



Parent/Guardian Program Guide

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Parent/Guardian Program Guide

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About BBBS

Big Brothers Big Sisters has been bringing a little magic into the everyday lives of children by matching them with adult mentors in fun and rewarding relationships since 1904.

Friendship is a powerful thing. It's fun, most anyone can be a friend, 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.

Founded in 1904, Big Brothers Big Sisters is the oldest and largest youth mentoring organization in the United States. In 2015, the organization served more than 160,000 youth, ages 6 through 18 in 5000 communities across the country, through a network of 350 agencies. National research has shown that the positive relationships between Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and their Littles have a direct, measurable, and lasting impact on children's lives.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Oregon serves Deschutes county, Crook county, and Jefferson County. Children served by the program are ages 6 to 18 and are in need of an adult role model and friend to improve self-esteem, confidence, scholastic competency, and positive decision-making skills. Program services are provided to children primarily on a one-to-one basis through a match with an appropriate and trained adult volunteer. The role of the volunteer is to provide friendship and support to the child. The agency staff assesses the child's needs, determines the best match with a volunteer, makes a match, and continues to support and supervise the match throughout the relationship.

We need you to be an active partner!

Working together, parents/guardians, volunteers, and BBBS staff members plan activities and opportunities that can have a powerful and positive impact on your child.

Who are Our Big Brothers and Big Sisters?

- Men and women who work and live in your community
- College students from nearby schools
- Retirees, military individuals, members of congregations or civic organizations, and...
- Just ordinary people that are extraordinary

How do we select volunteer Big Brothers and Big Sisters?

- An orientation and training process that will help encourage your child's healthy development
- An application
- A criminal history record check
- At least three references
- An in-person interview, including questions about their home environment
- A professional decision about whether they should volunteer with a child
- BBBS also provides child safety tips to you and your child, and we welcome your questions and feedback

Who are our Little Brothers and Little Sisters?

Most children in our community-based programs come to us through their parents/guardians. We also reach out to involve children through schools, youth service agencies, churches, and other referral so

When they get together, what do matches do?

They typically meet at least twice a month for a few hours each time for a minimum of one year. They go places and do things that they both enjoy, such as biking, fishing, crafting, and more! As a parent or guardian, you should know about each activity and give your approval in advance. When your child returns home from an activity with their Big, it's very important that you talk openly with them about the activity. What did they do? Where did they go? Who else was there? Make sure that your child feels okay when they're with their Big.

Your Role

We know that it takes a special parent/guardian to get a Big Brother or Big Sister for their child. Parents/guardians are important partners in helping to build a meaningful friendship between their children and volunteers.

What can you do to help?

- Share your concerns, hopes, and wishes for your child with your Match Support Specialist. They will tell these to your child's Big and help them in planning activities that are fun and educational.
- Help find the best times for outings to occur, and make sure that your child is prepared: proper clothing, ready on time, etc.
- Make sure that you know details of each planned activity (and have given your approval in advance), when your child will be picked up, and when you can expect them back. Make a point of being home.
- Always ask about what the activities were, where they took place, who else was involved, and your child's feelings about the visit.
- Please don't talk about your child with their Big when the child is present. If there is something you think they should know, call them when your child is away.
- Please don't ask that siblings be included. This is special for your child. Do participate in events and agency-sponsored activities that invite parents/guardians to join in.
- Bigs are "older friends". They are not substitute parents, baby sitters, disciplinarians, financial support, a taxi service, or counselors.
- Time with a Big is special. Don't punish your child by saying they can't see their Big. Often, this one-to-one adult time will actually help your child's overall behavior.
- Be flexible. Remember that the Big is a volunteer and has a busy schedule too. Both you and the volunteer should make sure to call ahead to cancel any planned visits.
- Help make sure that your child returns phone calls and stays in regular contact with the volunteer. Regular contact is important to the success of the match.
- Give it time: this relationship needs time to develop (at least three months) so don't judge it too quickly.
- Please do not assume that the volunteer has lots of money and will always pay for your child during activities. We recommended no-to-low cost activities to lower the financial burden on mentors.

BBBS Support - How BBBS Works with You

BBBS works hard to support the relationship between Bigs and Littles.

Our goal is for the relationship to be as successful as possible for everyone. Bigs, Littles, and parents/guardians work with their Match Support Specialist from their BBBS agency. It is important for us to talk with you every month for the first year of the match. This allows us to provide support, and offer ideas if problems arise. After the first you, we will continue to contact you regularly. You can think of your Match Support Specialist as the main link between you and your child, the Big, and the agency.

