



Volunteer Handbook

Community Based Mentoring



WELCOME TO BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS!

Thank you for taking the first steps in Defending the Potential of a child in the Lehigh Valley!

This Volunteer Handbook contains useful information on the policies and procedures as of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lehigh Valley (BBBSLV).

The structured ground rules we have in place are designed to keep all match participants safe.

This Volunteer Handbook also contains helpful information and advice to help you prepare for your match journey!

Be sure to reach out to your BBBSLV Program Specialist with any questions, or contact us at our general email: bbbs@bbbslv.org.



MISSION

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

VISION

All youth achieve their full potential.





WHO ARE OUR BIGS?

Volunteers in our Community Based Mentoring Program:

- Are all ages! Volunteers must be a minimum of 18 years old, and we have volunteers in their 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s+.
- Are able to meet consistently with their Little. Volunteers are asked to make a 12 month commitment (1 year) and to meet with their Little 2 times a month. Most volunteers devote about 5-10 hours per month to mentoring.
- Are able to be a reliable, stable, and safe mentor for a youth.
- Mentors must have a vehicle as well as current car insurance and driver's license.
- BBBSLV welcomes and values volunteers from all races, religions, marital statuses, physical abilities, sexual orientations, and gender identities.

WHO ARE OUR LITTLES?

- BBBSLV matches Littles ages 7-15.
- Our Littles come from many backgrounds – the common theme is that they can all benefit from a positive, caring role model.
- All Littles agree to participate in the program.
- Our Littles are just as diverse as our Bigs!

HOW DO LITTLES JOIN OUR PROGRAM?

Many families are aware of our program and contact us to enroll their child, understanding how their child could benefit from a positive role model. BBBSLV staff also work with school staff, therapists/counselors, and other professionals who work with children to spread word of our program and enroll children who can benefit.

Data we have collected indicates that:

- 90% of Littles are economically disadvantaged,
- 57% of Littles reside in a single parent home,
- 45% of Littles have a mental health diagnosis (such as anxiety, depression) or developmental diagnosis such as ADHD or Autism, and,
- 10% of Littles have a parent incarcerated.

PROFILES OF LITTLES:

Kaden is 12 and enjoys football as well as video games. He has recently returned to living with his mother, after his mother was seeking help for substance abuse. He could benefit from a mentor as he works on reuniting with his mother and navigating middle school.

Angela is 14 and a freshman in high school. She has been struggling with anxiety and could benefit from a positive mentor who would enjoy talking and listening to her. She enjoys listening to music, working on art, and walking around the mall.

In Big Brothers Big Sisters programs, youth are not excluded on the basis of race, religion, national origin, color, gender, sexual orientation, disability, gender identity, parent's veteran status, or the marital status of their parent.



WHAT IS THE ENROLLMENT PROCESS?

There are 4 steps to the enrollment process:



Volunteer Interview

You will meet with a BBBSLV Program Specialist for your volunteer interview. The volunteer interview helps us to learn more about you and your match preferences.



Application & References

You will complete an application where you will list references, including spouse/significant other, a family member, a friend, and a coworker. If you have volunteer with other youth serving organizations, we will ask you to list those as well.



Background Checks

All volunteers will need to complete the PA Child Abuse History Clearance, as well as a FBI fingerprint clearance. BBBSLV will also complete additional background checks.



Pre-match Training

To help our volunteers be prepared and equipped for their match journey, each volunteer will complete an online pre-match training via The Learning Exchange. To access the training, visit: <https://bbbs.csod.com>, then enter your email address, and the temporary password: Bbbs123.



BBBSLV reserves the right to accept or deny volunteer applicants, and close a match at any time.



WHAT IS THE MATCHING PROCESS?

BBBSLV uses a holistic enrollment process to determine acceptance into our program. Your BBBSLV Program Specialist will be in touch with you through the enrollment process and will let you know whether or not you have been accepted into the program.

When you have been accepted, BBBSLV will identify a Little for you. We will take into account all that you have shared with us during your enrollment process, including your preferences, and needs of the children who are looking to be matched.

Once we have identified a Little for you, we will contact you to have a **PRE-MATCH CONVERSATION**. During this conversation, we will share information about your potential Little, why we feel it is a good match, and also goals for the match. If you agree, we contact the Little and family for a pre-match conversation about you as a Big.



If everyone agrees to the match, a BBBSLV staff member will coordinate and facilitate a **MATCH MEETING** that will take place either at the BBBSLV Youth Mentoring Center, your Little's home, or a local park.

At the match meeting, a BBBSLV staff member will make introductions, review policies and procedures moving forward, and will also provide contact information for your Match Support Specialist.

