Big Brothers Big Sisters

Preparing Volunteers Guide

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Our mission: To make a positive impact in the lives of children and youth and to assist them in becoming confident, competent and caring individuals by providing committed volunteers, leadership and standards of excellence.

About BBBS

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

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.

We have two basic ways you can meet with your Little to build a fun friendship.

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

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

History and Purpose:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Virginia, through its Bedford Office, established a school-based Mentoring Program at Bedford Elementary School during the 1996-1997 school year. This pilot project was evaluated at the end of the school year to determine if it should be continued or terminated. The project was determined to be successful so a decision was made to continue the program and expand into other schools as the Big Buddy Program. At present, we now provide these services to 25 elementary schools throughout the region.

We know that students benefit from the individual attention provided by carefully screened Big Brothers/Sisters. Each Big meets with his/her Little one (1) hour per week, or every other week, during the school year to provide support, encouragement, and a positive role model. Bigs should not be viewed primarily as tutors, although some might do this activity. Big Brothers/Sisters could have lunch with their Little Brother/Sister, work with them on reading, play an educational board game, shoot baskets, or just sit and talk. The main purpose is to meet the needs of children within a school setting. Teachers and guidance

counselors work together to select those children in need of one-on-one attention. The teachers have reported an improvement in the child's self-esteem, behavior, attendance and academic success over the years this program has operated.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Virginia recruits, screens, and trains the Big Brother/Sisters. The agency also monitors the relationship and (with input from school personnel, parents, and Big Brothers/Sisters) evaluates the success of the program. Bigs are selected from various occupations and age groups. Students are selected by the teachers and guidance counselors.

A key component of this program is location. It is school-based so there is NO contact (phone or otherwise) between the Big Brother/Sister & Little Brother/Sister outside of the school setting. Big Brothers/Sisters sign an agreement to this effect prior to the initial meeting. Big Brothers/Sisters are required to sign a logbook and be identified each time they enter the school. The Brothers/Sisters contacts occur only during regular school hours.

Big Brothers Big Sisters staff serve as the liaison between the school and the Big Brother/Sister to facilitate scheduling. Also, agency staff would be available to handle any problems that may arise.

Who are our Littles?

- Children from our community who could benefit from having a positive adult role model.
- Children who like to have fun.
- Age 7 to 18.

How do Children come into the program?
Most children in our community-based programs come to us through their parent or care-giver. Most children in our school-based programs 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"? It won't be long before you meet your Little Brother or Little Sister for the first time. And, when you do, it will help for you to understand your role as a 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
- Communicate on a level the Little can understand
- Listen well and act as a sounding board
- Have a positive self-esteem
- Be able to help the Little without doing their work for them
- Reinforce the Little's accomplishments & respect the child's dignity

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.

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.

Have Fun. Make a Difference. Make a Friend.

How to Get Involved – Enrollment

- BBBS will gather information to learn more about you.
  - **Interview**
  - **References**
  - **Child Protective Services Registry check**
  - **Criminal history record check**
  - **Interest assessment**
  - **Home assessment**
  - **Possible interview with significant other**
  - **Information from another BBBS agency or other service organization where you may have volunteered previously**
- If agreeable to all parties you get matched with a child.
- Start having FUN, making a difference in the life of a child, and enjoying your new friend.

How to Create a Partnership with Your Little's Parent/Guardian

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 his/her family.**
- **Talk to your Match Support Specialist about any concerns you have about your Little/Little's family or your Little's well-being.**

A Top Priority-Child Safety

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

- Thorough professional screening.
- Child Safety and child abuse prevention education programs for volunteers, parents and children.
    - If you ever have a situation where your Little talks to you about any abuse or violence he/she is subject to, contact your Match Support Specialist immediately. Our response to the disclosure by a child can prevent negative outcomes for the child and their family. For that reason, it is crucial that volunteers follow our BBBS protocols on reporting abuse.
- Guidelines that establish appropriate boundaries and respect a child's right to feel safe.
- Ongoing BBBS Match Support contact with each party in the match. This helps provide up-to-date information about safety issues and early warnings of potential problems throughout the match relationship.
- The BBBS Match Support Specialist maintains *required* consistent scheduled contacts with each member of the match party.

