



Big Brothers Big Sisters.

OF THE MIDLANDS

THE PARENT/GUARDIAN HANDBOOK



MISSION

Create and support one-to-one mentoring relationships that ignite the power and promise of youth.

VISION

All youth achieve their full potential.

ABOUT US

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands began in 1959 with a small group of men who became mentors to boys who needed a positive male figure in their lives. Today, we serve youth between the ages of 7 and 21 across the seven county Omaha/Council Bluffs metro area. Bigs, Littles and their families come from all walks of life. Every youth in our program has a personal desire to have a mentor, as well as a parent/guardian who feels they would benefit from having a mentor. What Bigs have in common is a willingness to support a youth and have some fun.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands serves approximately 1,000 youth in the metro area every year. Our local agency is one of the most successful of the national organization's nearly 300 affiliates. The agency has received many accolades including Big Brothers Big Sisters of America's 2017 Mid-Large Agency of the Year, 2017 Pinnacle Award, 2018 Board of the Year, 2019 Mid-Large Agency of the Year and *The NonProfit Times* named us "Best Small Nonprofit to Work For" in 2017.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands is one of the fastest-growing affiliates in the country – while not compromising on the quality of our services.



PROGRAMS

The **Community-Based Mentoring (CBM)** program serves youth ages 7-21 by matching them with a caring, positive adult role model. The youth and mentor meet in the community and spend time doing different activities they both enjoy. The Big and Little commit to meeting for a minimum of 4 hours in 2-4 outings per month for a minimum of 12 months.

Mentors can be a Big Brother, Big Sister or Big Couple (married couple or two individuals who live together and have been in a committed relationship for three or more years). This sets us apart from other mentoring programs.

Within our Community-Based Mentoring program, we serve some specific populations of youth. We have additional programming for these specific populations:

Bigs in Blue:

Bigs in Blue is a program focused on building relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve. The program provides each youth with a one-to-one mentoring relationship with a law enforcement officer and, in doing so, builds a bridge between the community and law enforcement.

Foster Care:

Youth in foster care are among our most vulnerable youth. Because of the disruption in their lives and the loss of support networks, foster care youth need many things, but perhaps most important, they need caring, supportive adults to guide and nurture them.

Latino Mentoring:

Latino Mentoring provides Latino youth with a caring Big Brother, Big Sister or Big Couple who can enrich their lives culturally, socially and academically, and support them by helping them reach their potential through one-to-one mentoring friendships. These youth may have Spanish speaking parents. If so, the match is supported by bilingual staff.

LGBTQ+ Mentoring:

We recognize the unique challenges facing youth of the LGBTQ+ community. One-to-one mentoring relationships can help LGBTQ+ youth face these challenges and promote personal and educational outcomes.

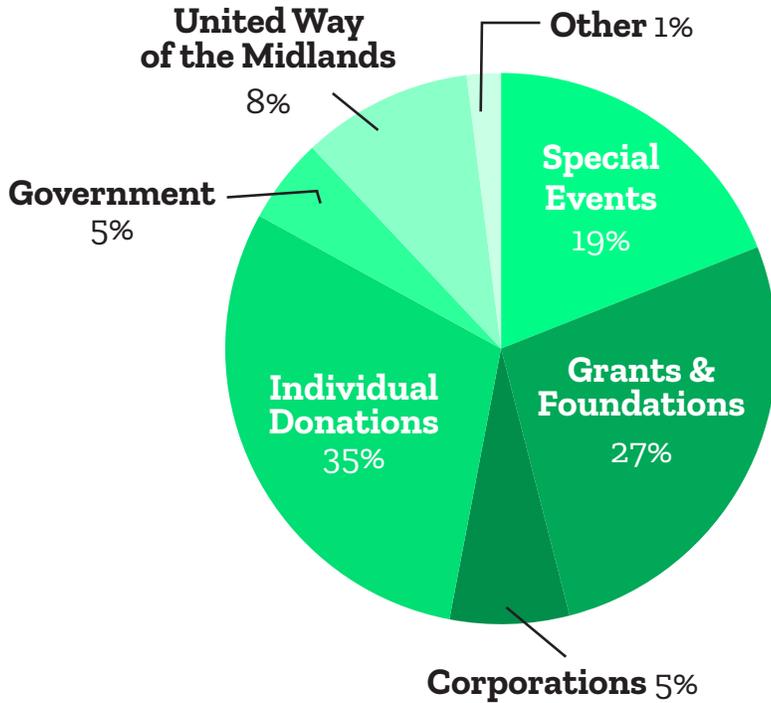
Mentoring Youth of Incarcerated Family Members:

The youth in this program have one or both parents currently incarcerated. Bigs in this program can help by being their friend and providing stability to their Little.

WE SERVE 7 COUNTIES



CURRENT SOURCES OF FUNDING



All funds raised in the Omaha/Council Bluffs metro stay in the Omaha/Council Bluffs metro to benefit the youth in our community.