After the match meeting, you may spend some time to know your Little and also arrange a time to meet for your first official **MATCH ACTIVITY**.

WHAT IS MATCH SUPPORT?

Once you are matched, BBBSLV continues to be there every step of the way to help you and your Little have a successful experience with the best possible outcomes for your Little. Match Support is the professional monitoring, support, and continual engagement with the Big, Little, parent/guardian(s), while your match is active with BBBSLV.

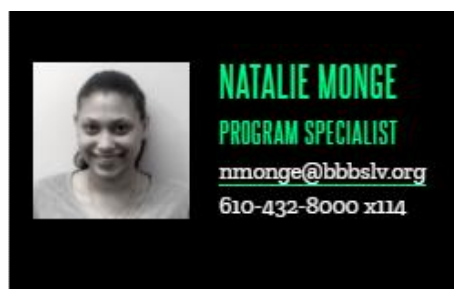
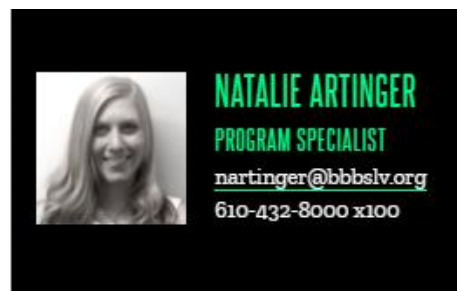
WHO IS A MATCH SUPPORT SPECIALIST?

Your Match Support Specialist will be your key contact once you are matched and for the first year of your match, will be speaking with you on a monthly basis to provide coaching and support. Once you have been matched for over a year, your Match Support Specialist will speak with you quarterly.

WHAT WILL WE DISCUSS DURING MATCH SUPPORT?

These contacts are an opportunity for your Match Support Specialist to discuss with you how the match relationship is going, monitor for areas of concern and make sure all ground rules for the match are being followed. Also, this is an opportunity for you to discuss any areas of concern.

MEET OUR MATCH SUPPORT STAFF:



ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

You don't need any special degrees or job skills. You just have to care about positively impacting a young person.

Everything we do at Big Brothers Big Sisters is to Defend the Potential of youth and this is your primary role as a Big.

Bigs aren't saviors or heroes. It's not even your job to uncover the potential in your Little, because that potential is already in them.

Your role as a Big is to invest in meaningful interactions with your Little to help them ignite their potential. This means accepting your Little as they are and encouraging them to pursue their goals.

You will also be a role model to your Little so it is important to set a good example in all you do and say.

Another role you will have as a Big is to support your Little. This will look different for every match but in general, be proud of who they are and show genuine interest in what they like to do.

Being a mentor also comes with certain expectations. To start, you are expected to be consistent and dependable. Building an enduring relationship with your Little requires that you are present and follow through on your commitments. This means you are expected to spend time with your Little on a regular basis.

As a Big you are expected to regularly communicate and connect with your Little. In all communication it is your responsibility to be honest and open. Show respect and value your Little's family by communicating with them as outlined in the Ground Rules. This includes following all policies and procedures regarding how often and through what means you are communicating with your Little, their family, and your Match Support Specialist.

You are also expected to follow all rules and guidelines and communicate with your Match Support Specialist on a regular basis.

You will likely become a significant part of your Little's life, and it is important to keep in mind what the role of a mentor involves and what it does not. To help with this, keep the following in mind, you are not your Little or their family's social worker, doctor, counselor, or expert, even if that is your profession. You are not a peer friend. You will listen and ask questions to help your Little think through situations just like a friend would do, however you are not responsible for keeping your Little's secrets, especially if those secrets indicate they are unsafe or being harmed in any way. If you suspect or know your Little is unsafe or in danger, you are expected to communicate your concerns or your Match Support Specialist. Finally, you are not a parent to your Little, their siblings, or their parent/guardian.

Your match is a one-to-one mentoring relationship between you and your Little. Be respectful of your Little's parent or guardian, deferring to them on decisions that affect your Little. Do not take siblings on outings, or provide money or transportation outside of the time you spend together, or activities your Little wants to do outside of the time you spend together. You may not give your Little's family money or resources. The takeaway is that your Little is the primary focus of your match relationship. If it starts to become about something other than this, please reach out to your Match Support Specialist.

While there is a general expectations for your Little to be an active participant in the match relationship, this will look different for each child based on their personality, age, background, culture, life experiences, etc. It is important to keep an open mind with your Little and set realistic expectations about the match relationship.

Our goal is that parents partner with you and the local agency to support a healthy, positive, match relationship.

