistic and honest because children can often see through excessive praise or flattery.
- Focus on the positive aspects of your Little's behavior.
- Communicate with your Little by listening to their feelings without making judgments about those feelings.
- Start with doing small projects that allow your Little to set goals, follow through and complete projects. The projects can become more involved, but the point is to allow the Little to experience success.

Kids who have goals and a clear view of their future are less likely to smoke or drink. **Ideas to get your Little thinking about tomorrow:**

- Help him/her conceptualize the future by giving him/her an idea of middle school, high school and college. Look at the schools' websites. Tell him/her stories about your high school or college experiences.
- Help him/her feel more familiar with the possibility of higher education by bringing in brochures and applications. Even better—take a tour of a local college.
- Help him/her learn more about their dream career and how to begin planning now.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Child Safety-- A Top Priority

**Children's safety is our #1 priority. We focus on the child's safety and well-being throughout the match.** We do this by providing:

- Thorough professional screening.
- Child safety and child abuse prevention education programs for volunteers, parents and children.
- Guidelines that establish appropriate boundaries and respect a child's right to feel safe.
- Ongoing BBBS Match Support contact with each party in the match. This helps provide up-to-date information about safety issues and early warnings of potential problems throughout the match relationship.
- The BBBS Match Support Specialist maintains *required* consistent scheduled contacts with each member of the match party.

As a Big you play a role in supporting the parent's primary role of keeping their child safe. **Bigs need to model appropriate behavior as well as assume responsibility for their Little's safety during outings.**

Some safety issues include: Internet safety, bullying and violence prevention, the Little's medical condition, and child abuse prevention.

Reasonable cause for concern such as regular instances of lack of adult supervision, suspicious bruises or other marks on the child, regular lack of nourishment or outright admissions of abuse/neglect by the Little should be reported.

Our agency has expectations and guidelines relating to Child Safety. We expect you to know and follow these guidelines, outlined in the following pages.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Child Abuse and Neglect

**If you ever have a situation where your Little talks to you about any abuse or violence he/she is subject to, contact your Match Support Specialist immediately.** Our response to the disclosure by a child can prevent negative outcomes for the child and their family. We are committed to taking action to ensure its prevention and for that reason, it's critical that volunteers follow our BBBS protocols on reporting abuse. **However, you should always remember that the BBBS Match Support Specialists are trained in dealing with these issues, and you should not feel that you will have to deal with them yourself.**

**As Big Brother Big Sisters staff and volunteers, we are mandated reporters. This means that by law you are required to report suspected physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect or exploitation of children.** You should report if you have reason to believe abuse, neglect or exploitation has occurred. You do not necessarily need to have proof. Abuse and neglect can often be identified by the appearance and behavior of the child. It's important to pay attention to patterns or several indicators. One indicator will not necessarily mean abuse has occurred; there could be another explanation, so use care and discretion.

**If you suspect that your Little is in an abusive or unsafe situation:**

- 1. You are required to report the incident to local law enforcement within 24 hours.**  
The following page includes a list of phone numbers, including the child abuse and crisis hotlines.
2. If you feel that the child is in immediate danger, call 911.
3. You are also required to report the incident to BBBS as soon as possible. Leave us a message if the office is closed.
4. Your BBBS Match Support Specialist will talk to you about the incident, document the concerns, and help to decide what to do next.
5. The name of the reporting party can remain confidential. The authorities and BBBS will not disclose to the family who reported the incident.
6. If you are not certain that abuse, neglect, or other maltreatment has occurred, but you are concerned, make the call.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Emergency Contact Information

**Below is a list of numbers you can call to report child abuse, emergencies or crisis:**

#### Big Brothers Big Sisters

- (775) 352-3202 Reno

#### Child Protective Services

- 1-833-900-SAFE (7233) Washoe County Child Abuse Hotline
- (775) 785-8600 Washoe County
- (775) 684-4400 Carson/Douglas

#### Crisis Call Center (nights/weekends)

- (775) 784-8090

#### Police

- (775) 334-2175 Reno
- (775) 353-2208 Sparks
- (775) 687-0300 Carson

#### Sheriff

- (775) 328-3001 Washoe County
- (775) 782-5126 Douglas County

#### In an emergency

- 911

### **For more information about our programs, activities and events:**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northern Nevada

Main Phone:

(775) 352-3202

Fax:

(775) 322-8898

Mail:

1300 Foster Dr. Suite 210

Reno, NV 89509

Website:

[www.bbbsnn.org](http://www.bbbsnn.org)

Online:

[www.facebook.com/bbbsnn](https://www.facebook.com/bbbsnn)

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Ground Rules (abridged)

#### 1. Match communication

- a. meet in person once each week.
- b. Parent/caregiver must approve each outing.
- c. Matches may communicate via text, email, social media, or other means with prior approval of parent/caregiver.

