Big Brothers Big Sisters of Marquette & Alger Counties

VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION GUIDE

TOGETHER, WE ARE DEFENDERS OF POTENTIAL

#DEFENDERSOFPOTENTIAL
#BIGBROTHERSBIGSISTERS
WE ARE THE MOST HUMAN BRAND IN THE WORLD

Big Brothers Big Sisters has been changing lives and shaping communities through mentorship since 1904 to clear the path to a child’s biggest possible future.

TOGETHER WE ARE DEFENDERS OF POTENTIAL In a world of causes, we make a difference by creating professionally supported, one-to-one matches for kids who want to realize their full potential.

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS Here’s the proof. National research has shown that positive relationships between Littles and their Bigs have a direct and measurable impact on children’s lives. By participating in our programs Littles:
- Improve or maintain their scholastic competence.
- Improve or maintain their educational expectations.
- Improve parental trust.
- Improve with peer relationships and social skills.
- Gain more self-confidence.
- Improve social acceptance.
- Improve in their attitudes toward risky behaviors

SHARE THE JOURNEY. Often, it is not a single occurrence that best captures the truth of a match. Sometimes it is the awkward beginning that slowly transforms into a deep bond. It is the showing up for weeks without knowing where the relationship will go, building trust and forming respect along the way.

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

YOU DO NOT NEED TO CREATE POTENTIAL. YOU JUST HAVE TO DEFEND IT.
**Community Based Mentoring:** The traditional Big Brothers Big Sisters Program. Individuals age 21+, couples, and families are matched with children ages 7 to 18. For a minimum of one year, Bigs are required to spend 4-6 hours per month with their Little. The first 3 months are spent in the community. After 3 months of being matched they are able to spend time at the Bigs home with parent/guardian consent, and overnights can take place after 6 months of being matched.

**School Based Mentoring:**

- **Girl Power:** This program is supervised by BBBS staff on site at local schools or local community settings. High school, college students, or members of the community are matched with elementary/middle school students. They meet weekly for the entire academic school year. We focus on empowering girls to become leaders, have high self-esteem and confidence, set goals for their future, and teach them important social skills to help them succeed in life.

- **Dude Power:** This program is supervised by BBBS staff on site at local schools or local community settings. High school students, college students, or members of the community are matched with elementary/middle school students. They meet weekly for the entire academic school year. We focus on empowering boys to become leaders, build individual strengths, set goals for their future, and teach them important social skills to help them succeed in life.
YOUTH ELIGIBILITY

- The child must be 7 to 15 years of age.
- The custodial parent/guardian and child are all able to find the time in their schedules to keep the match open for the required year, 4 to 6 hours a month.
- Must reside in Marquette/Alger County and/or attend school in Marquette/Alger County.
- If the child’s parents are divorced or separated there must be a clear resolution of all child custody issues.
- The youth must want to participate in the program.
- The custodial parent/guardian must be capable of supporting the mentoring relationship.
- The youth should be mentally, emotionally, and physically able to participate.
- The youth has the ability to form a relationship.

VOLUNTEER ELIGIBILITY

- Must be 21+ with a valid driver’s license and proof of car insurance.
- Must reside in Marquette/Alger County and/or attend school in Marquette/Alger County.
- The volunteer is able to find time in their schedule to keep the match open for the required year, 4 to 6 hours a month.
- Anyone living in the volunteer’s home must be supportive of the match.
- The volunteer will have to pass all criminal background and driving checks.
  - Will not be accepted if:
    - Felony and/or incarceration occurred in the last 5 years, was for any physical or sexual abuse of an adult or child.
    - Received a charge related to illegal drugs or narcotics in the last 5 years
    - Received a charge related to marijuana in the last 24 months
    - More than 3 moving violations in 3 years
    - Received DUI in last 2 years or received more than one DUI in the last 5 years.
- The volunteer should be mentally, physically, and emotionally able to participate.
- The volunteer has the ability to form a relationship.
Becoming a Big involves a one-year commitment. A series of steps are used to tell you more about the program and for us to learn more about you.

**INQUIRY** Contact the BBBS office or check out the website for more information about the programs and becoming a Big.

**ORIENTATION & APPLICATION** Complete an application online or a paper copy and return it to BBBS. Once the application is received, BBBS staff will send you an Orientation presentation to review.