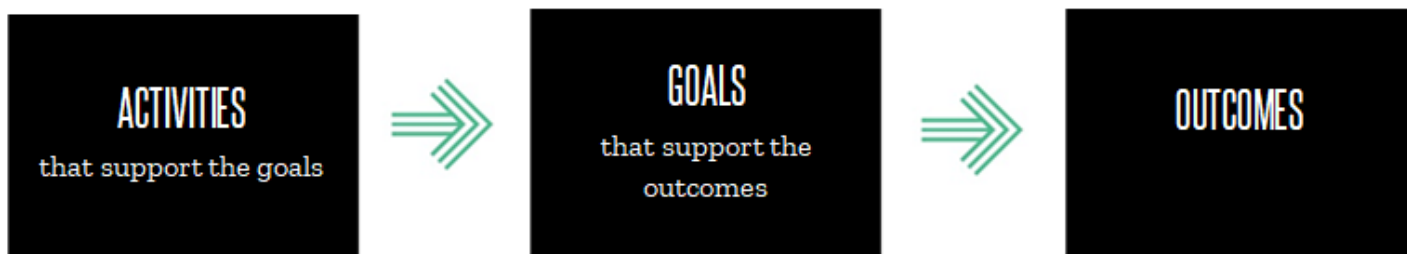
As you begin your new role as a Big, your Match Support Specialist will support you every step of the way.

HOW DO I PLAN MATCH ACTIVITIES WITH MY LITTLE?

Once you are matched, you will stay in touch directly with your Little's parent/guardian to arrange times to meet for your match activities. Your Match Support Specialist will also be available to help you, should you need it.

Being a Big is about both enjoying your time with your Little and achieving positive outcomes. Your Match Support Specialist will work with you, your Little and your Little's parent/guardian to identify goals for the match, which will likely fall into one or more of these three categories of:

- Avoidance of risky behaviors
- Educational Success
- Higher aspirations, greater confidence, and better relationships.



These categories represent the most common youth outcomes found as a result of effective mentoring. In general, youth-specific match goals are established to produce one or more of the youth outcomes. The activities you select should support those goals, which can produce the desired outcomes.

AN EXAMPLE:

Julie's Little has decided she would like to become work on handling her reactions when she becomes upset with her younger brother. Together, Julie and her Little have role played scenarios, talked about coping strategies, listened to music together, and gone out for some physical activity like walking and biking.



WHAT TO EXPECT: STAGES OF MATCH GROWTH

All matches go through stages as they grow and progress. Below are some stages you and your may Little experience. Remember the best way to help your match develop is to stay in touch with your Match Support Specialist.

DISCOVERY

- Chances are, discovery is the stage of the mentoring relationship cycle you are in right now. This includes the time prior to being matched with and meeting your Little, and usually extends into the first few months of being matched. Some things you can expect during this stage are:
 - Examining your motives for becoming a Big,
 - Determining which program is right for you,
 - Training,
 - Meeting your Little for the first time,
 - Begin learning about your Little and building trust.

NEGOTIATION

- Next is the Negotiation stage. Think of this time as making an agreement with your Little about what is important in your match relationship. During this stage you are determining:
 - When and how long you will meet with your Little,
 - Setting goals for your match relationship,
 - Establishing ground rules,
 - Setting boundaries for your relationship.

GROWTH

- The Growth stage should be the longest stage of your match relationship. This is where the relationship building takes place, and you and your Little really learn about each other. It's during this stage you will:
 - Meet regularly with your Little,
 - Evaluate your match relationship goals,
 - Maintain the relationship through consistent contact.
- Sometime the growth phase may present challenges and require perseverance, but these are opportunities to support your Little and establish a stable presence in their life.

MATCH CLOSURE

- The final stage in the match relationship cycle is Closure. Closure is when it is time for your match relationship to come to an end. Your match can close for a variety of reasons such as you or your Little moves, a change in schools, declining interest, or because of challenges in the match. When one of these circumstances occurs, you, your Little, or their family may decide it is time for a change or transition.
- Regardless of the reason, you should approach this decision with as much thought and care as the decision you made to volunteer as a Big.
- Handling the process in a positive way helps teach children how to end future relationships in a constructive way. It is important to keep in touch with your Match Support Specialist to discuss how to best handle the situation.

RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT STYLES

Research has shown that mentors who provide support via a **Developmental Approach** have stronger matches, and produce better outcomes for the mentee. A Developmental Approach focuses on 5 elements:

1. Express Care
2. Provide Support
3. Expand Possibilities
4. Challenge Growth
5. Share Power.

The Developmental Relationships Framework was developed by the Search Institute (<https://www.search-institute.org/>) The Search Institute bridges research and practice to help young people be and become their best selves. To learn more about the Developmental Relationships Framework, we encourage you to visit their website, or view the video linked below:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5Y9kwCOF7I&t=1s>

In comparison a **Prescriptive Approach** to mentoring, can be overly narrow and leave little room for a strong relationship to flourish and may prompt an early match closure. Characteristics of a prescriptive mentorship include:

- Rigid versus adaptive attitude.
- Seeks to fix deficits versus enhance talents.
- Critical of the Little and choices they make.
- Sees only one set path to development and success.