#### 2. Activity Budget & Gifts

- a. Most activities should be low cost or free.
- b. Bigs should spend \$30 or less per month on their Little for the cost of activities.
- c. Gifts should be limited to birthdays, holidays, or other special occasions, and should be worth \$25 or less
- d. Big may not provide financial or monetary assistance to the youth or family.

#### 3. Youth supervision

- a. Big is responsible for youth during their outings.
- b. Big is responsible for supervision for youth at all times and may not leave the youth with someone else.
- c. Children should be picked up and dropped off at their door and a parent or other responsible caregiver, such as another relative, needs to be at home.
- d. If your Little is older (12 or older), and usually stays home alone, you may drop them off to stay home alone only if parent/caregiver has provided prior approval to do so.

#### 4. Discipline

- a. Big should provide encouragement, support, and direction, but should in no way be involved in disciplining a Little.
- b. Bigs should provide clear expectations and boundaries before each outing, for example, where at the park the child may play or that Little needs to stay within eyesight.

#### 5. Including Others

- a. The match must have been meeting at least three (3) months before doing an activity where another person is invited.
- b. Activities where other people are included may not exceed more than once per month.

#### 6. Transportation

- a. Bigs must practice safe driving which includes following all traffic laws and avoiding distractions, such as cell phone calls.
- b. Big and Little must wear seatbelts at all times.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

- c. Children under 12, or those who are older but small for their age, need to ride in the back seat of vehicles. If they have to ride up front the air bag needs to be turned off. Use a booster seat if your Little is under 60 lbs or under age 6.
- d. Big must keep current car insurance and license with you at all times. Big must also provide a copy of current car insurance and license to the Agency.
- e. Your Little is not allowed to operate any vehicle without proper license/permit and parent approval.
- f. Big may not allow others to provide transportation for youth.
- g. Big should provide transportation for match-related activities only.

### 7. Bike, Skating, Skiing, Snowboarding Safety

- a. Littles and Bigs must wear helmets and should consider other protective equipment as well.

### 8. Motorcycles, Quads and other off road Motorized Vehicles

- a. Helmets and proper clothing must be worn.
- b. Safety classes are offered at local motorcycle retailers and matches are encouraged to attend.

### 9. Water Safety

- a. Ask your Little's parents how well s/he can swim before doing water activities
- b. Life vests are required for motorized water craft. It is also strongly recommended to use them for children under 12 for canoeing, rafting and other water activities besides swimming.
- c. Go to areas with life guards when possible.

### 10. Out of State Activities

- a. Out of state trips require that parent/caregiver has filled out a permission form in advance (and a copy has been provided to your Match Support Specialist).
- b. BBBSNN and Big must have a copy of the signed permission form.

### 11. Photos, Digital Technology & Social Media

- a. Bigs and Littles may take photos of their activities. Parents/caregivers should be notified if photos are taken and have the right to view all photos.
- b. Big must request parent/caregiver permission to post a photograph of a Little in a public place or in any media, including but not limited to newspapers and social media sites such as Instagram.
- c. Big may not post any information (photos or commentary) that contains specific identifying information, such as: Little's last name, the school the Little attends, Little's address, information about the Little's schedule, etc.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

- d. Use of social media (e.g. by friending on Facebook) between Big, Little, and Little's family is not encouraged.
- e. If the Agency believes that the Big's online activity does not represent the Agency or appropriate role modeling, BBBSNN may close the match.

