



VOLUNTEER PROGRAM POLICIES

A Program of the Ithaca Youth Bureau
1 James L. Gibbs Dr. Ithaca, NY 14850
607-273-8364
www.bbbsithaca.org



EXPECTATIONS FOR BIGS & PARENTS



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

- 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.

CONTACT US:



Joe Gibson,
Program Coordinator
273-8364 ext. 2144
jgibson@cityofithaca.org



Molly Bargar,
Client Relations Specialist
273-8364 ext. 2156
mbargar@cityofithaca.org



Nathalie Bessou,
Match Support Specialist
273-8364 ext. 2161
nbessou@cityofithaca.org



David Menard,
Match Support Specialist
273-8364 ext. 2155
dmenard@cityofithaca.org

Website:
<http://www.bbbsithaca.org/>

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PROGRAM POLICIES:

PROMOTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR



We want our Bigs to create a positive environment where misbehavior is not an issue. There may be some initial testing of boundaries in the beginning of your relationship, but most negative behavior can be avoided by following a few guidelines.

- Stay focused on your Little. Avoid distractions. Listen and engage actively in conversations.
- Keep yourselves busy. Have a plan and a back up plan. Collect activity ideas together for future use.
- Recognize and acknowledge their good behavior when you see it. Offer genuine and specific recognition.

When negative behavior occurs:

- Avoid taking it personally. Instead, treat it as a teachable moment.
- Provide advice, suggestions, and guidance. Do not punish or discipline.
- Avoid long lectures. Address issues with short discussions that address the behavior, not the child.
- Talk with your Match Support Specialist and/or the parent/guardian for guidance if behavior becomes a problem.

Remember, negative behavior is often a sign that the child needs you in their life more than ever. Seek assistance, try a different solution, but don't give up on your Little.

PROGRAM POLICIES:

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES



Staying in touch with your Little's parent/guardian is very important to the success of match relationships. Please observe the following guidelines when communicating with your Little's family.

- Learn the preferred way of communication (i.e. phone, text, email) of your Little's parent/guardian and adapt to it if necessary.
- Ask your Little's parent/guardian when works best for them to communicate according to their schedule (i.e. can they communicate during their work hours etc.)
- Always keep the parent/guardian in the loop regarding plans, even if you communicate directly with your Little on their own device. This will ensure that you have verbal permission each week for the activity you have planned, as well as help make sure your Little doesn't miss your meeting.
- You should be as consistent as possible every week with your match outings, but if you must miss one:
 - Do so for only valid, unavoidable reasons.
 - Give the family as much notice as possible.
 - Make up the time at a later date and make sure your Little knows when they'll see you again.

PROGRAM POLICIES:

COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR MATCH SUPPORT SPECIALIST



Once you have approved the Little that our agency finds for you, 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 Little, and the parent/guardian. 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 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 family communication.
- Changes in contact information.
- Setting goals for you and your Little.

PROGRAM POLICIES:

COVID-19 SAFETY POLICIES



Please note that while all match participants are expected to follow these rules, it is the Big's responsibility to make sure the rules are being followed by all parties.

- 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/guardian.
- 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 not permitted to use their cell phone while driving, other than GPS. No texting or talking on the phone.
- Bigs are required to observe all traffic laws, and make sure the Little is properly seated and restrained at all times in the car.
- 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.
- You are the only person permitted to drive your Little.
- 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



MEDICAL EMERGENCIES:

Volunteers must be prepared to respond if their Little is injured or becomes seriously ill during a match outing. Please follow these guidelines in case of such situations.

If your Little is injured or becomes ill and requires professional medical treatment, you must first decide if an ambulance is necessary.

● If YES

- Call the ambulance first and give medical personnel all relevant information.
- Inform the parent/guardian immediately (after calling the ambulance).
- Stay with the child until a parent/guardian or Match Support Specialist arrives.
- Inform your Match Support Specialist and give them all details as soon as possible.
- When possible, obtain any names and contact information of anyone who may have witnessed the incident occur.