That's not all that the Match Support Specialist provides. They also:

- Find information and resources that you might be interested in, including community resources
- Keep you updated on activities offered by the agency
- Help you communicate with your child and their Big
- 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 question your child's safety or well-being
- Discuss concerns you were having about the Big
- Report any emergency situations or your child's illness
- Report any changes in address or phone number
- Report any important family changes
- Report success stories about your child's progress or special honors

Remember, we are here to support you in your role as a Parent/Guardian. You can contact us by phone, email, or by setting up a meeting time that is convenient for you. 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.

Our Top Priority is Child Safety

Children's safety is our number one priority. We focus on the child's safety and well-being throughout the match, not just at the beginning.

We want to work together to keep your child safe. While our staff carefully screen each volunteer, we need your help to make sure the relationship is healthy and the volunteer is making good judgements about your child's safety on outings.

- If you are not comfortable with an activity that your child's Big suggests, you are encouraged to not approve. Talk to your Match Support Specialist when you have questions.
- When the Big takes your child out, the Big should always stay with them and not leave them with someone else.
- Your child's Big should not use alcohol or other drugs before or during activities with your child.
- Your child's Big should not use physical discipline or yell at your child.
- Volunteers should never ask a child to keep a secret.
- Volunteers might want to buy an occasional gift for your child. They should ask your advice about this first.
- Volunteers should not engage in tickling, wrestling, giving backrubs, or asking a child to sit on their lap.
- Of course, showing pornographic or sexual material is *never* acceptable.

Here are some patterns that you should discuss with your Match Support Specialist:

- Your child's Big wants to spend more and more time with your child
- Your child's Big often invites other children to join them in activities (siblings, child's friends, etc.)
- Activities always take place in *private* settings such as the volunteer's home, instead of more public settings
- Your child's Big takes an excessive amount of pictures or videos of your child

We know that you work with your child to teach them skills to help keep them safe from violence - whether it's online, at school, at home, and in your community. Please feel free to discuss these issues and any other issues related to child safety with your Match Support Specialist. We want to work with you to keep your child safe. **It's important that you communicate openly and often on these subjects.**

Agency Policies

All BBBS participants, including youth, families, volunteers, board, advisory council and staff serving as volunteer Bigs are not excluded on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, color, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, citizenship status, veteran status, or disability.

30-Day Match Contact Policy

BBBSCO requires that all match participants/parties (Bigs, Littles, and parents/guardians) remain in contact with their Match Support Specialist on a regular basis (monthly or quarterly, depending on the length of the match). All match participants must contact the agency within 30 days of an initial match support contact attempt. If a Big, Little or parent/guardian does not adhere to this policy, the match will be closed after the 30 day grace period. BBBSCO enforces this policy in order to ensure the safety of the children we serve, to remain in compliance with our national offices, program, delivery policies, and to cultivate a support system throughout the lifespan of the match. BBBSCO thanks its volunteers, clients and parents for their participation in regards to this policy.

Transporting Children

All volunteers transporting children must provide documentation of verification of appropriate licensure and insurance. In addition, volunteers must follow the safety requirements in accordance with state law (e.g., seat belt use, car seat use, prohibitions on use of cell phone, alcohol or other drugs prior to driving a child, etc.).

Children must follow Oregon State's Child Restraint law when riding in a vehicle with a volunteer.

- Children up until their 8th birthday, unless they are 4'9" (whichever comes first), must ride in a child restraint (i.e. booster seat).
- The restraining system must be used correctly according to the car seat and vehicle manufacturer's instructions.
- Vehicles equipped with lap-only belts are exempt from the requirement to use a booster seat.
- Children 8-years of age or at least 4'9" who wear a seat belt **MUST** use it correctly or continue to use a booster.

Bigs and Littles are not permitted to travel together internationally without an accompanying Parent/Guardian (e.g.: a day trip to Canada).

Home Visits

Visits to the volunteer's home by the Little are not allowed for the first 3 months of the match to allow for the healthy development of the match relationship. After the first 3 months, the decision to allow the child to visit the volunteer's home is at the parent/guardian and agency's discretion. Any visits occurring prior to 3 months will be reviewed by a supervisor to determine whether match suspension or closure is warranted.

A Match Support Specialist has the authority to restrict the volunteer and Little's activities at the volunteer's home if there are concerns regarding the safety level or appropriateness of such visits. In that case, the parent/guardian and volunteer will be informed of the professional staff's decision.

Overnight Visits

The policy of Big Brothers Big Sisters Of Central Oregon is that *no overnight visits will be permitted* during the duration of the match. Any exceptions to this policy must be with approval of the Director, with documented staff approval, and with documented approval of the Little's parent or guardian. You must contact your Match Support Specialist when discussing this overnight policy.