**IN-PERSON INTERVIEW** The in-person interview takes about one hour and is the most useful tool in finding an appropriate Little for you. BBBS staff gathers information about you, your family and friends, your interests and hobbies, and the type of Little you would like to be matched with. BBBS staff will also use this time to meet and talk with any other members of your household when applicable. You will also be asked to provide a copy of your driver’s license and proof of insurance to have on file. This normally takes place at your home.

**TRAINING** After your interview, you will be required to complete a Pre-Match Training either online or in-person. This is required to be accepted into BBBS.

**BACKGROUND CHECKS** BBBS staff will perform the following background checks: a.) State/National background check b.) Local background check to the county prosecutor c.) Sex Offender Check d.) Fingerprint Scan e.) Driving record check f.) Social media check. g.) Reference checks.

**ACCEPTANCE/DENIAL DECISION** After the interview, BBBS staff will discuss all the information collected and the final decision to accept or deny the volunteer is made. The potential volunteer is notified by letter of their acceptance.

**MATCH SELECTION** Once you have been accepted as a Big, BBBS staff will contact you with a description of a potential Little. Then a description of you will be given to the parent/guardian.

**PRE-MATCH MEETING** The volunteer and parent have the option of meeting briefly with BBBS staff in a local community setting. This is a time where you can learn more about the child and the parent can learn more about you. If both agree to the match, a match meeting is set up.
**FINAL-MATCH MEETING** The final-match meeting brings you together with your Little for the first time. This meeting takes place at the Littles home. BBBS staff will be there to introduce you to the family and to review the final agreements of the match. BBBS staff will assist in guiding you to set-up your first outing.

**MATCH SUPPORT** After contacting everyone after the first outing, BBBS staff (Match Support Specialist) will call you once a month for one year, to check up on the match. BBBS staff will ask questions regarding to what activities you have been doing, how your friendship is progressing, and if there are any problems or if things are going great.

**MATCH ACTIVITIES** You and your Little decide, with parent’s approval, what you will do when you get together. You are encouraged to try new activities that are fun and inexpensive. The two of you will also be invited to group activities sponsored by Big Brothers Big Sisters.

**ANNUAL EVALUATION** Annual evaluations are preferably done in person with BBBS staff. The evaluation allows BBBS staff to talk about your match and what has happened within the past year. The Big is given the opportunity to continue with the match or to close the match. If the Big chooses to continue the match, contact with the agency is reduced to once every three months.

**MATCH CLOSURE** An evaluation is conducted at the time of match closure. Some reasons for the closure of a match are:

- The child or volunteer moves out of Marquette or Alger County.
- The agency feels it is in the best interest of the volunteer or child.
- The child graduates from high school or turns 18 years of age.
- All parties agree that agency involvement is no longer necessary to continue the relationship.
- Staff determines that the match no longer meets the standard eligibility requirements.
ALL BIGS ARE LIFE QUALIFIED: Every potential Big has what it takes to help our kids. Being a Big is not the same for everyone.

- **ADULT COMPANION**
  - Be involved in the total life of the Little by being understanding, kind, and sincere, patient, and by providing security and affection.
  - Commit unconditionally – accept that the Little may have difficulties due to emotions, developmental level, different value systems, latent hostility toward adults, or testing the Big to determine if the friendship is genuine.
  - Be a consistent and reliable presence in the Little’s life, through the Little’s happy and difficult times.
  - Allow the Little a degree of independence in the choices and judgements they make.
  - Put the Little’s safety and well-being first.

- **POSITIVE ROLE MODEL**
  - Exhibit honesty and respect for others. Be a positive example in life style, social interactions, dress, occupation, personal habits and demeanor.
  - Acknowledge that positive impact comes after the relationship is built.

- **FRIEND and LISTENER**
  - Emphasize friendship over changing the behavior of the Little.
  - Maintain open communication with the Little.
  - Suspend judgements and accept the Little for who they are.
  - Create an environment that encourages expression of positive and negative attitudes, feelings, and thoughts.
  - Focus on having fun.

- **INSTRUCTOR**
  - Introduce the Little to new and challenging opportunities.
  - Share your own skills and talents with the Little.
  - Create “Teachable Moments” out of difficult decisions or situation.
  - Have realistic expectations.

