

Welcome to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central New Mexico!

We believe that every child deserves a chance to see their potential realized. By matching children one-to-one with adult mentors (or Bigs), Big Brothers Big Sisters defends that potential. We are working to change lives today, and forever.

As a guardian, you recognize the potential of your child better than anyone. By giving them the opportunity to be part of Big Brothers Big Sisters, you're starting them down a path to an even brighter, more promising future.

It starts with the right role models. And, Big Brothers Big Sisters is the place to start a relationship with one. For over 100 years, due in large part to private donations, we've been able to recruit, screen, match and support mentoring relationships that have changed the lives of hundreds of thousands of young people across the country — one Little at a time. We partner with parents/guardians, volunteers and others in the community.

A study* for Big Brothers Big Sisters found that kids matched with a Big Brother or Big Sister:

- Are more confident
- Are more likely to steer clear of drugs and alcohol
- Do better in school
- Get along better with their family and friends
- Feel better about themselves

*Tierney, J.P., Grossman, J.B., and Resch, N.L. (1995) Making a Difference: An Impact Study of Big Brothers Big Sisters. Philadelphia: Public/Private

Inclusion Policies

We believe that all children, families, and volunteers for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central New Mexico should be included for consideration in our program in respect of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status or disability.

Please Note: Big Brothers Big Sisters reserves the right to accept or deny participants, or close a match at any time.

Mentoring Programs

Big Brothers Big Sisters offers two primary mentoring programs: community-based, in which a Big and a Little spend time in the community doing activities; and site-based, where the Big visits with the Little at their school or another specified facility. You'll discuss the options and the best choices for your schedule and for your Little's needs early in the enrollment process. Here's a brief overview of our different programs.

Community Based Mentoring

Big Brother and Big Sister volunteers provide children and youth – our "Littles" individualized time and attention on a regular basis. Bigs and Littles will typically meet 2 – 4 times a month, either virtually or in-person, for a total of 4 – 8 hours monthly.

During unstructured weekly or bi-weekly outings, filled with conversations and shared activities, they develop a relationship that helps youth manage the every-day challenges that are part of growing-up.

By spending time with their Big, children gain new skills, and explore new interests. Through this mentorship, they will expand their experiences.

Site-Based Mentoring

Volunteers offer children and youth individualized time and attention on a consistent basis, with the venue being the child's school or other facility rather than out in the community. Volunteers and children meet regularly during the school year – typically each week. During the summer, they may exchange letters, email messages or phone calls, or attend an agency-sponsored event. Some matches grow and become Community-Based Matches so they can meet more often.

mentor2.0

Our mentor2.0 program is a site-based option specific to high school students. We are currently partnered with Amy Biehl High School and South Valley Academy. Big Brothers Big Sisters technology-enriched mentoring program. Volunteers e-mail with their mentees once a week guided by curriculum prompts and meet with the student monthly at the school. When matches continue from one school year to the next, volunteers experience the satisfaction of watching their mentees achieve success in high school.



Your Role

We need you to be an active Partner. When it comes to the future of our children and the well-being of our communities, we're all in this together. So it should come as no surprise that we need the parents and guardians of Littles to be involved every step of the way, starting with the initial match.

Not only will you provide information about your child's strengths and needs, but you'll also approve the selection of the Big Brother or Big Sister. Once the match is made, you remain closely involved in many ways, including:

- **Know about each activity and give your approval in advance.** When your child returns home from an activity with their Big, it's very important that you talk openly with them about the activity. We'll talk with you about your observations and conversations during our monthly conversations.
- **Talk with Match Support monthly.** We will contact you monthly to get your point of view about the match, observations and questions. This monthly contact is required - it allows us to provide support, and offer ideas if problems arise. During these monthly contacts, you or your child may be required to complete assessments or surveys. Note that for safety purposes, we will suspend or terminate any match where consistent conversation is not occurring.
- **Call us!** If you need help locating resources, are moving, have a joy to share, have safety concerns or need to talk about the match, call your Match Support Team.
- **Respect boundaries, and follow all policies, procedures and ground-rules.** We educate volunteers, families and Littles about the importance of focusing on what this match is and what it isn't. For example, we ask all parents to remember that the Big is a volunteer and should not be asked to perform any services for the family, buy clothes or supplies, be asked to take siblings on outings, bring the child home to an empty house, and so on. Without exception, it is critical to safety and healthy relationship development that you adhere to our rules, as do our volunteers.
- **Support your child's mentoring relationship.** The time your child spends with their Big can be an invaluable experience. Committing to scheduled times, talking with your child about their experience, promoting activities and events offered by the agency, getting to know their Big, and talking regularly with your Match Support Team are great ways to be an active partner.

