



Big Brothers Big Sisters

Volunteer Information

Thank you for your interest in Big Brothers Big Sisters. The following information is designed to help you learn more about our organization, what you can expect from us, and what it takes to be a Big Brother or a Big Sister.

Big Brothers Big Sisters in the Heart of Michigan
(Serving Midland & Isabella Counties)

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www.bbbsheartofmi.org

About BBBS

For more than 50 years, Big Brothers Big Sisters in the Heart of Michigan has been bringing a little magic into the everyday lives of children by matching them with adult volunteers in fun and rewarding relationships. We are very excited that you are considering being a volunteer with our agency.

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. You'll be amazed at what it will do for you, too. It's what we call "*the magic of mentoring.*"

There are a variety of flexible opportunities for volunteers to be involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters, including:

- **Traditional one-to-one** – Men are matched with boys and girls are matched with women in a one-to-one relationship. Sometimes, women can be matched with boys between the ages of 6 and 10.
- **Couples for Kids** – Big Brothers Big Sisters offers the opportunity for married couples to spend some fun time together and share this special time with a child. Because most Little Brothers and Little Sisters are from single-parent homes, a family experience is valuable.
- **Families for Kids** – Married couples with children can spend some time together and share this special time with a child. It's an extra seat at the dinner table, an extra ticket to the movie, or even one more hand to help with family chores. Just being together in a family setting is a valuable experience for Littles.
- **High School Bigs** – High School students who are over the age of 16 and have a drivers' license can become a Big Brother or Big Sister. This is a great opportunity for youth in our community to reach out and help a younger child.
- **Big for a Day** -- Designed for busy people, our Big for a Day program allows adults to spend a day with a child on our waiting list.
- **Teaming Up with YOUth** – Bigs and Littles meet after school in many elementary schools throughout Midland County. Get togethers take place typically at the same day and time each week. Bigs in this supervised program are generally high school or college students.

Who are our Littles?

- Children are generally from single parent households or come from a family situation that lacks the involved and supportive participation of one or both parents.
- Children who like to have fun and just need a friend.
- Children ages 6 to 17.

How do Children come into the program?

Most children come to us through their parent or caregiver. Children in our Teaming Up with YOUth program come to us through a teacher or counselor. We also reach out to involve children through churches, youth service agencies, and other referrals. All children and their parents must want to be in our program.

Your Role

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.

What is a “Big”?

A Big Brother or Big Sister is a friend – a friend who is consistent and is able to commit to seeing a child on a regular basis, generally 3-4 times per month. Children benefit most from longer-term relationships, and we are hopeful that our Bigs will be able to stay in our program for at least one year.

What makes a successful “Big”?

Successful Bigs...

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

What a “Big” Is Not

- Parent
- Financial support
- “Taxi” service
- Babysitter
- Peer
- Therapist

What Will You Do? - Expectations

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

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

To make the most of your relationship:

- Be a good friend: Listen, have fun, take time to get to know this new person in your life. Choose activities that you both enjoy and that will strengthen the bond between you. Don't set out to impose mandatory changes in the Little. Positive behaviors will flow after your Little trusts you and your Little grows in being more secure, not by your declaring mandatory new behaviors that the Little has to do.
- Be Consistent:
 - Show the child you think your time together is important.
- Be involved and participate in agency activities:
 - This connects you with other Bigs & Littles and allows your Little to interact with other kids in the program.
- Regularly communicate with your Little, the parents and your Match Support Specialist:
 - We will contact you each month to provide assistance and give feedback on how you're making a difference.
 - Anytime you are unsure about what to do or how to handle a situation, your Match Support Specialists are here to help.
- Work for a long-lasting relationship.
- Realize that problems may come up:
 - It's normal for problems to arise in a match relationship
 - Try to balance your expectations of what it will be like with your Little and be realistic about how fast the relationship will take to develop.

What you can Expect from BBBS

First of all, we'll work hard to be sure we make the best match possible for you and your Little. We'll gather information about you and your Little, what you like and don't like, and be sure your personalities and interests are in tune with each other.

The Enrollment process consists of:

- **Interview**
- **References**
- **Criminal history record check**
- **Home assessment**
- **Possible interview with significant other**
- **Information from another BBBS agency or other service organization where you may have volunteered previously**

A professional Big Brothers Big Sisters Match Support Specialist will be assigned to you and your Little. You can expect our Specialist to stay in touch with you, your Little and your Little's parents on a regular basis. In the beginning, we'll call you once a month to see how things are going. As your match grows stronger, we'll contact you less often. But, please know we are always here to help.

BBBS and Your Match Support Specialist will:

- Give you ideas about low cost, fun and learning activities you can do with your Little.
- Provide help on specific topics to you when you need it.
- If necessary, help you work through any problems you might have with your Little and/or his parents.
- Hold events where you and your Little will join with other matches to have fun and share experiences.



Have Fun. Make a Friend. Make a Difference.

VOLUNTEER INQUIRY RECORD

Date of Inquiry: _____

Volunteer's Name: _____

Address: _____

County: _____ Township: _____

Home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____ Work phone: _____

May we call you at work? Yes No

If Student, Name of School or College: _____

Fax: _____ E-mail: _____

Birth date: _____ Age: _____ Male: Female:

Referred by: TV Radio Friend Special Event Always known
 Website Corporate Partner Other

Program Interest: BB/BS Couple TUWY

(Area below for staff use only)

Interview date: _____ Interview time: _____ Location: _____

Staff member doing the interview: _____

No interview scheduled, wants to wait: _____
Date to re-contact: _____

Staff taking this inquiry: _____

Comments: _____

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