- **LIMIT SETTER**
  - Set clear limits for acceptable behavior during your time with the Little.
  - Emphasize positive behaviors rather than simply pointing out negative ones.

- **RESOURCE AND GUIDE**
  - Open the door to activities and experiences for the Little.
  - When serious problem situations arise, act as an advocate to identify the appropriate resources to ensure successful intervention.

- **MEMBER OF THE TEAM**
  - Supports and helps the Little’s growth and development.
  - Communicates openly and honestly with the Little, the parent, and BBBS.
  - The Big contacts BBBS monthly to discuss the match or calls whenever they need support, guidance, or additional resources.
SHOWING UP IS A BIG DEAL. Each time you meet you'll gain a little more understanding and your Little will become a little more comfortable. Think of it as a journey to a new country. "Each day you see something new and wonderful and learn a new thing about the people who live there. You begin to understand and then speak the language. The 'we and they' you began with gradually turns into 'us.'

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

A BIG IS ...
- CONSISTENT
- RELIABLE
- CARING
- PATIENT
- PERSISTENT
- SUPPORTIVE
- ENCOURAGING
- ATTENTIVE
- COMMUNICATIVE
- OPEN MINDED
- OBSERVANT
- NUTURING
- COMMITTED
- FUN
- A FRIEND

A BIG IS NOT ...
- ☒ A PARENT
- ☒ A SOCIAL WORKER
- ☒ AN ATM
- ☒ A DISCIPLINARIAN
- ☒ A BABYSITTER
- ☒ A TAXI

In order to maintain healthy boundaries and to prevent confusion, a clear understanding of your role as a Big is essential.
Parents have entrusted their child to you. They remain the leaders in their family and our role is to support them whenever we can when appropriate. It’s important that we respect and honor that. The parent’s support is critical to the success of the match. It may take a while to establish your role with the parent. Listed below are some ways you can work with the Parent/Guardian.

- **Communicate with them before and after an activity.** Describe what you plan to do and what you’ve done together.

- **Make sure they are aware of activity plans,** and ask if the activity is ok (do not rely on the Little to tell the Parent/Guardian about plans).

- **Let them know about any changes in plans.**

- **Respect the privacy and confidentiality of your Little’s family.**

- **Maintain a primary relationship with your Little and do not become overly involved with the rest of the family.**

- **Only set up activities that require money on occasion,** so you do not burden the parent/guardian financially.

- **Talk to your Match Support Specialist about any concerns you have about your Little/Little’s family or your Little’s well-being.**
Child’s safety is our #1 priority. We focus on the child’s safety and well-being throughout the match, not just at the beginning.

**CHILD PROTECTION IN BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS:**

We want to work together to keep the children safe.

- Parents/Guardians should approve all activities; if they are not comfortable with an activity that you suggest, they are encouraged to not approve. Talk to your BBBS match support staff when you have questions.

- When you take your Little out always stay with them & do not leave them with someone else.

- Do not use alcohol or other drugs before or during activities with your Little; volunteers are not to smoke when with their little.

- Do not use physical discipline or yell at your Little.

- If an activity involves changing clothes to go swimming, there should be separate changing and showering places.

- Volunteers should never ask a child to keep a secret from their parents/guardians.

- You may want to buy an occasional gift for your Little. Please get parent approval.

- Be sensitive to whether a hug or other form of physical touch would be comfortable to your Little. Always respect your Little’s personal boundaries.

- Display or discussion of any materials of a sexual nature is prohibited, including but not limited to viewing pornography or sexually suggestive materials.

- Volunteers should not come between a parent and their child; volunteers need to respect a parent’s role and authority.

- Child abuse and neglect is a serious subject. BBBS staff members are required to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child. It’s important for you to report to us if at any time you suspect your Little is being harmed in any way. Please refer to the guidelines & MI Child Protection Law in this guide, on page 14. If you have any questions/concerns at all, please contact our office.

- If you ever feel that a child is in imminent danger, don’t hesitate to call 911 or local law enforcement.
• Safety in the car is of the utmost importance! This means mandatory safety belt use, obeying all traffic laws, including appropriate youth related regulations. Do not put the child or yourself in danger by eating, talking/texting on your cell phone or multitasking, etc. while driving. You must let parent/guardian know and obtain approval if you are not going to be operating your vehicle when transporting your little.