### 12. Weapons

- a. Any firearms, archery, and/or other weapons ownership by the Volunteer Big applicant must be Disclosed to BBBS's Agency Staff at enrollment and throughout the life of the match and to the child's parent/caregiver
- b. All firearms, archery, and/or other weapons will be made inaccessible at all times to a child while in the Volunteer Bigs care.
- c. Big may not keep any type of weapon on their person or in their vehicle while meeting with a Little, even if Big has a valid permit to do so.
- d. Big must have weapons locked in their home if a Little is going to be present with firearms and ammunition must also be kept separated.
- e. Matches may not participate in any activities that include any type of weapon, unless participating in specific, approved activity(ies), which the parent/caregiver, Big, and BBBSNN Staff have approved in advance.  
Such approval must be documented in the match file.
  - i. Activities that include archery may be considered.
  - ii. Any activities that include guns/firearms, including Air Soft, BB, paint ball, rifles, and handguns are prohibited and will not be considered under any circumstances.

### 13. Home Visits

- a. Littles are not permitted to visit the volunteer's home.

### 14. Cell phones

- a. Phones should be put away when spending time together.
- b. Use of phone or calls, texts, music, social media, or other features should be limited to emergencies or when necessary for the activity (for example to look up directions).

### 15. Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Use

- a. You may never use tobacco or alcohol during outings with your Little, even if it has been offered by the parents
- b. Drug use at any time while being a Big is strictly prohibited and will result in Match closure. This includes medical or recreational marijuana.
- c. Model and encourage healthy lifestyle choices including saying no to drugs, alcohol and tobacco.

### 16. Overnight Visits

- a. Overnight visits are not permitted by the agency.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### 17. Personal Space & Privacy

- a. Remember that everyone has his or her own sense of personal space and boundaries
- b. Your Little is old enough to change clothes and use the restroom without help. Allow your Little his/her privacy, unless illness or disability requires your assistance.
- c. When going to the gym, either have your Little change at home or ensure they have a private area to change and avoid exposure to unclothed individuals in the locker room.
- d. Rough housing, tickling, play fighting, wrestling and other similar physical activities are not appropriate
- e. Hugs, high fives, handshakes or a pat on the back are appropriate ways to show affection to your Little, but Bigs should ask first before giving a hug.
- f. If you have a Little who has poor boundaries for personal space, let him or her know what you are OK with and ask your Match Support Specialist for help on how to deal with this.
- g. Bigs may not keep a secret for their Little if it involved the safety, health, or wellbeing of the Little or anyone else.
- h. Bigs may never ask nor suggest that a Little keep a secret for them.

### 18. Talking about dating, sex, drugs, gangs or other difficult topics

- a. Big should encourage Little to make healthy, positive, age appropriate choices
- b. Big must tell your Match Support Specialist right away if difficult topics come up.

### 19. Medical Emergencies and Accidents

- a. Keep your Little's medical card and emergency contact # with you at all times
- b. For minor cuts or bruises, it is OK to administer basic first aid. However, Big cannot give any medication (even Tylenol) to the Little.
- c. If it is an emergency call 911 or go straight to the hospital and call the parents from there.
- d. Let the parent/caregiver and your Match Support Specialist know about any injuries. You must also tell them if there was an accident, regardless of whether an injury occurred. For example, you got into a fender bender, or your Little fell off their bike, but seems OK, etc.

### 20. Child Abuse

- a. All BBBSNN Staff and Volunteer Bigs upon having knowledge of an incident of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation, or having reasonable cause to believe a child has been or is being abused, neglected, or exploited MUST:

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

- i. report to law enforcement or child protection authorities immediately and no later than 24 hours by phone, in accordance with state and federal law;
- ii. inform BBBSNN of any incident or allegation of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### You CAN Make a Difference in the Life of a Child

It's pretty simple. By building a trusting mentor relationship with a child you can make a powerful impact in his/her life. That's what it's all about.