THE LEARNING EXCHANGE

As you continue through the volunteer enrollment process or as you begin your match relationship, we provide continued learning opportunities to support you and your match relationship. Below are some of the opportunities offered through the Big Brothers Big Sisters, learning platform, The Learning Exchange.

INTRODUCTION TO TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE FOR VOLUNTEERS

This course defines trauma and takes a look at its potential long-term effect on a child's development. It also provides helpful tips on how to support your Little if they have experienced trauma.

CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

When spending time and building a relationship with your Little, it is helpful to understand their current developmental stage. Not only will this give you a better understanding of their unique experiences, it will also help you connect with them. Your Little's development will impact your communication, relationship, and activities. With more insight, you can maintain realistic expectations throughout the different stages of your match.

LGBTQ AWARENESS

This course provides guidance and best practices when working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. This video series provides an overview of terms and definitions, explore risks faced and ways mentoring can help protect youth against these risks, discusses the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ youth, and provides practical tips and strategies when working with LGBTQ youth to help create a safe and supportive mentoring environment.

TO ACCESS THE LEARNING EXCHANGE VISIT: <https://bbbs.csod.com>



VOLUNTEER CHILD SAFETY GROUND RULES – COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAM

The safety guidelines that are presented in this document are designed to protect program participants from harm, identify potential areas of risk, and define ways to minimize liability. Bigs are required to follow these guidelines while matched with a Little. Program insurance coverage and limitations will also be outlined in this document.

Contact with Program Staff:

- Your Match Support Specialist will have monthly contact with you, your Little and his/her parent or guardian. The purpose of this contact is to discuss the development of your relationship with your Little, advise your Match Support Specialist of your activities, monitor child safety, and to receive feedback.
- Your Little's parent/guardian is made aware of all of the child safety guidelines outlined in this document. They have agreed to inform their child's Match Support Specialist if they are aware of any violations of these procedures and guidelines.
- After you and your Little have been matched for one year, contact with your Match Support Specialist will occur every three months should you choose to continue the match.
- At times, Ground Rule or policy updates may be communicated to you by email. Volunteers are expected to review any communications and speak with their Match Support Specialist for any clarification. Please keep BBBSLV updated on any email address changes.

Personal Stressors and Life Changes:

- If at any time during your match you are experiencing significant life stressors which may interfere with your match, please discuss these circumstances with your Match Support Specialist.
- Update your Match Support Specialist regarding any changes in: jobs, relationship/marital status, living situation, contact information, health/mental health concerns, availability, etc.
- You should also inform your Match Support Specialist of any changes in your Little's family such as: living situation, health issues, safety issues, inappropriate requests from the family, etc.

Contact with your Little:

- Bigs are asked to commit to visiting with their Little 2-4 times a month for at least 12 months.
- Match visits should not occur more than once a week and not more than four times a month.

- As per the BBBSLV "Digital Technology and Social Networking Policy", before connecting via social media, Bigs and Littles must discuss with this with their Match Support Specialist and receive parental approval.
- If your Little has a cell phone, please receive parental consent before contacting your Little via his/her cell phone. All match activities should still be approved by parents, even if a child has his/her own cell phone.
- To encourage healthy relationship development, Bigs are asked to wait at least three months before engaging in activities that take place at the Big's home. Before scheduling such an activity, discuss with your Match Support Specialist and receive parental approval.

Supervision and transportation of Little:

- You are responsible for the supervision of your Little at all times.
- Your Little should never be left unsupervised or with someone else during an activity.
- Do not allow others to transport your Little (family, friends, roommate, partner) without the consent of your Match Support Specialist and written permission from the parent/guardian.
- Create a plan with your Little that you will both follow if you get separated while on an outing.
- Follow PA state guidelines, which state that children ages 4-8 are required to be in a booster seat unless the child is over 80 lbs or at least 4'9" tall. It is also recommended that children under 12 ride in the back seat.
- Do not use a cell phone while transporting your Little in a vehicle.

When dropping your Little off at home after an activity:

- Escort your Little to the door to ensure his/her safety.
- Check in with the parent/guardian at this time, letting them know how your activity went.
- Communicate any concerns about the child privately with the parent/guardian.
- If no one is home wait a few minutes for their return. If parent/guardian has a cell phone you can try calling to let them know you are at their home with their child and your activity is over. If you are unable to contact a parent/guardian and can no longer wait for their return, leave a note at the door asking them to call you when they return so they can pick up their child.
- Don't drop child off unattended unless previous arrangement has been made with the parent/guardian.