• Volunteers must let the Little’s parent know if they will be leaving the local area for an outing.

• All guns and ammunition must be locked or inaccessible to the youth. Mentors must have written permission from parents to engage in an outing using a gun. A gun safety policy form will be completed at the time of a match.

• Because your Little (or Little’s parent) may view your personal website (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) please make sure it doesn’t contain inappropriate material and is set to high privacy standards. A social media policy form will be completed at the time of a match.

• Overnight visits may occur only when approval is given in advance by BBBS professional staff and the parents/guardians and volunteer are in accordance with the terms of the overnight policy.

• Use of snowmobiles, boats, four wheelers, etc. must have parent approval and all proper safety equipment (helmets, life jackets, etc.) must be used.

• All pertinent medical information regarding your Little will be shared with you at the time of the match meeting. (allergies, medications, etc.) You will also receive a copy of your Little’s Medical/Emergency Information form.
Child abuse is an intense and serious subject. Quite often, abuse goes unreported and children continue to suffer in silence. As a mentor, you may have the opportunity to intervene in an abusive situation. Being prepared with knowledge, resources and intervention skills will help you handle the situation. Most importantly, remember that intervention in the form of a caring, non-judgmental, supportive friend can make a critical difference in the life of a victimized child.

If you are an adult that a child comes to about abuse...

- Attempt to remain calm and deal with the disclosure at their reaction level.
- Maintain eye contact with the child.
- Stress that the child did the right thing by telling you.
- Allow the child to relate the incident in their own terms.
- Stress that you believe them.
- Tell them that the abuse was NOT their fault.
- Express that you feel bad and want to help.
- Do not ask many questions unless the child wants to answer them.
- Avoid displays of shock. Never use terms such as “bad”, “awful”, “disgusting”, to describe the situation.
- Attempt to give some control back to the child by asking what they want to do.
- Do not confront the abuser. A confrontation can jeopardize the match. During this kind of crises, the child will be in even greater need of their mentor.
- Tell the child that you have a responsibility to report to your Program Staff.
- Contact your Program Staff as soon as possible. The abuse may constitute a mandated report to the authorities in your community. The child, as well as you, may need information and support in order to deal with the situation.

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

For more information on this subject, visit www.michigan.gov/mdhhs, www.childhelpusa.org (Child Help); www.preventchildabuse.org (Prevent Child Abuse America), or www.aap.org (American Academy of Pediatrics).

If you suspect any abuse or neglect call (855)444-3911
Michigan
Child Protection Law
Act 238 of 1975

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

“Child neglect” means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare that occurs through either of the following:
- Negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.
- Placing a child at an unreasonable risk to the child's health or welfare by failure of the parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for the child's health or welfare to intervene to eliminate that risk when that person is able to do so and has, or should have, knowledge of the risk.

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

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

Except for records available under section 7(2)(a) and (b), the identity of a reporting person is confidential subject to disclosure only with the consent of that person or by judicial process. A person acting in good faith who makes a report, cooperates in an investigation, or assists in any other requirement of this act is immune from civil or criminal liability that might otherwise be incurred by that action. A person making a report or assisting in any other requirement of this act is presumed to have acted in good faith. This immunity from civil or criminal liability extends only to acts done pursuant to this act and does not extend to a negligent act that causes personal injury or death or to the malpractice of a physician that results in personal injury or death.
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Marquette and Alger Counties recognizes that online social networking (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogs, etc.) has become a very popular communications tool and that many of our Bigs and Littles use these websites. Not all social networking sites are designed to support mentoring relationships. If you do choose to participate in a social networking site, be mindful to the following guidelines:

- **BE RESPONSIBLE.** Be thoughtful about how you present yourself and the BBBS organization. When in doubt, don’t.

- **BE RESPECTFUL.** Make sure that what you post will add a positive to the discussion and not a negative. It is okay to disagree with others, but being rude or disrespectful is inappropriate. Remember everything posted is public.

- **BE RESOURCEFUL.** Add value and spread the news about BBBS. Share events or posts from the BBBS social media accounts. Help build a sense of community. Participating in social media gives you the opportunity to share a lot of valuable information.

- **BE SMART.** Use your best judgement when deciding what information to publish or spread. Know that there are consequences to what you publish. What you write could spread virally and will be public for a long time. It can be attributed to you and BBBS. Be respectful to the organization, staff, volunteers, children, families, donors, partners, and supporters.

