



# PARENT/CAREGIVER PROGRAM POLICIES

*A Program of the Ithaca Youth Bureau*  
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# EXPECTATIONS FOR BIGS & PARENTS/CAREGIVERS



In addition to adhering to all program rules and policies, the following is what we expect of our Bigs & parents/caregivers:

- Volunteers and families will complete a Pre-Match training.
- A commitment to meeting (either in-person or virtually) every week.
- A 1 year commitment from the date of the introduction meeting.
- In-person meetings are to be between 1-2 hours.
- Virtual meetings are to be between 30 min – 1 hour.
- Bigs and families must stay in communication with BBBS monthly to ensure that every match is safe, developing appropriately, and complying with changing state laws regarding Covid safety.
- Bigs and Families must follow all general rules for the BBBS program as well as the Covid-19 related safety policies.

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# EFFECTIVE MENTORING: THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR



Understanding the role of the Big in your child's life will help make their match experience a success.

## A mentor is:

### ● A trusted guide and friend

Young people do not get much of an opportunity to spend time with trusted adults, other than their parents and family members. By being a good listener and engaging in authentic conversations with their Little, mentors help children develop important life skills.

### ● A confidant

Building a close relationship with their mentor will help children build better relationships with others in their life as well, such as parents and peers. In the process, Littles may tell their mentor things he or she does not feel comfortable telling anyone else. A mentor's role is to be supportive, non-judgmental, and to protect the safety of their Little.

### ● A caring, responsible adult

While their Little is with them, mentors are in charge of their physical and emotional safety. Mentors are trained to keep this in mind while choosing activities, and having conversations, and discussing choices.

### ● A positive role model

Modeling positive behavior is one of the most important things mentors do. Our mentors receive guidance and training on how to be a great role model.

### ● A defender of potential!

A mentor's role is to see the potential and strengths, of their Little and help them ignite that potential! They help Littles channel their strengths in a way that ensures success. They provide positive feedback, and help Littles to dream big! Bigs not only positively impact your child's life today, but transforms their potential for tomorrow.

## A mentor is not:

Mentors cannot be all things to their Littles and to the families they work with. Quite often when mentors run into problems in their relationships, it is because the mentor, the Little or the parent/guardian did not understand the proper role of a mentor. Mentors should not be expected to take on the following roles:

- A parent/legal guardian
- A mentor to other children in the family
- Providing professional services to the family, even if it's the Big's career (i.e. doctor, accountant, therapist.)

# EFFECTIVE MENTORING: THE ROLE OF THE PARENT/CAREGIVER



Thank you for enrolling your child in our program. Having a Big can be an amazing experience for a child! Parents/caregivers play an important role in the match relationship and can help ensure it's a success by understanding the part you play in it.

## The parent/caregiver's role:

- **Maintain close communication with your child's Big:**
  - Let them know the best ways and the best times to reach you.
  - Keep them up to date with your contact information.
  - Return calls, texts, or emails as soon as you can.
  - Help ensure meetings take place each week (in-person or virtual)
  
- **Maintain close communication with your BBBS Match Support Specialist**
  - Reach out to them anytime you have a question or concern about the match.
  - Be available for monthly check-ins with them to talk about how things are going.
  - Always be sure we have your most current contact information.
  - A lack of monthly communication with your Match Support Specialist may result in your child's match being ended.
  
- **Talk to your child about the match:**
  - No one knows your child better than you. Check in with them to see if they are happy and comfortable with their Big.
  - Get in the habit of asking your child about their outing with their Big when they return home.
  - Help your child think of ideas for match outings and encourage them to share their thoughts with their Bigs.

# PROGRAM POLICIES:

## COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR MATCH SUPPORT SPECIALIST



Once you have approved the Big that our agency finds for your child, you will be assigned a Match Support Specialist from our staff. The Match Support Specialist serves as your agency liaison and will become your primary contact throughout your entire match.

Match Support Specialists oversee the match as a pair, but also meet individually with you, your child, and the Big. It is their responsibility to assess the match in areas of relationship development, child safety, activities, youth outcomes and of course how much fun everyone is having!

They are available every day to help you with any assistance you may need. Our Match Support Specialists can be reached via email, phone calls, or text. Please contact them any time with emergencies and at reasonable times with non-emergencies.

**Your Match Support Specialist must meet with you every month** to discuss how things are going. They will ask questions, listen, and give feedback. These official monthly meetings will be conducted either in-person, over video chat, or in a phone call. Official monthly meetings may not occur over email or texting. Again, feel free to reach out to your Match Support Specialist outside of your monthly meetings if you have questions, need support, or have concerns.

**A lack of communication with your Match Support Specialist may result in your child's match being ended.**

The following are topics that your Match Support Specialist will cover at your meetings, and things we hope you'll bring up if necessary:

- Changes in match development.
- Changes in the child's development or behavior.
- Activity and enrichment ideas.
- Milestones or accomplishments in the match.
- Child Safety.
- Assistance with volunteer communication.
- Changes in contact information.
- Any questions, concerns, or issues.

# PROGRAM POLICIES: COVID-19 SAFETY POLICIES



- **ONE:**  
Matches may not meet in person if any party feels unwell. In the event of illness, matches should either reschedule or meet virtually.
- **TWO:**  
Any Big or family who contracts Covid-19, or comes into direct contact with someone who has tested positive, should not meet in person. That week's meeting should be rescheduled or conducted virtually.
- **THREE:**  
Matches are encouraged to engage in activities that are outdoors and that allow for physical distancing. When physical distancing is not possible, such as when traveling in a car, mask use is strongly encouraged.