****Failure to comply with this overnight policy will result in the immediate closing of the match.***

Private Changing Rooms

All facilities used for BBBS swimming or other water activities must have private changing rooms available for Littles. For outings with Bigs that involve swimming or other water activities, Bigs must ensure that private changing rooms are available and used by Littles. A private changing room is defined as an enclosed space where an individual can change clothes without being seen by others. For example, holding up a towel for your Little to change behind does *not* qualify as an enclosed, private space.

The organization of activities must include the reservation of facilities that offer private changing rooms. If a facility does not have private changing rooms, an alternative location with the appropriate amenities must be sought. Littles should be informed of the availability of private changing rooms before the activity to ensure they are aware of their privacy options. While respecting privacy, Bigs and staff should ensure the safety of Littles by being present in nearby common areas. Bigs and staff should periodically check in on the private changing areas to ensure there are no safety issues, while maintaining a respectful distance to protect privacy.

Non-compliance with this policy by Bigs or staff may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of involvement with BBBS.

Firearms and Weapons

Any possession of firearms is to be disclosed to BBBS's Agency Staff at enrollment and throughout the life of the match. The volunteer's possession of firearms will be disclosed to the child's parent/guardian by Agency Staff. The parent/guardian may choose to not approve the match, based upon the volunteer's firearms ownership. All volunteers must attest to the fact that any owned weapons, firearms or ammunition are licensed, permitted, registered, and handled in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws. Weapons, firearms and ammunition will be made inaccessible at all times to a child while in the volunteer's care, unless participating in specific, approved activity(ies), which the parent/guardian and volunteer have approved in advance and such approval is documented in the match file (e.g., hunter safety courses). In the case where a Law Enforcement official is required to carry a weapon at all times as a condition of their employment, BBBS professionals must document the weapon related job requirements as well as parent notification of the requirements and their approval of the condition prior to the match.

Digital Technology and Social Networking

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Oregon 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. In general, personal use of social networking sites is typically for communications between peers, including friends and family. BBBS wants to reiterate that the relationship with the Little is that of a mentor in addition to a friend.

Not all social networking sites are designed to support mentoring relationships. Volunteers must proceed thoughtfully when inviting or accepting an invitation from the Little to a social networking site. Volunteers may consult with the program staff regarding social media use. Adherence to the following guidelines regarding any postings related to the match or affiliation with BBBS is required:

- Bigs should not participate in any online communication with/about your child unless they have discussed this with you and have received your approval. Bigs should give you and BBBS staff their website address and, when possible, link their page to the agency page on that site so that we can follow along with their postings. We are active on social media sites, such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.
- Bigs should never post any pictures of your child online unless you have given them consent.
- Bigs should never post the last name of your child, you or BBBS staff.
- Bigs should never post any contact information for your child. Bigs should never post any identifying information about your child (i.e.: child's home address, school the child attends, where you work, etc.).
- Bigs should never post anything that could be perceived as judgmental or offensive to your child or you, to include any strong racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or religious discriminatory views or opinions, or any content that appears to impose any belief system upon a child.
- Bigs should make sure that their page settings are set to private, so that only people they approve can view their online content.
- All mentors should honor confidentiality guidelines within their match; they should be cautious when posting detailed information about conversations with their Little, you, or with BBBS staff.
- Posting generalized information or status updates is typically appropriate, but lengthier postings or blogs containing in-depth information should be approved by you and by BBBS staff prior to posting.
- Bigs should be aware of other postings on their page that are not BBBS of Central Oregon related or are inappropriate for minors.
- Bigs should know that as a BBBS volunteer they are a role model at all times. Bigs will ensure that all contents are appropriate and kid-friendly, in case your child or your family were to read your social networking page. If the social networking site allows, create a separate group for your child, you, and BBBS staff that limits your child's access to their general or universal postings.
- When in doubt about whether or not something is appropriate to post, Bigs should consult with their BBBS staff prior to posting.
- Most social media platforms have requirements that minors be age 13 before using the service. Mentors should not connect with youth under the age of 13 on social media.

Required Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect

BBBS staff members and volunteers are required to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child. Our staff and volunteers are trained to respond if a child tells them about abuse. A report will be filed with authorities. If at any time, you suspect that your child is being harmed, please contact BBBS staff for support. If you have any questions or would like more information on violence prevention, please don't hesitate to ask our staff for additional resources.

Match Activity Expense Policy

This policy ensures that all match activities between Bigs and Littles at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Oregon (BBBSO) remain financially accessible, equitable, and sustainable by setting a *\$40 maximum spending limit per outing* (excluding food) and requiring prior approval from a Match Support Specialist for any activities exceeding that amount. Mentors are encouraged to prioritize quality time through free or low-cost experiences and to remain sensitive to the financial circumstances of mentees and their families. Open communication with mentees and guardians about activity costs is expected, and compliance with these guidelines is required to maintain consistency and fairness across all match relationships.