- **RESPECT PRIVACY OF OTHERS.** Protect confidences and personal privacy. Only share information through social media that you know is appropriate for public consumption. Get approval before sharing information relayed to you by others. Always adhere to policies and ground rules related to confidentiality and child safety.

- **BE THE FIRST TO RESPOND TO YOUR OWN MISTAKES.** Make sure that what you say is factually accurate. Clarify information that is incorrectly communicated and take responsibility if you are responsible for misstating facts.

BBBS recommends to have no social media interaction with your match.
Big Brothers Big Sisters Board of Directors and Staff have established the following Board approved policy regarding gun safety:

- Parents must give written permission for a child to be matched to a volunteer who owns a gun(s).
- A discussion will take place at the time of the match between the volunteer, parent, child and case manager regarding gun safety.
- Guns in the volunteer’s home must be locked or inaccessible to the matched child.
- A volunteer must comply with all Michigan and Federal gun laws. All guns owned by the volunteer must be registered and licensed in their name.
- Volunteers with Conceal and Carry permits are not permitted to carry or possess a loaded weapon while with their Little. Volunteer Bigs who are required to carry as a part of their jobs, are permitted to carry, but are required to control their weapon on their person at all times.
- The agency will NOT sponsor any outings that necessitate the use of guns.
- We recommend that the child matched to a volunteer who owns a gun and/or who wishes to engage in an outing using a gun (hunting or target shooting) take the NRA or similar gun safety training.
- If the volunteer and child get permission from the parent to engage in an outing using a gun the transported gun must be unloaded with ammunition kept in a separate location.

If you are interested in any Hunter, Marine, ORV, Snowmobile, Bowhunter, and Trapper classes, visit the site below to see if there are any upcoming classes in your area.

http://www.dnr.state.mi.us/recnsearch
Visits to the volunteer’s home are recommended by BBBS staff to start after 3 months of being matched, although they may occur when approval is given in advance by the child’s parent/guardian in accordance with the terms of this policy.

The following conditions must be met before a volunteer home visit will be considered for approval:

- The activity would enrich the child’s healthy development.
- The Big has demonstrated good judgment and reliability in their commitment to the Little & has adhered to child safety guidelines, program policies & procedures.
- All volunteer home visits must adhere to the following during the visit:
  - The Big is responsible for the supervision of the Little and for providing a safe and secure environment. The child should never be left unsupervised or in the care of someone else.
  - Use of alcohol, drugs or tobacco is prohibited when with the child.
  - Under no circumstances should a Little sleep together in the same bed or sleeping bag with the volunteer or other youth.
  - Provisions for privacy for separate sleeping, changing of clothes and showering for both the volunteer and the Little need to be set out in advance.
  - Match parties are expected to follow BBBS child safety policies and procedures at all times.

Permission to visit to the volunteer’s home must be given by the Parent/Guardian.
An overnight visit may occur only when approval is given in advance by BBBS' professional staff and the child’s parent/guardian in accordance with the terms of this policy.

The following conditions must be met before an overnight visit will be considered for approval:

- The activity would enrich the child’s healthy development.
- The match has been in effect for at least 6 months.
- The Big has demonstrated good judgment and reliability in his/her commitment to the Little and has adhered to child safety guidelines, program policies and procedures.

All overnight visits must adhere to the following during the overnight visit:

- The Big is responsible for the supervision of the Little and for providing a safe and secure environment. The child should never be left unsupervised or in the care of someone else.
- Use of alcohol, drugs or tobacco is prohibited when with the child.
- Under no circumstances should a Little sleep together in the same bed or sleeping bag with the volunteer or other youth.
- Provisions for privacy for separate sleeping, changing of clothes and showering for both the volunteer and the Little need to be set out in advance.
- Match parties are expected to follow BBBS child safety policies and procedures at all times.

Approval for an overnight visit must be secured from the parent/guardian in advance to ensure that all conditions are met.

Special approval must be obtained by your Match Support Specialist for any activities that include any of the following:

- An outing that includes more than 3 consecutive nights
- Travel out of Marquette/Alger County
The success of the match friendship depends greatly on the efforts of the Big, the Little, and the Parent. Each one plays an important role in helping build a meaningful friendship.