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

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

Addressing Child Abuse and Neglect (Tri-Agency Perspective: DSS, The Court, and CASA)

Child abuse and neglect cases are resolved through a tri-agency approach which involves the Department of Social Services, the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, and CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), which operates within the Department of Criminal Justice Services.

Following a report of suspicion of child abuse and neglect, the Department of Social Services will conduct an investigation to determine if the complaint is founded. If founded, Social Services may request that the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court schedule a series of hearings to determine how the child's case will be resolved. If the Court agrees that the allegations are founded, the Court may go ahead with the hearings and appoint a CASA Volunteer to the child.

In addition to investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect, the Department of Social Services is also responsible for providing services to the child and the child's family. These may include foster care placement, adoption, counseling and other services.

The Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, in addition to scheduling hearings will also appoint a guardian *ad litem* (the child's attorney), appoint attorneys for the parents, and appoint the previously mentioned CASA. The Court ay also order services for the child and family which the Court deems necessary.

The CASA Volunteer is the child's voice in Court and has specific duties outlined in Code of Virginia. These include: (1) investigating the child's case; (2) reporting to the Court; (3) monitoring court orders; (4) assisting the guardian *ad litem*; and (5) reporting suspicions of child abuse and neglect to Social Services.

The goal of the process is to assure safe, permanent homes for abused and neglected children who enter the system. Children may at the end of the process either: (1) return home to their family; (2) live with relatives; (3) be adopted; (4) remain permanently in foster care; (5) learn to live on their own (if 16 or older); or (6) be assigned to another planned permanent living arrangement.

You may be contacted my your MSS, the Department of Social Services, the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court, or a CASA Volunteer and be asked to provide additional information. Again, your cooperation will be greatly appreciated.

Match Support Specialists are to contact the Department of Social Services: After the abuse has been reported to the MSS, he will then contact the Department of Social Services. Caseworkers at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Virginia are *mandated reporters,* so they have to contact the Department of Social Services.

Be Cooperative: You may be contacted later by your MSS or the Department of Social Services and asked to provide additional information. Your cooperation with these social service professionals will be greatly appreciated. Please do not attempt to conduct your own investigation.

BBBS Support - How BBBS Works with You & Your Little

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/Team from their BBBS agency. This specialist also works with the Little's parent / guardian.

Along the way to forming a safe and lasting friendship your Match Support Team will be in touch with all of you to help you and your Little. Sometimes they will call, meet you in person, 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 Team 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.
- Hook you up 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. 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.

Telephone: (434) 528 – 0400
E-mail: agency@bbbscva.org

You Can Make a Difference in the Life of a Child

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

Here are some thoughts on making a difference:

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

Suggested Activities

Amusement Parks
Art Projects
Attend Sporting Events
Bike Riding
Bowling
Camping
Cooking/Baking
Crafts
Fishing
Help with Homework
Miniature Golfing
Movies
Painting
Shopping
Swimming
Volunteer for Community Service

Places to Visit:

Airport
Area Points of Interest
Appalachian Trail
Blackwater Creek Nature Trail
Booker T. Washington Memorial
Community Market
JUMP Park (Forest)
Leesville Lake
Lynchburg Public Library
Monticello (Charlottesville)
Natural Bridge-Zoo, Museum, and Caverns
Peaks View Park
Riverside Park
Smith Mountain Lake State Park
Wintergreen Resort (Nelson County)
Colleges
Fars
Holiday Displays
Library
Skate Parks

Agency Sponsored Activities:

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central Virginia sponsor activities throughout the year which are open to the Bigs and Littles free of charge or at a reduced fee. These include many seasonal events such as several Christmas activities, Bowl for Kids Sake, a Recognition Dinner, a Picnic, and a Back-to-School Night at a baseball game. Other events have included the Putter Classic, the Valentine's Day of Giving, a trip to a Hockey Game, and even a camping trip.