Safety

The safety of your child is our number one priority – no exceptions. While our staff carefully screens each volunteer, we need your help to make sure the relationship is healthy and the volunteer is making good judgments about your child's safety on outings. Here's how you can further promote safety:

- If you are not comfortable with an activity that your Big suggests, you are encouraged to not approve.
- When your Big takes your child out, they should always stay with your child and not leave them alone or with someone else.
- Your child's Big is not permitted to use alcohol or other drugs before or during activities.
- Your child is not permitted to use alcohol or other drugs before or during activities.
- Your child's Big is not permitted to physically discipline your child. If your child exhibits inappropriate or problematic behaviors during an outing, our Bigs are advised to call you, end the outing early and return the child to your care.
- If an activity involves changing clothes (e.g. swimming), make sure they bring a change of clothes with them, and there should be separate changing and showering places.
- Although not required, volunteers might want to buy an occasional gift for your child. They should ask your advice about this first.
- Volunteers should not engage in tickling, wrestling, giving backrubs/massages, taking naps together, piggy-back rides, or asking a child to sit on their lap. We tell volunteers not to initiate hugs with their Littles. If you know your child will want to hug their Big, and you are comfortable with them doing so, please establish this boundary with their Big early on in the match.
- During transportation, all safety laws must be followed, such as wearing seatbelts.
- You must be present when your child is dropped off after an outing. Bigs are not permitted to drop off your child if no approved adult is present.
- Showing age-inappropriate videos, misusing social media, pornography or sexual material is not acceptable and is grounds for match termination. Speak with the Big and your Match Support Specialist right away if you see or suspect anything inappropriate.
- If you have any questions or concerns, talk to your Match Support Specialist.

Here are some patterns that you should discuss with your Match Support Specialist:

- Your child's Big wants to spend more and more time with your child.
- Your child's Big often invites other children to join them in activities.
- Activities always take place in private settings such as a volunteer's home.
- Your child's Big takes an excessive amount of pictures or videos of your child.
- The Big becomes involved with your family, buys gifts for your child or provides services beyond the scope of this program.

Duty to Report: Child abuse and Neglect

Big Brothers Big Sisters staff members are required to report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child. Our staff and volunteers are trained to respond if a child tells them about abuse. A report will be filed according to State and Agency protocol. Reports are made with authorities and Children, Youth and Families Department at **#SAFE (#7233) or 1-855-333-SAFE (7233)**.

If you have any further questions or would like more information on violence prevention, please don't hesitate to ask our staff for additional resources.

***If at any time you suspect that your child is being harmed, either within our program or elsewhere, please contact Big Brothers Big Sisters' staff.**

Indicators of Child Abuse and Neglect

There are many indicators of child abuse. Some indicators are physical and more easily seen, while others are behavioral. No one indicator necessarily reflects an abusive situation, however, any one indicator can point to it. Be sensitive to changes in your child. Check with your Match Support Specialist if you have a question.

Physical Abuse

- **Physical Indicators:** Unexplained bruises, burns, fractures, lacerations, and abrasions.
- **Behavioral Indicators:** Wary of adult contacts; apprehensive when other children cry; behavioral extremes; aggressiveness or withdrawal; feels deserving of the punishment; exhibits inappropriate, precocious maturity or unusually solicitous of adults; frightened by parents; afraid to go home; reports injury by parents.

Physical Neglect

- **Physical Indicators:** Consistent hunger; poor hygiene; inappropriate dress; consistent lack of supervision, especially in dangerous activities or for long periods; unattended physical problems, dental or medical needs; abandonment.
- **Behavioral Indicators:** Begging, stealing food; extended stays at school (early arrival and late departure); constant fatigue, listlessness or falling asleep; alcohol or drug abuse; delinquency; states there is no caretaker.