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

- Make every effort to see my Little 4-6 hours a month for the next year.
- Make sure parents are aware of activity plans and ask if the activity is okay (do not rely on my Little to tell them about plans).
- Communicate with my Little’s parents before and after an activity. Describe what we plan to do and what we’ve done together.
- A working relationship with the parent is ideal. However, a personal relationship with the parent could adversely affect the match.
- Keep our relationship primarily one-to-one and will only involve other persons on occasion.
- Not engage in activities that pose a risk for injury: speeding, not using seatbelts, using a cell phone while driving, alcohol, etc.
- Only set up activities that require money on occasion, so I do not burden the parent financially. Not buy my Little expensive gifts, and when in doubt I will call the agency staff.
- Inform the parent and my BBBS Match Coordinator of vacations, business trips, or any other activity that may interfere with my match outing or match support calls.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of my Little’s family.
- Give sufficient notice to my Little and his/her parents if I need to cancel any planned visits or if activity plans change.
- Be consistent, so that my Little is aware that he/she is important to me.
- Keep regular contact with BBBS match support staff by responding within two business days. Failure to do so could result in suspension and a ten-day letter.
- Inform the agency staff prior to residential changes, change in phone numbers, new members to the home, beginning counseling, or other long term or permanent changes.
- Speak openly to agency staff by providing them with feedback about my match relationship, activities, and Little’s behavior.
- Actively participate in an annual evaluation should my Little and myself want to continue on with our match for more than one year.
- Actively participate in the closing procedure of the match at any time the match should close.
- Overnight visits may occur only when approval is given in advance by BBBS professional staff and the parents/guardians and volunteer are in accordance with the terms of the overnight policy.
- Immediately call a professional staff member should my Little disclose any information to me that is serious and poses a threat to him/her.

What do I do if I have a problem or concern? Call the professional staff immediately!! Don’t ever think that what is on your mind is too trivial to bring up. What might seem like a minor irritation to you now could easily escalate into a major problem later. Our professional staff is here to help you with any problems you may have with your Little or the parent to ensure that you have a successful match and memorable experience as a Big Brother or Big Sister volunteer. Remember-do not wait until it is too late!!
**Michigan Child Personal Flotation Device (PFD) Law:** Personal Watercraft (PWC): Children of all ages must wear a Coast Guard type I, II or III PFD (not inflatable) when riding or operating a PWC.

**Bike Safety: A bicycle is a vehicle, not a toy.**
Take the proper precautions when taking your Little out on the road.

- Make sure that your Little is ALWAYS wearing a safety helmet that fits them properly. Set a good example by wearing yours as well.
- Make sure that your Little's brakes work prior to riding.
- Steer clear of busy streets as much as possible.
- Make sure that you are riding the same direction as traffic - a motorist will not be expecting riders coming in the opposite direction.
- Follow all traffic laws (e.g. signs, signals, lane markings).
- Avoid biking at night where possible. If you do ride in the evenings, make sure to have reflectors on your bikes and clothing.

**Michigan’s Booster Seat Law, effective July 1, 2008.**

**Children must be in a booster seat until they are 8 years old or 4’9” tall.**
Children must be in a seat until they reach the age requirement or the height requirement, whichever comes first.

Test all children under age 13 to be sure they are big enough to safely wear the adult safety belt without a booster seat:

1. Have the child sit all the way back on the vehicle seat. Check to see if the knees bend at the seat edge. If they bend naturally, move on to the next step. If they do not, return to the booster seat.
2. Buckle the lap and shoulder belts. Be sure the lap belt lies on the upper legs or hips. If it stays on the upper legs or thighs, move on to the next step. If it does not, return to booster seat.
3. Be sure the shoulder belt lies on the shoulder or collarbone. If it lies on the shoulder, move on to the next step. If it is on the face or neck, return to the booster seat. DO NOT place the shoulder belt under the arm or behind the child’s back!
4. Be sure your child can maintain that correct seating position for as long as you are in the car. If you child begins to slouch or shift positions so the safety belt contacts the face, neck, or stomach, return your child to the booster seat until all the test steps can be met.


**REMINDERS:**

- You are the only person allowed to drive your Little when you are together (Unless prior approval is given by the parent/guardian).
- Make sure you and your Little buckle up every time you’re in the car.
- If your auto insurance policy changes, please be sure to update your Match Support Specialist, as we need to have this information on file.