General Safety:

- Children under 12 are required by law to wear an appropriate helmet while riding a bike. It is strongly recommended that your Little wear a helmet while skateboarding, roller-skating and rollerblading.
- Abide by use of seat belts, helmets, life preservers, airbag safety guidelines and operating instructions at all times.
- Parental/guardian permission is required before a child is able to operate any motorized vehicle or equipment.
- Escort the child to any public restroom to ensure safety.

Overnight Visits:

- Overnight visits with your Little are **NOT** permitted.
 - Any situation that may arise where Big/Little would be spending time together overnight is not allowed. This would include, but is not limited to, an overnight sleepover at the volunteer's home, instances where the Little's whole family may stay overnight, or group trips, such as a Big attending a church camping or Boy Scout camping trip with a Little. Please speak with your Match Support Specialist for further clarification.

Firearm safety:

- **In your home:** All guns must be locked and ammunition must be locked separately so that they are inaccessible to your Little.
- If you have a firearm or weapon in your home, **you must sign a Firearm Verification Form**, which indicates that it is licensed and registered according to state and federal laws, the firearm shall be kept in a locked safe/cabinet that is inaccessible to your Little, the firearm shall be stored separately from the ammunition, which will also be kept locked up and inaccessible to your Little and the same precaution will be taken with any other weapons.
- If you obtain a firearm at anytime during the time that you are matched, your Match Support Specialist should be notified so that you can complete the Firearm Verification Form at that time.
- Bigs may **not** carry a firearm with them while their Little is under their supervision and care.

Pool/Swimming Safety:

- Be aware of your Little's swimming ability and confidence before taking him/her on an activity. If the child is scared of swimming, please do not force them to swim.
- We encourage you to use a swimming area that has a certified lifeguard on duty. You may swim where there is no lifeguard, but you must be attentive and have safety as your utmost concern for your Little.

- Encourage your Little to use sunscreen. He/she should apply it or have their parents apply it before they leave the house. Encourage the use of sunglasses and/or hats.
- Make sure your Little has a private changing area if changing is necessary.

When engaging in high-risk activities (rock climbing, white water rafting, paint ball, target practice, etc.):

- Contact your Match Support Specialist to discuss the activity.
- Contact your Little's parent/guardian for his/her approval.

Internet, Movies, Video Games:

- Bigs are responsible for determining age appropriate content and ratings in all media forms with their Little.
- Viewing content with your Little that contains explicit sex, graphic violence, or pornography is strictly prohibited and grounds for match closure.
- Obtain parent/guardian permission when taking your Little to a movie, making sure the parent/guardian knows exactly what movie you will be seeing.

Alcohol, Drugs, Tobacco:

You will be terminated as a Big immediately for non-compliance with the following:

- Use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco are strictly prohibited when in the presence of your Little, and/or his/her family. This includes cigarettes, chewing tobacco, and all illegal and non-prescription medication.
- The use of drugs or alcohol prior to spending time with your Little is strictly prohibited.
- Supplying your Little or his/her family with drugs or alcohol is strictly forbidden and against the law.

Pets:

- Carefully introduce your Little to pets. Be aware that he/she may have no experience with animals.
- Consider your Little's fears and allergies and establish boundaries and instructions on appropriate care and treatment of pets and animals.
- Make sure pet is secured if your pet does not like children.

Personal Boundaries:

- Respect your Little's need for personal space and privacy.
- Provide separate/private areas for child to change or bathe if these activities are necessary.
- Nude swimming, showering, or bathing with your Little is strictly prohibited.
- Affection is best expressed through positive, affirming comments.

- Physical affection may be expressed by a handshake, high five, and pat on the back, etc. Hugging should be initiated by the child or done only if permission is given by the child.
- Having your Little sit on your lap, wrestling, teasing, massage or touch of any private areas (genitals, breasts, and buttocks) must be avoided.
- Never sleep or nap with your Little in the same bed, sleeping bag, or sofa.
- Contact your Match Support Specialist if you have any concerns about your Little's boundaries, expression of affection, sexuality, or if parent shows a romantic interest in you.

Discipline and setting limits:

- Physical discipline is never allowed.
- State your expectations for behavior and set appropriate boundaries.
- Verbally address behavior concerns and clarify what needs to change or happen.
- If the child does not respond take him/her home and inform the parent/guardian. Reassure the child that you will see him/her again and that you are not angry with them. Contact your Match Support Specialist to discuss the situation.