Sexual Abuse

- **Physical Indicators:** Difficulty in walking or sitting; torn, stained or bloody underclothing; pain or itching in genital area; pain on urination; bruises or bleeding; venereal disease; pregnancy.
- **Behavioral Indicators:** Unwilling to change for gym or participate in physical education class; withdrawal, fantasy or infantile behavior; bizarre, sophisticated or unusual sexual behavior or knowledge; poor peer relationships; delinquent or runaway; reports sexual assault by an adult.

Our Volunteers/Bigs

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Central New Mexico requires each volunteer to complete an extensive screening process that includes:

- Completion of a formal written application
- An in-person or virtual interview
- Layered background checks and reference checks
- Training
- Continuous monitoring and support by a professionally trained Match Support Specialist

Based on years of extensive research, Big Brothers Big Sisters requires our volunteers to be capable of the following commitments. Our professional staff work with volunteers to ensure these commitments can be met by providing coaching, training and activities to help them develop in their role as a Big.

- Commit to a minimum of one year as a Big
- Commit to spending consistent, significant time with your child each month
- Follow all agency policies, procedures and ground rules. Because child safety is a top priority, we consider violations of policies, procedures, and ground rules to be grounds for match suspension or termination
- Maintain regular communication with Match Support Specialist, including returning all calls and emails. Failure to maintain contact may result in closure of the match
- Participate in required surveys related to the match relationship and youth outcomes
- Complete additional assigned training throughout the duration of the match

What a Big Should Do:	What a Big CANNOT Do:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize friendship and having fun over changing behavior • Have realistic expectations about the Little • Acknowledge that positive impact on the child comes after the relationship is built • Not act like an authoritarian • Decide activities together with Littles • Be patient, consistent, and dependable • Set boundaries and limits • Put a child’s safety and well-being first • Help establish and achieve goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Childcare • Offer Your Family Monetary Assistance • Provide Professional Services • Discipline Your Child • Tutor (although sometimes school-related activities may be part of your time together)
<p>We will work with you to ensure healthy boundaries are established and respected by everyone.</p>	

Enrollment Process

Potential Littles, along with their families, are screened to ensure that our mentoring programs are the best fit for their needs. The next steps in this process include:

- Orientation to Big Brothers Big Sisters Programs
- Completing the Application and Enrollment Forms
- Completing the Guardian Training on Your Child's Personal Safety
- Completing the Parent and Child Interviews

Once your child has been accepted into the program:

- Enrollment Specialists will work to find your child the best possible match. We match based on interests, compatibility, preferences and location. This process can take some time. If you have not heard from us in six months, we will be contacting you to update demographic information and preferences. One of our Enrollment Specialists will contact you when we find a potential match.
- Once all parties agree to a match, a Match Meeting will be scheduled with you, your child, your child's Big, and one of our Specialists. This will be the start of your one-year commitment to your match.
- After the Match Meeting, our Match Support Team oversees the relationship by providing coaching, ensuring safety, assisting in goal-oriented activities, referring services, and addressing Match needs. It is therefore critical for all match parties to treat contact by the Match Support Team as a serious component of match development. Lack of response to Match Support's contacts is grounds for match suspension or termination, which can have detrimental impact on your child.



Match Closure

We know from research on mentoring that when a match closure is unplanned, abrupt, premature, or handled without care and communication, Littles can be left feeling mentally and emotionally hurt. Also, Bigs may be left feeling guilty, sad, or lacking closure.

It may seem odd or even pessimistic to discuss this stage when your child is contemplating or entering a mentoring relationship. However, research shows that when handled in a thoughtful manner, it can be a positive process that allows for reflection and personal growth for both the Big and the Little. This means that you, your child, and your Big, in partnership with your Match Support Specialist, need to actively plan for the end of your child's match, and discuss how to handle match closure.

At the time of closure, Big Brothers Big Sisters will discuss with you, your child, and the Big about the best plan for closing your match relationship with the organization. When a match is closed, Big Brothers Big Sisters officially closes the file and does not continue to provide professional support or guidance to the previously matched parties. At that point, the match is no longer considered an "active" match, or part of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. This means that Big Brothers Big Sisters is no longer responsible for or involved in the relationship.

By this time, your child and their Big have most likely invested a lot into each other and the relationship. During the closure process, it is important that Bigs and Littles celebrate their time together and set plans for the future.

When your match closes, talk to your Match Support Specialist about ways in which you can stay involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters. This may include your child being matched again, but there are many other ways in which you can be involved with the agency. You and your Match Support Specialist should talk about the best options for you and your family.