Many area businesses are willing to give tours of their facilities. Arrangements for such tours are made on an individual basis by the Caseworker

Tax Deductibility: Activity expenses for the Little and mileage are tax deductible. The Big must save receipts and record mileage. Other deductions ay include parking fees, admission tickets, etc.

Valuable Relationships

Now that you are matched with your Little; you may be thinking what comes next and how fast will it happen?

As every experienced Big will tell you, the 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.

Honeymoon Stage

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

What does this stage look like?

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

What can you do to move it along?

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

Growth Stage

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

What does this stage look like?

- This is the most crucial time regarding the development of the Big/Little relationship.
- This is the time that may be a turning point in the relationship.

- It is common, around the four-month date, that your Little will begin testing you to see what you are really about and how much he/she can get away with.
- Your Little may be observing you to find a reason not to trust you.

What can you do to move it along?

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

MATURITY STAGE

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

What does this stage look like?

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

What can you do to move it along?

- Develop long term shared interests, activities that you will do frequently together and that you both enjoy.
- Identify past shared experiences and enjoy shared "jokes."
- Learn something new to both of you, together.

Transition and "Closure"

- Your relationship with your Little may transition to less regular contact because of a change in where you or your Little lives, a change in life circumstances, a feeling that you have successfully

taken your Little through a critical stage, 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 a "transition." BBBS will "close" the file of your match and will not continue providing regular support to the match. The Big and Little may transition into a pattern of continuing, though less frequent, contact. All BBBS matches "close" when the Little reaches age 18 or graduates from high school.

- No matter the reason or the length of the match, you and your Little have given a lot to each other and going through this transition should be handled in a sensitive, thoughtful, and caring way.
- Recognize that you have made an impact at some level on your Little.
- The Little you now know is probably not the same Little with whom you were initially matched. Changes probably have occurred. Celebrate the experience as much as you can together - highlights and hurdles.
- Working closely with the child's parent/guardian make a plan for some form of continued contact that feels appropriate to your match circumstances. This may be as limited as exchanging greeting cards at holidays or as intense as continued regular contact with an 18 year old going off to college.
- If the transition of closing the match is not approached carefully, a child can be hurt by the experience. Our staff will work with you, the child and his/her parent to help you with this transition.

Children - Ages & Stages

If you haven't had recent experience with a child in the age group you'll be matched with, we have some information to help you work successfully with your Little.

We've created handouts for each of the age categories listed below. These handouts are designed to provide you with some general characteristics of children in each of the four different age categories:

- 5-7 year olds
- 8-10 year olds
- 11-13 year olds
- 14-16 year olds

These handouts may help you understand what your Little might be like depending on his/her age. They also include some suggested activities. Just ask your Support Specialist for copies.

As you read the handouts:

- Keep in mind that they are generalizations.

- While they may provide a description of children in general, you may encounter something slightly different with your Little. This does not mean that there is something wrong with your Little. It may mean that they are not like the average child.

- Sometimes a child's development may be delayed because of trauma or negative experiences or simply a slower or faster development than others, so the stage they're in at present may not correlate to their age in years.

Developmental Stages of Children

Age Six

Physical Development

1. Growth proceeding more slowly, a lengthening out. Large muscles better developed than small ones.
2. Eleven to twelve hours of sleep needed.
3. Eyes not yet mature, tendency toward farsightedness. Permanent teeth beginning to appear.
4. Heart in period of rapid growth.
5. High activity level – can stay still for only short periods of time.