Match Life Cycle

As every experienced Big will tell you, friendship takes time to develop. It is a different experience for every Big and Little, and no doubt your friendship will be unique. However, there are some common stages that most match friendships will go through at different times, usually depending on the level of trust that has been established.

The Honeymoon Stage - This stage occurs from the 1st meeting to approximately the 4 month date.

- **Beginning a new relationship is fun and exciting, but anxiety and uncertainty is also a common feeling when developing a new relationship.** Give everyone time to open up, allow plenty of time for the relationship to develop, take it slow and keep the lines of communication open.
- **Kids will test the limits with you.** It is important for you to let your child know what is expected of them because they may not know what is appropriate behavior, especially in an adult situation. Littles feel more comfortable if they know what is expected of them ahead of time.
- **Another common phenomenon in early match development is the expectation that the Big is going to immediately impact our child's life.** Wouldn't it be nice, if at the end of the day...
 - Our Littles' grades jumped from F to A!
 - Our Littles became "perfect" kids!
 - Our Littles trusted their Big completely!
 - Our Littles showed sincere appreciation!
 - Our Littles realized how much investment their Big had in their life!

This is the real world. Beware of the trap of placing expectations on the Big and your child. This often sets you up for disappointment and burnout. Results may not be immediate and you may not see an impact for years to come. This is common, but be aware that their Big is definitely making an impact on your child's life!

Growth Phase - This stage typically takes place from the 4 month stage to one year.

- **Trust will develop.** Openness, honesty, and consistency play important parts in building a trusting relationship.
- **Guilt may also occur during this stage if outings need to be changed.** Everyone has times when they are unable to follow through with plans. Have open communication with the Big to alleviate some of these negative feelings. Encourage them to do the same with you. Here in Central Oregon, we have seen a trend with summer. Once school is out, time seems to be busy for everyone. Knowing ahead of time that your child is going to have a hectic and/or busy month or a few months will help in deciding outings. It may be typical for Bigs and Littles to hang out once a week and then all of a sudden you find them only hanging out once a month due to cancellations and busy schedules. This is OK. Keep the lines of communication open with everyone so no one feels hurt or guilty.

Maturity Phase - This stage typically takes place from one year on.

- **You will notice that your child's relationship with the Big has become more positive and realistic.** Match activities are less structured. As the relationship matures, all match participants begin to accept flexibility without guilt. The trust that has developed between Big, Little, and parent/guardian allows acceptance of changes and other commitments in all of your lives. Match activities are based on the quality of the interaction rather than the activity itself. The relationship becomes more natural and you get the joys of watching your child as they grow and develop.
- **As the match matures, it will be easier to accept negative feedback.** This feedback may come in the form of negative behavior on the part of your child, or as constructive criticism from your Match Support Specialist. Understand that acceptance of negative feedback, and open the door to future changes and improvement in the relationship.

Transitioning the Match through Formal Closure

As we describe above, there is a transition stage in a match where the pattern of activities together may become less frequent. For various reasons, such as a change in where you or the Big lives, a change in life circumstances, a change in school the Little is attending, declining interest as the Little grows older, decreasing times that the Big and Little are meeting, or because of challenges in the match, the match can end its regular pattern of meetings. When one of these circumstances occurs, the Big and/or the Little may decide it is time for a change - for transition.

Our goal is that the transition is very positive for both your child and the Big. The transition may lead to continued contact between your child and the Big on some level, but it's important to note that any continued contact outside of BBBS formal program guidelines should only occur at the discretion and with the express permission of you as the parent/guardian.

At the time of the transition, BBBS "closes" the file, and does not continue to provide professional support or guidance to the matched participants. At that point, the match is no longer considered an "active" match.

Ideally, this transition period can be a positive time for setting up patterns that will be long-lasting for the friendship between the Big and the Little. You and your child may decide to keep in touch and to get together regularly as the friendship continues into the adulthood of your child. You may decide to contact each other occasionally by phone, emails, cards and get-togethers, such as for birthdays. Experiencing healthy closure is a good way to model behavior your child can use in the future as well.

A Few Guidelines:

- The transition/file closing process gives an opportunity to review the great stuff that has happened during your match.
- Your Match Support Specialist will walk you through the process. There are several steps to take, which can maximize the positive effects.
- Celebrate the time your child and Big have spent together!
- The goal is that you, your child, and the Big leave BBBS feeling positive.

THANK YOU!

As your child's match begins, and throughout the entire life of their 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 your child and you know that there is a great reward in life in the relationships they will develop.

We wish you and your child all the best! We will be with you, supporting you, throughout your journey.

