

## ABOUT VOLUNTEERING

Being a Big Brother or Big Sister is one of the most enjoyable things you'll ever do. Not to mention, one of the most fulfilling. You have the opportunity to help shape a child's future for the better by inspiring positive change and empowering them to achieve what they never dreamed possible. And the best part is, it's a lot of fun. Help start a Little on their path to big things!

### ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Pass a background check
- Have a valid CA drivers license, insurance, and vehicle
- Commit to at least one year in the program
- Big Couples must meet all of the above requirements and be in a relationship of 2+ years.

### Q: What is the minimum time commitment to be a Big?

You'll meet with your Little twice a month as a community mentor.

Together, you decide what you want to do and then your Little gets parent approval. We recommend that you keep a consistent schedule of outings and see each other on a regular basis.

### Q: Do I have to be employed to be a Big?

Volunteers can apply to be a Big if they are retired, in college or graduate school, or do not work outside the home. However, if a volunteer is between jobs we require they be employed at least one month before applying to be a Big.

### Q: Who are the Little Brothers and Little Sisters?

In our Community Based program, Littles generally are initially enrolled between 6 and 16 years old. Youth are enrolled through high school in our Site Based program. We serve all youth, and any child is welcome, including those living in single parent homes, growing up in poverty and coping with parental incarceration.

## **Q: How much does it cost to be a Big?**

The quality of time invested 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 them see the world through a different lens so you can inspire them to become something he never thought possible. If you are going to spend money, we encourage you to seek out low-cost activities, especially in the beginning. Shoot hoops at a local park, play a game together, or share that pizza that you were going to have for lunch anyway. Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies offer donor-supported group activities that are a great way to meet other Bigs and Littles. As a Big, you may also receive notices for free tickets to cultural and sports activities for you both to enjoy.

## **Q: How do you match a Big with a Little?**

We conduct in-depth interviews with the Bigs, Littles, and parents/guardians enrolling in our program so we can get to know all parties and can make the best match! We make matches based on common interests, personalities, preferences, and geography.

## **Q: How far will I have to travel?**

We encourage Bigs in our Site Based program to choose a location they can commute to relatively easily. In our Community Based program we ask if Bigs are willing to drive up to 45 minutes but we try make matches where the Big and Little are within 30 minutes of each other. We recognize that lengthy travel takes up too much time and can undermine the longevity and quality of a match.

## **Q: What kind of background checks do you do?**

All volunteers and employees are subject to background checks that include obtaining references from people who know them well. Also we conduct a National Criminal Background Check at the time of enrollment and every 3 years if match remains active, Federal Background Check, DCFS Child Abuse/Neglect, Public Domain Search, Motor Vehicle Check, and fingerprinting.

## **Q: What kinds of things do Bigs and Littles do together?**

In the Community Based program Bigs and Littles do normal, everyday activities that ultimately build friendships and change lives! Going out for ice cream, going to a baseball game, cooking a meal, visiting a museum – the Big and Little can decide what they want to do together! In the Site Based program fun and engaging activities are led by the Program Coordinator.

## **Q: How old are your Bigs?**

Bigs must be at least 18 years old to mentor in our Community Based program.

## **Q: When would I meet with my Little?**

In the Community-Based Program it's up to you and your Little, but most matches meet on the weekends.

## **Q: Can I be a Big if I don't know much about kids?**

Yes you can! You'll have a dedicated and professionally trained Match Support Specialist who will assist you throughout the duration of the match with helpful suggestions designed to specifically enhance your relationship with your Little.

## **Q: Do Volunteers Receive any kind of Training?**

Yes, you will participate in a volunteer training workshop where we will walk you through situational scenarios to help prepare you for your match. We also have a series of online videos for you to watch to feel completely comfortable in your match. In addition, your match support specialist will be there every step of the way to offer customized support as your match progresses.

## **Q: Does BBBSOC accept LGBTQ volunteers?**

Yes! Big Brothers Big Sisters is committed to ensuring its programs are inclusive to all youth and volunteers. Equality, diversity and inclusiveness are critical components of our mission. We encourage volunteers of all sexual orientations, races, colors, religions, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, ages, national origins, disabilities, marital status or military status to get involved.

## **Q: Can I volunteer even if I have a criminal record?**

We handle this on a case-by-case basis. It is important that you disclose this to us and address it fully. In some instances an offense may not be an obstacle because it is minor or long ago. In other instances, for example a case that is still open, it is a disqualifier.

## **Q: Are there residency requirements to be a Big?**

Yes. All volunteers either must be a legal US resident for at least 12 months.

**Q: What outcome areas will I focus on with my Little?**

In both the Community Based and Site Based programs, Bigs and Littles set goals around three outcome areas: Educational Achievement (improving attitudes about school, improving grades, addressing truancy, discussing career aspirations, etc), Avoidance of Risky Behavior (peer pressure, drug and alcohol use, gangs, making healthy choices), and Socio-Emotional Competency (developing healthy peer relationships, self-confidence, etc).



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