WHO ARE OUR BIGS?

Match Type

Big Sister	50%
Big Brother	43%
Big Couple	7%

Age

19-21 years	7%	36-45 years	12%
22-27 years	35%	46-59 years	9%
28-35 years	33%	60+ years	4%

Race/Ethnicity

Caucasian	79%
Hispanic	8%
African American	7%
Asian	4%
Other	2%
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	<1%

Referral Source

Media/Special Event	20%	Fraternity/Sorority	6%
Family/Friend	18%	Board/Staff	5%
Self	18%	Other	4%
Weblink	15%	College Partner	3%
Other Big	10%	Service Organization	1%

Education Level

Bachelor's Degree	42%	Juris Doctorate	3%
High School Grad/GED	24%	PHD	2%
Master's Degree	22%	Doctor of Medicine	<1%
Associate's Degree	6%	Some College	<1%

LITTLE ELIGIBILITY & EXPECTATIONS



What's a Little?

A Little is a high-potential youth between the ages of 7 and 21 who chooses to be in the program. Littles come from all different familial, ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Eligibility Requirements to Enroll a Youth as a Little:

- Youth must be 7-14 years old at the time of enrollment
- Parent/Guardian and youth must live in our service area (in Nebraska: Douglas, Sarpy, Cass, Washington or Saunders counties and in Iowa: Pottawattamie or Mills counties)
- Parent/Guardian and youth agree to a 12-month commitment and the parent/guardian allows their child to be available to meet 2-4 times a month for a minimum of 4 hours per month
- Complete an in-home interview that allows us to gather information on your child to determine if the program is a good fit for you and your child

What am I Expected to do as a Parent/Guardian?

- Commit to supporting your child's match for a minimum of 12 months with the availability to meet 2-4 times per month
- Take the initiative to schedule outings and keep in contact with your child's Big
- Adhere to the 50/50 policy – you and your child's Big are to share the cost of activities
- Great communication between you, the Big and your Big Brothers Big Sisters Match Support Specialist is very important to ensure a successful match

TIPS TO SUCCESS



Tips to Build and Maintain a Positive Match for your Child...

Parents/guardians are experts on their children and the most important allies of a match. Here are some tips for a successful match.

Talk with your child after each outing to see how they feel about the match.

The number one goal when matching your child with a Big is to ensure they have a positive experience and a great time. Asking your child after each outing how they feel is going to help you understand the match better.

Be open and honest with your Match Support Specialist about concerns or questions.

Your Match Support Specialist is here to help. Being open and honest with them will allow them to help guide the match, if there are any concerns or issues.

Do not cancel outings, unless absolutely necessary.

It's important for any youth to receive one-to-one attention. Following through with the planned outing is essential when building any type of relationship. If rescheduling is necessary, take the initiative and make a phone call to talk with the Big about it.

Let the Big know what's going on at home and school...the positive and the negatives.

Keeping the Big informed about your child's school life can make them feel more involved and will give them some insight about what's going on outside of the match relationship.

Talk with the Big at pick-up and drop-off.

Keep informed about what's going on. To protect your child's confidentiality and trust, a phone call later with the Big would allow you and the Big to communicate about sensitive issues that either of you want/should address.

Express interest in the Big's life.

Ask the Big about their life and how they are doing. Showing you care about their personal life makes a Big feel appreciated!



Help make a list of activities your child would like to do.

It is sometimes challenging to think of outing ideas, especially while the Big is getting to know your child. Be creative. Free activities are best. Inform the Big of activities and events the match can do around your neighborhood.

Remember, the Big is a volunteer!

Provide positive feedback to the Big and show appreciation frequently.