Characteristic Behavior

1. Eager to learn, exuberant, restless, overactive, easily fatigued. Relatively short periods of interest.
2. Self-assertive, aggressive, wants to be first, less cooperative than at five, keenly competitive, boastful.
3. Whole body involved in whatever he/she does. Learns best through active participation. Inept at activities using small muscles.
4. Inconsistent in level of maturity evidenced: regresses when tired, often less mature at home than with outsiders.
5. Has difficulty making decisions.
6. Group activities popular, boys' and girls' interests beginning to differ. Much spontaneous dramatization.

Special Needs

1. Encouragement, ample praise, warmth, and great patience from adults.
2. Ample opportunity for activities of many kinds, especially for use of large muscles.
3. Wise supervision with minimum interference; help in developing acceptable manners and habits.
4. Friends come and go quickly.
5. Concrete learning situation and active, direct participation. Some responsibilities, but without pressure and without being required to make complicated decisions or achieve rigidly set standards.

Age Seven

Physical Development

1. Annual expected growth in height; two or three inches. In weight; three to six pounds. Growth slow and steady.
2. Losing teeth. Most seven year olds have their six molars.
3. Better eye-hand coordination. Eyes not yet ready for much close work.
4. Better use of small muscles.

Characteristic Behavior

1. Sensitive to feelings and attitudes of both, other children and adults. Especially dependent on approval of adults. Able to assume some responsibility.
2. Interest of boys and girls diverging. Less play together.
3. Full of energy but easily tired, restless and fidgety, often dreamy and absorbed.
4. Little abstract thinking. Learns best in concrete terms and when he can be active while learning.
5. Cautious and self-critical, anxious to do things well, likes to use hands.
6. Talkative, prone to exaggerate, may fight verbally instead of physically; competitive.
7. Enjoys songs, rhythms, fairy tales, myths, nature stories, comics, television, movies.
8. Concerned about right and wrong, but sometimes prone to take small things.
9. Rudimentary understanding of time and monetary values.

Special Needs

1. The right combination of independence and encouraging support. Acceptance at own level of development.
2. Chances for active participation in learning situations with concrete objects.
3. Adult help in adjusting to the rougher ways of the playground without becoming too crude or rough. Warm, encouraging, friendly relationships with adults.

8 to 10 Year Olds

General Characteristics

1. Interested in people, aware of differences, willing to give more to others but expects more.
2. Busy, active, full of enthusiasm, may try too much, accident-prone, interest in money and its value.
3. Sensitive to criticism, recognize failure, capacity for self-evaluation.
4. Capable of prolonged interest, may make plans on own.
5. Decisive, dependable, reasonable, strong sense of right and wrong.
6. Spends a great deal of time in talk and discussion, often outspoken and critical of adults although still dependent on adult approval.

Physical Characteristics

1. Are very active and need frequent breaks from tasks to do things that are fun for them and involve use of energy.
2. Bone growth is not yet complete.
3. Children experiencing early or rapid growth may be upset with their size.

Social Characteristics

1. Can be very competitive.
2. Are choosy about their friends.
3. Team games become popular.
4. Worshiping heroes, TV stars, sports figures is common.

Emotional Characteristics

1. Are very sensitive to praise and recognition. Feelings are hurt easily.
2. Because friends are so important during this time, there can be conflicts between adult's rules and friend's rules. You can help by your honesty and consistency.

Mental Characteristics

1. Their idea of fairness becomes a big issue.
2. Are eager to answer questions.
3. Are very curious and are collectors of everything; however, they may jump to other objects of interest after a short time.
4. Want more independence, but know they need guidance and support.
5. Wide discrepancies in reading ability.

Developmental Tasks

1. Social cooperation
2. Self-evaluation
3. Skill learning
4. Team play

Strategies for Common Problems

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

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

"What do I do?"

"My Little doesn't show appreciation."

- Coming into the match with a preconceived notion of how your Little should show appreciation will set you up for a letdown. Your Little may not say "please" and "thank you" when you first start meeting, and even after many times together he/she may still not respond in a way that you deem appropriate.