Again, children’s safety is our number one priority & we want to work together to keep the children safe. If there are any questions regarding rules or regulations of various sports, please feel free to contact our office!
BBBS works hard to support the relationship you have with your Little. Our goal is for the relationship to be as successful as possible for everyone. Bigs and Littles work with their Match Support Specialist from their BBBS agency. This person also works with the Little’s parent/guardian.

Along the way to forming a safe and lasting friendship your Match Support Specialist will be in touch with all of you to help you and your Little. They will call or email you to make contact. Monthly communication is required for the first year of the match and quarterly communication is required after the first year throughout the life of the match. This allows us to provide support, give you ideas for activities, etc. You can think of your Match Support Specialist as the main link between you, your Little, your Little’s parent and the agency.

That’s not all that the Match Support Specialist provides for your match. They also:
- Provide you feedback on how you’re making a difference.
- Find information and resources that you might be interested in.
- Offer group activities and give you activity ideas for you and your Little.
- Offer with donated tickets to community/sports events.
- Keep you updated on activities offered by the agency.
- Help you communicate with your Little and their parent.
- Work with you on any conflicts that might come up.

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:
- To get feedback from the Little, and Parent/Guardian about how the match is going.
- Share fun stories about your match.
- Discuss concerns you are having with your match or the safety of your Little.
- Ask for activity ideas and find out about current events at BBBS.
- Report any emergency situations.

Contact your Match Support Specialist by phone and/or email – whichever is most convenient for you. It is important that you contact us back within two business days when we try to reach you (does not include unpredicted life situations). If you plan on being unavailable for a long period of time (vacations, work requirements, etc.) please notify us ahead of time. If your Match Support Specialist is not available please contact the agency for assistance. We make it a priority to serve you when you need it.

Communication with your Match Support Specialist is part of your commitment as a Big and must be fulfilled, Failure to contact us regularly or respond to our attempts to reach you may jeopardize the status of your match, following a ten-day letter, which could lead to suspension and/or closure of the match.
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.

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.*

**Termination Process**

- Each termination should be done with the consent and supervision of your Match Support Specialist. It is important to talk to your Match Support Specialist before telling your Little you need to close the match. 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.

- 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.

- 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.

- Inform your Match Support Specialist of any pertinent information regarding termination. If you need help in approaching your Little, ask your Match Support Specialist for advice. He/she is there to help.

**Types of terminations:**

- Transfer of Big Brother/Big Sister (i.e., leaving town, moving).
- Mutual agreement of both Big and Little with Match Support Specialist consultation.
- Indications that such a relationship is no longer needed.
- Personal reasons, including marriage of Big, change of employment, financial pressures, lack of time, etc.
- Changing situation of Little, including leaving town/moving, institutionalization (hospital or alternative school), family problems, etc.
- Program ends due to participant completion.
It is helpful to evaluate the relationship. This should be done by the Big and the Little through 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. You have shared many positive moments in your relationship with your Little. Let the closure of your match be another

Your friendship will last beyond your official termination as a Big. Activities or interactions, such as exchanging pictures, keeping and sharing journals, making a scrapbook, etc. will keep memories bright for you and your Little. Please note that any interaction taking place after the termination of the match is not liable under Big Brothers Big Sisters.

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 re-engage volunteers through:
• A new match (community or lunch buddies)
• Other volunteer role (administrative, fundraising, etc.)
• As a donor for our agency or programs
• Sponsoring or hosting an event

THEY HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CHANGE THE WORLD.
WHO ARE THE BIGS IN THE PROGRAM?
Our Bigs come from diverse backgrounds just like our Littles. They are regular people, just like you. You don’t need any special degrees or job skills. You just have to want to positively impact a young person. Role models come in all shapes and sizes, and you could be a perfect fit.

WHEN CAN I SEE MY LITTLE?
As a Big/Little team, you decide together what you want to do and then your Little gets approval from their parent. We recommend that you keep a consistent schedule of outings and get together on a regular basis. We require you to spend a minimum of 4 to 6 hours a month for one-year with your Little. The outings will also depend on the comfort level of your Little’s parents, your Little, and you.