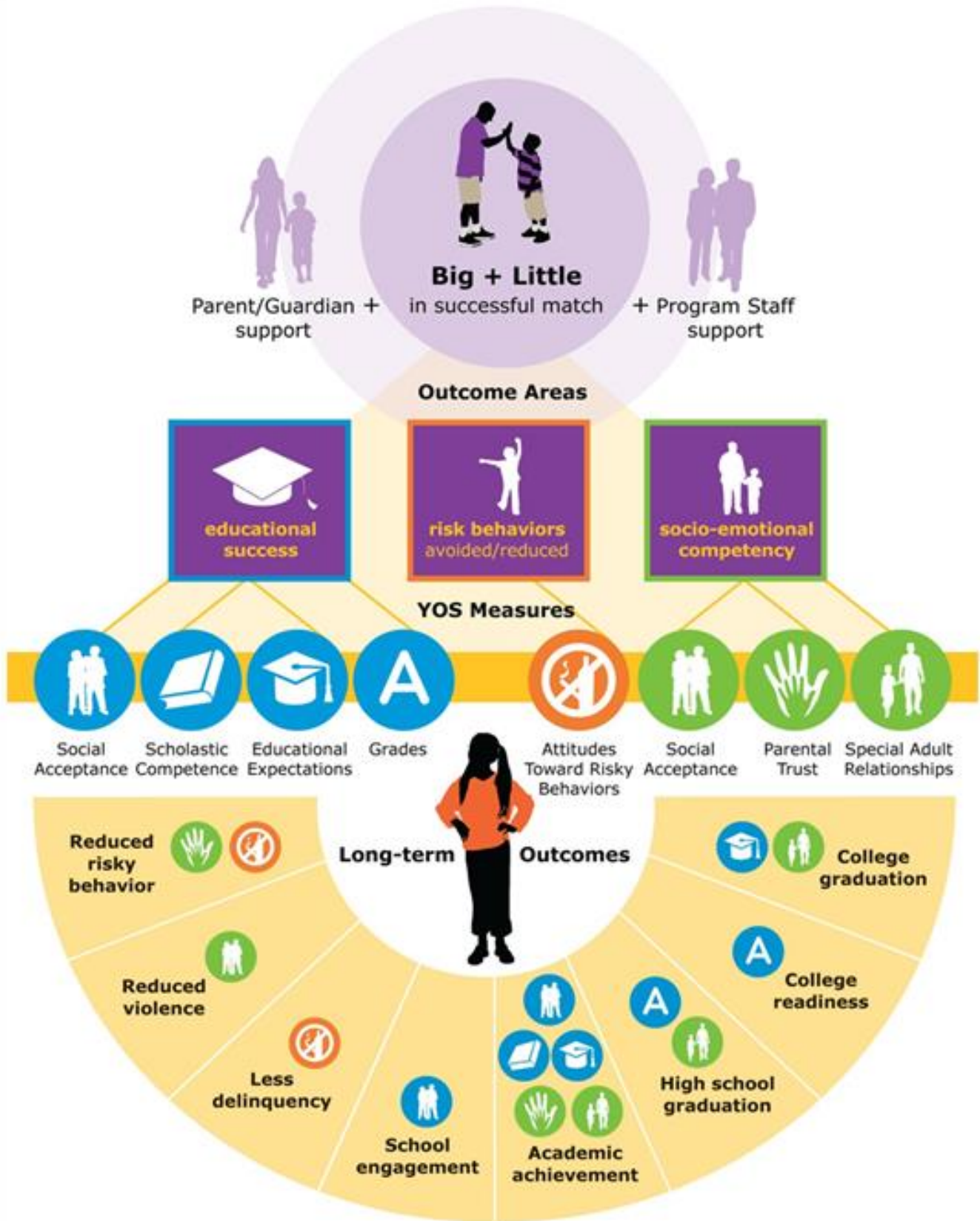
Bigs can get discouraged if they do not feel like they are making a difference or having the kind of impact they want to have. At Big Brothers Big Sisters, we are confident that you are having an impact on your Little. Sometimes it can be in small, but important, ways. Sometimes, we don't get to see the impact because it might not happen right away.

Here are some thoughts on making a difference:

- **Consistently sharing activities together (events, having lunch, just talking) is the biggest factor in forming a positive relationship with your Little.**
- **Deciding together what activities to do fosters a stronger relationship.**
- **By being there you are making a difference even if you don't think you are.**
- **If you're concerned about not making a difference, talk it over with your Match Support Specialist.**



# Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based



## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### Other Ways You Can Help START Something