- "I had a good time" may eventually be a response, but may be a long time in coming. Sometimes he/she might only say, "It was o.k." Be sure you model the behavior you would like your Little to demonstrate, and be consistent.

"My Little doesn't share feelings and/or initiate conversation."

- You may feel that your Little is not putting as much into the relationship as you would like. The relationship may seem one-sided for a long time with you doing the talking, but your Little not saying much.

- Eventually your Little may well respond in a more open and honest way, trusting you and confiding in you as an adult who will not disappoint or walk out on him/her. Conversation between you will grow and your Little may share more feelings with you. If this happens, rejoice in it, but remember that no relationship is perfect and all relationships are defined in a variety of ways.

"My Little never calls me."

- Littles love to receive phone calls, but seldom feel comfortable initiating them. Asking your Little to share with you the good feeling that comes from getting a phone call may help him/her to understand that adults also like to receive calls from people they like. Giving your Little definite times to call may help, as can enlisting the parent's help in encouraging your Little to call.

- It is important not to stop calling with hopes that they will start calling you. It is important to be patient, and be sure to reinforce the behavior with positive remarks when they do call.

"My Little doesn't act the right way."

- Your Little may come from a family with a very different value system than yours. It is not your responsibility or role to try to change the values of your Little. Your match is a learning experience for both of you. If your Little has never been to a play, they may not know what behavior is expected of them.

- Try to be content with the understanding that, through your example, your Little may come to respect values that are more positive. But this may be a long process.

"My Little doesn't seem to need me."

- Every child should have someone to bring a little magic to them, but your Little may not respond in a way that makes you feel you are needed. Feeling needed may be expressed by your Little in small ways, and may be non-verbal.

- In time, you may learn to recognize small signs that your Little needs you. This will help you in being content with the knowledge that you are making a difference and are a much-needed part of your Little's life.

"My Little doesn't make time for me."

- Your Little may seem to have little time for you, but be assured that although other activities and family issues may appear to interfere, your Little is benefiting from the interest and involvement of a caring adult friend. You are the person spending one-on-one time with your Little; listening; sharing, and showing your desire to be together on a regular basis.

- No group activity, school event or family commitment can take the place of your special relationship with your Little. If you recognize the importance of what you are doing, chances will increase that your Little will recognize this too.

"My Little doesn't seem interested."

- Keep in mind that we all demonstrate interest in different ways, and your Little may not know how to communicate that he/she is interested.

- Be sure you do not make assumptions based on your Little's behavior, and talk to your Support Specialist if you have questions.

"My Little doesn't want to improve."

- Your Little may have many adults eager to tell what she/he is doing wrong.

- What your Little will respond to is someone who will point out and praise strengths. These strengths (assets) can range from the values that the child holds to things he/she is good at doing. If your Little knows that you are going to be positive, give encouragement and compliments, and appreciate the unique person that he/she is, change will happen in very positive ways, and your Little will grow in confidence, competence and caring.

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

Transitioning the Match through Formal Closure

As we described 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 your Little lives, a change in life circumstances, a feeling that you have successfully taken your Little through a critical stage, 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 a transition.

Hopefully this transition is very positive, for both you and your Little Brother or Sister. The transition may lead to continued contact between you and your Little 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 expressed permission of the child's parent/guardian.

At the time of transition, BBBS "closes" the file and does not continue to provide professional support or guidance to the matched parties. At that point, the match is no longer considered an "active" match. We hope that you will stay involved with BBBS and we hope that you might consider taking on another Little.

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

You have invested a lot into each other. You want to communicate to your Little your appreciation of him/her and your hope and expectation that he/she will be successful and happy.

A few Guidelines:

- Never just stop and disappear from the match--this could really have a negative impact on your Little.
- The transition/file closing process gives an opportunity to review the great stuff that happened during the match.
- Your Match Support Specialist will walk you through the process—there are several steps to take which can maximize the positive effects.

THANK YOU!

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

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

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