Gift Giving, Donations, Work for Pay:

- Gifts for special occasions are allowed (birthday, holiday, and special recognition of achievement) but should not be extravagant.
- Gifts should never be purchased and kept at the Big's home without permission from the parent/guardian and Match Support Specialist.
- Donations of furniture, clothing, money, computers, bikes, or any professional service to the Little or their family must be discussed with and approved by your Match Support Specialist.
- Providing opportunities for your Little to earn money should be discussed with the parent/guardian and your Match Support Specialist.

If your Little gets sick while with you:

- Take the child home and inform the parent/guardian of the child's symptoms.
- Never give any medication unless you are given verbal or written permission from the parent/guardian.
- You will be informed of any allergies that your Little may have.

Insurance:

- To be an active participant in the Community Based Mentoring Program, Bigs must have auto insurance coverage as required by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- Should an accident occur while transporting your Little, a Big's auto insurance policy will provide primary coverage.

- BBBSLV provides general/professional liability insurance to Bigs, which is effective only when a Big's Personal Automobile Liability limits are exhausted. Coverage for physical damage to a Big's automobile is not provided by BBBSLV; a Big's personal coverage is responsible for any physical damage.

Taking other children with you on activities:

- BBBS is not responsible for any additional children you take with you and your Little on an activity. This includes your Little's siblings if they are not enrolled in the program.
- Although we encourage you to meet your Little's friends and family, as well as having your Little meet your friends and family, you should not be taking others on activities with you on a regular basis. The relationship is between YOU and YOUR LITTLE!

Family member and friend involvement in activities:

- Be aware that you assume total responsibility and liability for any person who attends an activity with you that is not enrolled in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program.
- You are responsible for his/her behavior, supervision, and safety.
- You must secure permission from your Little's parent/guardian before you invite a friend or relative on an activity with you and your Little.
- Any friend or relative of your Little who attends an activity with you who is not enrolled in BBBS is not covered by program insurance. You will be liable for any injury or incident related to that child.

Please contact your Match Support Specialist for further consultation or clarification at 610-432-8000.

VOLUNTEER GROUND RULES ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I acknowledge that I have read and will adhere to the "Community Based Volunteer Ground Rules" throughout the enrollment and matching process and for the lifetime of the match relationship. I understand that failure to do so may result in the termination of the match relationship. BBBS ground rules have been established for the overall safety and well-being of all participants. If I have any question around the Ground Rules or BBBSLV policies and procedures, I will contact my Match Support Specialist.

Volunteer Name:

Volunteer Signature:

Date:

MANDATED REPORTING INFORMATION

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America's National Standards require that everyone associated with a Big Brothers Big Sisters local agency – professional staff, board members, and volunteers – report all suspected or known cases of child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities, regardless of when the suspected abuse occurred.

Additionally, Pennsylvania Child Protective Services (CPSL), Section 6311, states that "an individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, is a person responsible for the child's welfare or has direct contact with children" is required to report suspected child abuse.

Am I a mandated reporter?

Yes, as a Big, your role will include direct contact with a child through Big Brother Big Sisters of the Lehigh Valley on a regular basis. This means you are required by law to make an IMMEDIATE report of SUSPECTED child abuse if you have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse.

When must I make a report?

- You must make a report of suspected child abuse if you have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse under any of the following circumstances:
 - You come into contact with the child through Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Lehigh Valley or in the course of employment, occupation and practice of a profession or through a regularly scheduled program.
 - You are directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child, or are affiliated with an agency, institution, organization, school, regularly established church or religious organization or other entity that is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child.
 - A person makes a specific disclosure to you that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse.
 - An individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to you that the individual has committed child abuse.

What is reportable?

Child abuse means intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

- Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act. Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
- Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
- Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Causing serious physical neglect of a child.
- Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.

Child abuse also includes certain acts in which the act itself constitutes abuse without any resulting injury or condition. These recent acts include any of the following:

- Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
- Unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement.
- Forcefully shaking a child under one year of age.
- Forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age.
- Interfering with the breathing of a child.
- Causing a child to be present during the operation of a methamphetamine laboratory, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement.
- Leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who the parent knows or reasonably should have known was required to register as a Tier II or III sexual offender or has been determined to be a sexually violent predator or sexually violent delinquent.

Serious Mental Injury now includes an act or series of acts over a course of time that *substantially contributes to*- though does not necessarily directly cause- a psychological condition in a child.

Sexual abuse or exploitation- Any of the following if committed on a child by a perpetrator:

A. The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of a child to engage in or assist another person to engage in sexually explicit conduct.

B. A simulation of sexually explicit conduct for the purpose of producing a visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting or filming, of sexually explicit conduct.