- **BBBS Donation Center** – New or used clothes, shoes, linens, toys, and other small household items are being collected. Items can be dropped off at one of our bins throughout the Truckee Meadows. The Donation Center can also pick up items. Bin locations are listed on our website [www.bbbsnn.org](http://www.bbbsnn.org). For a pick up call the Donation Center at (775) 826-2122 or book online [donatebbbsnn.org](http://donatebbbsnn.org).
- **Clothing Drives** – The Donation Center is looking for businesses, churches, schools and other groups willing to host clothing drives or host a clothing drive fundraiser. We are also looking for additional spots to place clothing barrels and bins for both short and long term. For information, contact the manager at the Donation Center by calling (775) 826-2122.
- **Refer a Friend** – You can help by referring friends & others who would make good Big Brothers or Big Sisters. Tell your friends, neighbors and co-workers about becoming a “Big.” Remember, the person doesn’t need to be Magic Johnson or Mother Teresa. They just have to like kids and be reliable.
- **Volunteer Outreach** –Invite us to do a presentation at your club, church or businesses. Help us at a booth or fair.
- **Big Chefs Big Gala** – This fantastic fundraising event involves bringing in the best of food and fun. Each spring we host a black-tie dinner and gala, which includes a live and silent auction.
- **Young Professionals Committee** – Young professionals who are interested in networking with like-minded people; taking part in helping the children in our community; and putting their leadership and talent to use are invited to join YPC. YPC members help BBBS with volunteer recruitment and fundraising with events like Comedy Night and Wine & Chocolate.
- **Sponsor an Activity** – Help cover the costs by paying rental fees, donating tickets, or inviting us somewhere special.
- **Individual Donations** – Your donation of cash, securities, real estate or insurance is eagerly accepted and prudently invested in building a strong Big Brothers Big Sisters for our community.
- **Host a Fundraiser** – Help us with online fundraising or fundraising at work.

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

- **Connect Us to Corporate Giving** – Some employers provide matching gifts for your contribution or donate to the organization for your volunteer hours. Ask about your company’s charitable giving programs.
- **Serve on a Committee** – How do we get so much done with such a small staff? It is through the combined efforts of many volunteers who serve on a committee to plan and carry out many of our activities.
- **Worthy Wheels** –Invest in a child’s future by donating your used vehicle – cars, trucks, motorcycles, boats, planes – to Big Brothers Big Sisters. Your donation is tax-deductible. We pick up or tow the vehicle for free.
- **Bequests** – Plan ahead and include Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northern Nevada in your will or estate plan. Consultation with your accountant or financial planner is the first step.

### Return on Investment

Whether you give your time or your money, you are making a lasting impact on our community. The investment in mentoring curbs the costs of things like jails and welfare programs.

For example, BBBSNN and Washoe County Juvenile Services worked together on a three-year project, measuring the impact of mentoring high-risk youth. BBBS matched low income youth referred by WCJS. At the end of the project, these Littles were 62% less likely than peers in Washoe County to become first time offenders. Our average spending is \$1000 per year, per match; compare that to the estimated \$1500 per week per child the county spends for a youth in detention!

Another example from the Teen Link grant project which ran through 2010-2014 found “...youth reported low levels of ever having sex” compared to averages from the same sexual behavior survey with similarly aged youth, “suggesting that having a mentor serves as a protective factor for sexual behavior.” The estimated costs associated with teen pregnancy were \$11 million in child welfare, according to a National Conference of State Legislatures report.

For more information on any of these opportunities contact Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northern Nevada

[www.bbbsnn.org](http://www.bbbsnn.org) or [contact@bbbsnn.org](mailto:contact@bbbsnn.org)

## Preparing Volunteers Guide: Community Based

### In Summary Successful Bigs...

- ★ Emphasize being there for the child over changing the behavior of the child.
- ★ Are not authoritarian.
- ★ Decide activities together with Littles.
- ★ Are consistent & dependable.
- ★ Have realistic expectations.
- ★ Are patient.
- ★ Focus on having fun.
- ★ Set boundaries and limits.
- ★ Acknowledge that positive impact happens after the relationship is built.
- ★ Put a child's safety and well-being first.

## THANK YOU!

As your match begins, and throughout the entire life of your match, we want to THANK YOU! You are stepping forward on a journey where you don't know exactly what will happen, but you are doing this because you care for others and you know that there is great reward in life in the relationships you develop.

We wish you all the best in your match with your Little Brother or Little Sister. Have great fun. Take pride in your contribution to the happiness of your Little. We will be with you, supporting you, throughout your journey.