HOW MUCH MONEY SHOULD I SPEND?
The quality of the time you invest with your Little is more important than the amount of money you spend. That’s why we don’t encourage spending a lot of money on your outings. The goal of the relationship is to help your Little see the world through a different lens so you can inspire your Little to become something they never thought possible. If you are going to spend money, we encourage you to seek out low-cost activities, especially in the beginning. Play a game together, or share that pizza that you were going to have for lunch anyway. The agency offers donor-supported group activities that are a great way to meet other Bigs and Littles. As a Big, you may also receive notices for free tickets to cultural and sports activities for you both to enjoy.

WILL I BECOME A REPLACEMENT PARENT?
No, Littles have a parent or guardian in their life already. What they need is a Big to spend quality, one-on-one time with them. Someone to have fun with, someone they can confide in, someone like you!

HOW SOON WILL I BE MATCHED?
Biggs and Littles are matched by where they live, their preferences and activities they enjoy. There is no set time limit to make a match. BBBS asks for everyone’s patience during the waiting period.

WHAT ARE SOME GOOD IDEAS FOR OUTINGS WITH MY LITTLE?
Share an activity that gives you something in common to talk about. Go to the library, check out a book and read together. Buy a comic book to read together. Play a board game. Go on a nature walk. Hit a bucket of golf balls at the local driving range. Take a ride in the car with the radio on and talk about the music you like. You want to select activities that give each of you a chance to learn more about one another. For children, playing can be learning. Most important: keep it simple and enjoy yourselves!

CAN I BRING MY SPOUSE, A FRIEND, OR A FAMILY MEMBER ON OUTINGS?
In the beginning it’s most important for you and your Little to get to know each other. This can happen best on a one-to-one basis. However, over time it’s also valuable for your Little to get to know the people who are important to you. Just keep in mind that if you’re spending lots of time with others, your Little may begin to feel jealous or neglected. The main focus is the friendship you develop with your Little.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT CAN I EXPECT FROM BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS ONCE I GET MATCHED?
Once you are matched with your Little, a Match Support Specialist from the agency will be in regular contact with you to provide assistance and give feedback. Any time you are unsure about what to do or how to handle a situation, you will have a Match Support Specialist there to help. They’ll help you with ideas for activities, guidance for handling possible difficult situations, and feedback on how you are making a difference.

HOW DOES BBBS CREATE A MATCH?
During a thorough intake process, professional staff gets to know the children and volunteers in the programs. BBBS staff makes matches based on personality, shared interests and volunteer and parent preferences in an effort to make compatible, quality matches that will result in long term friendships.
All Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies are an independent 501c3 nonprofit organization and is a local corporation serving local children and families. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Marquette & Alger Counties, Inc. receives funding from the various local fundraisers we do throughout the year, the United Way, current grants and individual contributions. There are no fees for our services and all of the people who serve as officers and members of the board do so voluntarily. Our Big Brothers/Big Sisters are all volunteers and the agency employs a small professional staff.

94% of every dollar you donate goes directly to making and supporting matches. The remainder covers overall program administration.

When you help fund a match, you empower potential. We believe that each and every individual who interacts with our organization has the responsibility and power to act as a defender. When we talk about defenders of potential, we are talking Bigs, Littles, guardians, staff, donors, and volunteers. Stand with us today by gifting unimaginable support, understanding, and growth throughout our local communities. No matter how little or big the amount, donating can start making a difference in the lives of young people around you.

If you’re considering making Big Brothers Big Sisters part of your trust, bequest, or endowment, please contact Jayne Letts, Executive Director. Email jayne@bbbsmqt.org or call (906) 475-7801.
OUR AGENCY
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Alger Parks and Recreation
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Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/bbbsmqt_alger/

OUR STAFF
From our Executive Team to our Board of Directors, Big Brothers Big Sisters has a compassionate and dedicated group of individuals on our side that are willing to do whatever it takes to help change children’s lives for the better.

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Big Brothers of Marquette and Alger Counties, Inc. is a program that is sanctioned under Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. We must be audited regularly and be in compliance with standards set by Big Brothers Big Sisters, with child safety being our top priority. It is important that we keep up to date with all of the standards and policies so they are subject to change.
THEY HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO CHANGE THE WORLD. AND WE ARE STANDING TOGETHER TO DEFEND IT. JOIN US.