C. Any of the following offenses as defined by the crimes code: rape, statutory sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, sexual assault, aggravated indecent assault, indecent assault, indecent exposure, incest, and prostitution.

D. Exploitation which includes any of the following:

1. Looking at the sexual or other intimate parts of a child for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire in either person.
2. Engaging or encouraging a child to look at the sexual or other intimate parts of another person for the purpose of arousing or gratifying sexual desire in any person involved.
3. Engaging or encouraging a child to participate in sexually explicit conversation either in person, by telephone, by computer or by a computer aided device.

Who can be a perpetrator of abuse?

- A parent of the child, parent's spouse, former spouse or boyfriend
- A person 14 years of age or older and responsible for the child's welfare.
- An individual who is 14 years of age or older who resides in the same home as the child.
- An individual 18 years of age or older who does not reside in the same home as the child but is related within the third degree of consanguinity or affinity by birth or adoption.

What indicators should I look for?

Please visit this website for more information on recognizing abuse and neglect:

<https://www.pa-fsa.org/About-Us/Understanding-Child-Abuse-Neglect-in-Pennsylvania/Recognizing-Abuse-Neglect>

What should I do if I suspect abuse?

Do not try to determine whether abuse actually occurred. Immediately report suspected abuse to the PA Department of Health Services electronically or through 1-800-932-0313.

If you report through Childline, you must also file electronically at

www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis. After reporting to Human Services, call your Match Support Specialist

Do I need to make a report directly to Childline?

Yes, changes to the law indicate that a mandated reporter should report immediately and then notify the institution they are affiliated with.

What do I do if I have concerns but I'm not sure it's reportable?

Contact your Match Support Specialist to discuss the situation.

Is a report confidential?

Yes, any report made is confidential. You are required to give your name when you make a report, but your name will not be released to the child's parent/guardian.

How do I make a report?

You have two options for reporting:

1. Call ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313. If you use this option, you also need to file a written report electronically at as stated in (2) below.
2. Submit a report electronically (www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis). The electronic form will guide you through the process and the information needed. If electronically filing only, make sure you receive confirmation that your report was received by the Department of Human Services.

What if a mandated reporter fails to follow the law?

The penalties for a mandated reporter who willfully fails to report child abuse range from a misdemeanor of second degree to a felony of the second degree.

What happens after I made a report?

Childline will submit the report to the appropriate Children & Youth office depending on the county where the child lives. The county will then determine if they need to investigate the report.

What types of safety conversations should I have with my Little?

Important things to discuss with your Little are:

- How is everything going at home and in their relationships with their family members?
- Have there been any changes in their family structure? How do they feel about those changes?
- How are friendships with their peers? Do you have any concerns around bullying?
- What things make you scared, worried, or nervous?
- Is there anything that you would like to change that would make you feel safer?

What types of safety conversations should I have with my Match Support Specialist?

- Have you noticed any changes in your Little's behavior or demeanor?
- Do you have any concerns about their home life or living situation?
- How are their friendships with peers?

- Are there any areas where you think the child or child's family could use assistance?

Additional Resources:

- If you are interested in learning more about mandated reporting there is a free online training offered by University of Pittsburgh. The website for that training is www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu.
- Childline also has a FAQ page with more information: <https://www.dhs.pa.gov/KeepKidsSafe/Pages/FAQ.aspx>.

VOLUNTEER MANDATED REPORTING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

I have read and reviewed the information regarding mandated reporting in Pennsylvania and understand my role/obligations as it pertains to being a mandated reporter. I understand that if I suspect abuse or if abuse is disclosed to me, I must report directly to Childline and contact my Match Support Specialist. If I have any safety concerns, but I am unsure of how to proceed, I will contact my Match Support Specialist right away.

Volunteer Name:

Volunteer Signature:

Date:

A FEW SCENARIOS:

Below are a few examples of situations that may occur as you navigate your mentorship with your Little. Read through and think about how you might handle the situation. We have also included a few suggested strategies for resolving the situation.

Scenario #1 - Busy Work Schedule

You just looked at your calendar and realized the last time you saw your Little was two weeks ago. Work is crazy right now, and family appointments are going to keep you busy for the next two weeks. You don't know how you will manage to fit in time to meet with your Little.

How do you handle this situation?