● If NO

- Inform the parent/guardian first and let them decide what to do.
- If the parent/guardian cannot be reached, take the child to the emergency room.
- Stay with the child until a parent/guardian or Match Support Specialist arrives.
- Inform your Match Support Specialist and give them all details as soon as possible.
- When possible, obtain any names and contact information of anyone who may have witnessed the incident occur.

MEDICAL NON-EMERGENCIES:

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

- Provide basic first aid if you are comfortable doing so. This includes things like band-aids and ice packs. Please wear gloves and take all safety precautions.
- Only volunteers with valid Red Cross certifications should do more than the above basic first aid.
- Always inform the parent/guardian of any minor injuries. Reports to your Match Support Specialist are not necessary for minor injuries.

● 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.
- Some children may have severe allergies and carry an epi-pen. If this is the case, you will be informed beforehand and offered training.

PROGRAM POLICIES:

MATCH SAFETY



As a volunteer with our agency, you assume responsibility for your Little's safety during your match meetings. If you act in accordance with our safety guidelines, your Little will be safe and you will have protection from personal liability. If you are found to be negligent in your adherence to the following safety guidelines, you can be held personally liable for unsafe practices or injuries to your Little.

- Always bring your Match ID card on match outings and enter all contact information into your phone.

When choosing match activities:

- Choose activities that are obviously known to be safe for children.
- Do not allow yourself to be talked into activities that are clearly unsafe.
- Always get permission from the parent/guardian and BBBS staff if you are unsure about an activity's safety. (Do this *before* you engage in the activity)
- Get to know your Little's family's safety rules and adhere to them just like an agency policy.
- Do not engage in any activities involving firearms or other weapons.
- View only age-appropriate movies, television, and games with your Little (follow the ratings.)
- You may only swim where there are certified lifeguards on duty. You may *never* swim at any of the gorges or other illegal places.
 - Prior written permission must be obtained before swimming elsewhere (e.g. a personal pool). This also pertains to boating and other water related activities. Life jackets must be worn for boating.
- Overnight visits are not permitted.
- Matches may only travel outside of Tompkins County after a 3 month waiting period and with permission from the parent/guardian.

Safety tips for in-person match meetings:

- Accompany your Little at all times in public places.
- Make a mental note of what your Little is wearing when you go out.
- Choose a location to meet up if you get separated.
- Always tell the parent/guardian where you are going and update them if your plans change.
- Give appropriate privacy in public restrooms, but don't go too far.
- If you fear your Little is lost, contact your Match Support Specialist and the police immediately.
- Get to know the adults in your Little's life.
- Talk to your Little about personal safety and ensure they act safely during outings.

PROGRAM POLICIES:

SOCIAL MEDIA, SPENDING MONEY, CONFIDENTIALITY



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY:

- Bigs may not introduce their Little to any social media platforms. Additionally, Bigs should think carefully about connecting with them on such platforms.
- Bigs must obtain permission from their Little's parent/guardian before connecting with them on any social media platform or web based apps.
- Bigs must obtain permission from their Little's parent/guardian before posting any pictures containing the Little on any social media platforms or web based apps.

SPENDING MONEY:

The quality of the time you invest with your Little is more important than the amount of money you spend. That's why we don't encourage spending a lot of money on your outings. The goal of the relationship is to help your Little see the world through a different lens so you can inspire your Little to become something they never thought possible.

- Littles are not permitted to ask Bigs for money, or to buy them things.
- If you choose to spend money on match outings, please do so:
 - Sparingly. Make the majority of your outings 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.
- We have a lot of supplies available for match activities including, games, arts and crafts, and more. Check with your Match Support Specialist before you buy.
- Remember that the first few months of your relationship establishes match expectations Engaging in free or low cost activities in the early part of your match will help set you up for success.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

- You must respect the confidentiality and privacy of your Little and their family.
- You will be speaking with BBBS staff members about the development of the relationship and about the safety of your Little.

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 must commit to being Bigs for at least one full year from the date they meet their Little. Some volunteers choose to stay longer, but it is not an obligation. After 1 year, you will be asked if you'd like to continue meeting with your Little or end the match.
- 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 family. 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 the 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 family, 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.