**NOTE:** Although our BBBS Covid guidelines have loosened, it is important to remember that any member of the match may still feel more comfortable adhering to a strict set of safety guidelines. All Bigs should check in with their Little's family and discuss any precautions that the family or the Big may want the match to continue to take.

# PROGRAM POLICIES:

## HOME VISITS & CAR SAFETY



### The Little may visit the volunteer's home only if:

- The 3 month waiting period has passed.
- The volunteer has obtained verbal permission from child's parent/caregiver.
- The Match Support Specialist has conducted a home assessment of the volunteer's home.
- All Covid safety related policies are followed by the match and all members of the volunteer's household.
- The visits are no more than twice per month and no more than 2 hours in length.
- The match has a specific planned activity for the meeting.
- The volunteer chooses one or two common spaces to spend time in.
- Time is spent outside as much as possible.
- If a volunteer has firearms in their home, they must be stored in a location that is totally inaccessible by their Little, in a room where match activities do not take place.
- No overnight visits are permitted.

### Car safety policies:

- Bigs are required to observe all traffic laws, and make sure your child is properly seated and restrained at all times in the car.
- If your child requires a booster seat, please provide one. Let your Match Support Specialist know if you cannot provide one or if your child required any other special considerations in the car.
- Bigs are not permitted to use their cell phone while driving, other than GPS. No texting or talking on the phone.
- Matches may only travel outside of Tompkins County after a 3 month waiting period and with permission from the parent/guardian.
- Littles and Bigs must wear their seatbelt at all times.
- Mask use is encouraged in the car.
- Motorcycles and mopeds may not be used to transport Littles.
- Public transportation may be used with parental permission. This includes: Buses, taxis, Uber, Lyft.

# PROGRAM POLICIES:

## MEDICAL POLICIES



Your child's Big will do everything in their power to keep your child safe from harm. In the event your child is hurt while with their Big:

### For Emergencies:

- The Big will call emergency medical personnel if necessary.
- The Big will make every attempt to reach you immediately, so that you can be informed and make any medical decisions.

### Note:

- Please be available when your child is with their Big and provide any extra contact information that you can. In the event of an emergency, the Big will need to get in touch with you right away.
- Please provide all necessary information about your child's health needs. This will help empower the Big to seek medical care for your child in the event of an emergency when you cannot be reached.

### For non-emergency injuries such as cuts, scrapes, bumps, and splinters:

- The Big will provide basic first aid. This includes things like band-aids and ice packs.
- Only volunteers with valid Red Cross certifications should do more than the above basic first aid.
- The Big will inform you of any injuries.

### Note:

- Volunteers are not permitted to administer medication of any kind to a child unless the child's life is in danger.
- Children may self-administer asthma inhalers if necessary.
- Children may carry an epi-pen if necessary. Volunteers matched with such children will receive training from the agency.



## PROGRAM POLICIES:

### SOCIAL MEDIA, SPENDING MONEY, CONFIDENTIALITY, WITHHOLDING CONTACT



#### SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY:

- Bigs may not introduce their Little to any social media platforms.
- Bigs must obtain permission from you before connecting with them on any social media platform or web based apps.
- Bigs must obtain permission from you before posting any pictures containing the Little on any social media platforms or web based apps.

#### SPENDING MONEY:

- Littles are not permitted to ask Bigs for money, or to buy them things.
- The Big may choose to spend money, but if so, we ask that they do it:
  - Sparingly. The majority of outings should be spending-free.
  - On special occasions such as a birthday or match anniversary.
  - In a way that provides an experience such as a museum or an enriching activity.
- Parents are permitted, but not required, to help the Big pay for any match activities.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY:

- Bigs are trained to respect the confidentiality and privacy of your household.
- Bigs will be speaking with BBBS staff members about the development of the relationship and about the safety of your child.

#### WITHHOLDING CONTACT WITH THE BIG:

- Please do not ever withhold your child's time or contact with their Big as a form of punishment for misbehavior or poor school performance. Your child needs to know that their Big will always be there for them.

# PROGRAM POLICIES:

## DRUG, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO USE, ENDING THE MATCH



### DRUG, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO USE:

- Volunteers are prohibited from using or possessing illegal drugs.
- Volunteers are prohibited from consuming alcohol or legal drugs in the presence of their Little or on the same day that they are scheduled to meet with their Little.
- Volunteers are not permitted to use tobacco products, such as cigarettes, vaporizers or chewing tobacco, in the presence of their Littles.
- Volunteers who use tobacco products, alcohol or legal drugs are advised to conceal all evidence of such use from their Little, and ensure the child does not come into contact with any evidence of such use during match outings, car trips and visits to the volunteer's home.

### MATCH CLOSURE/ENDING THE MATCH:

- Volunteers commit to being Bigs for at least one full year from the date they meet. Some volunteers choose to stay longer, but 1 year is what they are promising to you and your child.
- When it is time for the match to end, we will work with everyone to facilitate the closure process and make sure that the match ends positively.
- If at any time you feel that the match needs to end, ***please contact your Match Support Specialist first***, before taking any action or discussing it with the volunteer. Any time a match ends, it's very important that our agency be closely involved so that we can help to facilitate a positive transition for your child.
- Some families and Bigs choose to stay in contact even after the official BBBS match is over. That decision is up to you and the Big, but once the BBBS match has been officially closed, our program will no longer be providing support and will no longer assume any responsibility for the match.