- We understand there are times when life will become busy and scheduling may become challenging. Communication will be key in navigating situations like these.
- Remember that you do not always need to spend several hours with your Little at each visit. It can be exhausting to attempt to have long extravagant outings every time you see your Little. If you are going to be very busy for two weeks, keep in mind that any time with your Little is better than none at all.
- Instead of taking your Little out for the whole day, see if he would want to go out for ice cream or to get a bite to eat. While you are together, you can explain to him that you've been very busy, but finding time to spend together is important to you.
- Another option is that you can include your Little on an errand that you have to take care of for yourself. You may have to go to a store to pick up a household item, so why not invite your Little along with you? The important thing is that you are spending time together and building a relationship.
- A third possible option for your match would be to buy journals for each of you to have in the beginning of being matched so if there is ever a period of time when either you or your Little is away, you can write to one another and then share what you wrote the next time you see each other. This is a good tool to utilize to encourage reading and writing practice for your Little.
- Although your Little may not outwardly express any concern or disappointment at not seeing you, that is not necessarily the best indicator of their engagement in your match. Children often express their thoughts and feelings in ways other than verbal expression.
- Consider keeping in touch by a quick phone call. Are you worried that your Little only gives one word answers on the phone? That is okay. Even talking on the

phone for just a minute or two will help keep a consistent connection and help your Little grow more comfortable speaking on the phone.

- Most importantly, you should maintain open communication with your Little, so that he doesn't feel forgotten about.

Scenario #2 - Trouble with Phone Calls

Your Little is inconsistent in returning your calls. You made plans to get together and he/she was going to call you back to confirm, but you still have not heard from him/her on the day of your planned activity.

How do you react?

- First, be patient and remember that relationships have ups and downs, and do not "happen" by themselves. Do not take it as a sign that your Little is not interested in meeting with you.
- Although it may feel frustrating, it is important to remember your Little is a child and the best form of communication is usually through the parent/guardian. ***In the match relationship, it is expected that the Big takes the lead. This means that you should expect to be the one initiating contact, and often times, following up.***
- Children learn and develop at different rates and not all children are responsible enough yet to handle their own scheduling and communication. Many times, Littles lose their phones or their phone privileges have been taken away on short notice without you or the agency knowing.
- If you have plans the day of and have not heard from your Little, it would be best to call their parent/guardian to find out if your Little still was planning on meeting with you. If this issue continues, reach out to your Match Support Specialist to discuss ways to help improve communication.
- ***Most importantly, do not take offense if your Little does not return your call or if it takes several attempts to reach them.***
- It may also be beneficial to your match to pick the same day and time to meet each week or biweekly to reduce schedule/communication conflicts.

Scenario #3 - How do I develop conversation?

You and your Little have been matched for about eight months. When you signed up for the program you imagined you would have felt a deeper connection with your Little by now, but your Little does not talk about personal thoughts or feelings and does not really provide any activity suggestions.

How do you react?

- It is important to remember that all children open up and communicate their emotions/feelings in different ways. A child may feel close to you but may not have the words or feel comfortable expressing that they feel this way. If your Little is not very vocal about their feelings towards you, a good indicator is if they get excited to see you/spend time with you.
- Another suggestion would be to contact your Match Support Specialist and discuss your concerns with them. There are many times Bigs may feel their Littles are not interested in spending time with them but then report back to their MSS saying they have a lot of fun with their Bigs and wouldn't change anything about them.
- It's also important to remember that developing a relationship and building trust takes time and sometimes this is not always achieved in a short period of time. A large portion of the population we serve have experienced abandonment or neglect/rejection on some level and therefore it may be even more challenging to open up to someone.
- The impact that we have on our Littles can often be subtle. Positive growth takes time and you may not always see outward signs of the impact that you are having. If you are unsure about the difference you are making, you should talk to over with your Match Support Specialist. And, rest assured, you are a great value to your Little, even if you don't feel a deep connection.

Scenario #4 - Gracefully Handling Match Closure

You have been matched with your Little for a year and a half now. You recently took a new job that will mean longer hours and a further commute. Additionally, you and your spouse are expecting a baby in the next few months. It does not feel realistic to you that you will be able to continue your mentoring relationship with your Little.

How can you handle the match closure?

- When it comes time to close your match, the most important thing is to have clear communication. First, you should tell your Match Support Specialist about your situation and inform them that you will need to close your match. Next, you should inform your Little and his/her parent guardian. Explain your situation to them, and encourage them to share their feelings. Do not wait until your last visit with your Little to tell him/her. You should try to give him/her some notice; this shows that you truly care. Plan several last visits and do something together to remember your time together. You can make a scrapbook, do an art project, plant a tree, or frame a photo that you took during an outing.
- Having a positive match closure is absolutely essential to the way that your Little remembers your match. The worst thing you could do would be to walk away from the match without any communication to your Little or their parent. This will leave your Little with a feeling of abandonment and it will likely be the strongest memory he/she will have of the match.

- If you follow a proper closing procedure, your Little will be able to reflect positively on the time that you had together. Also, by having a proper match closure, you are teaching your Little how to properly resolve a relationship, which is a skill that he will likely need to use at some point in his/her life.