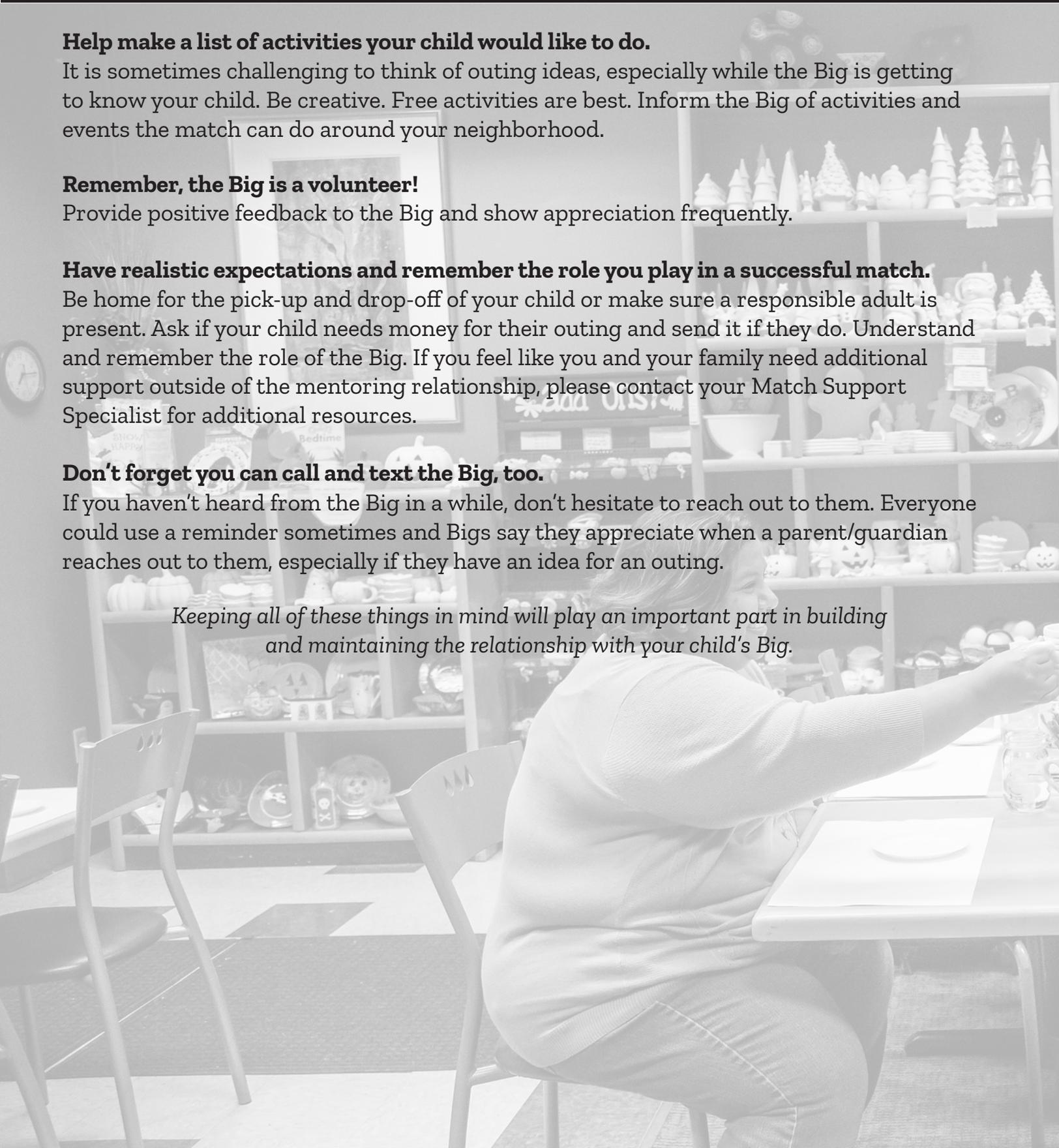
Have realistic expectations and remember the role you play in a successful match.

Be home for the pick-up and drop-off of your child or make sure a responsible adult is present. Ask if your child needs money for their outing and send it if they do. Understand and remember the role of the Big. If you feel like you and your family need additional support outside of the mentoring relationship, please contact your Match Support Specialist for additional resources.

Don't forget you can call and text the Big, too.

If you haven't heard from the Big in a while, don't hesitate to reach out to them. Everyone could use a reminder sometimes and Bigs say they appreciate when a parent/guardian reaches out to them, especially if they have an idea for an outing.

Keeping all of these things in mind will play an important part in building and maintaining the relationship with your child's Big.



BIG ELIGIBILITY & EXPECTATIONS



What's a Big?

Bigs are regular people. They have the desire to make a positive impact in a youth's life.

What should I expect from a Big?

- An emphasis on friendship rather than changing the behavior of your child
- To be consistent and dependable
- Patience
- A focus on fun
- To acknowledge that a positive impact on a youth comes after the relationship is built
- To have realistic expectations
- To put your child's safety and well-being first
- To set a good example for your child
- To share their strengths and recognize their flaws...Bigs are not perfect

How will Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands help me after my child is matched?

Once your child is matched with their Big, a Match Support Specialist from the agency will be in contact with you on a monthly basis to provide assistance and give feedback. Anytime you are unsure about what to do or how to handle a situation, your Match Support Specialist will be there to help.

Monthly contacts with your Match Support Specialist via telephone will include:

- Ensuring all parties are safe and happy with the match
- Problem solving and goal setting
- Brainstorming activity ideas
- Providing feedback from the Big

MATCHING PROCESS



Matching Process for Littles:

1. The parent/guardian calls to inquire about the program and an interview is scheduled with an Enrollment & Match Coordinator.
2. The Enrollment & Match Coordinator goes to the youth's home and completes an interview with the youth and their parent/guardian to assess the youth's personality, interests and needs. This also helps determine if a youth is eligible for our program. Child safety training is completed with the youth and parent/guardian during the home interview.
3. Any school or counseling reports are sent to the appropriate party, so the agency gets information on the youth's behaviors and needs from outside parties.
4. Once all paperwork is completed and acceptance is determined, we match the youth with the best possible volunteer, based upon parent/guardian and youth preferences, youth and volunteer interest, personalities, etc.

Matching Process for Bigs:

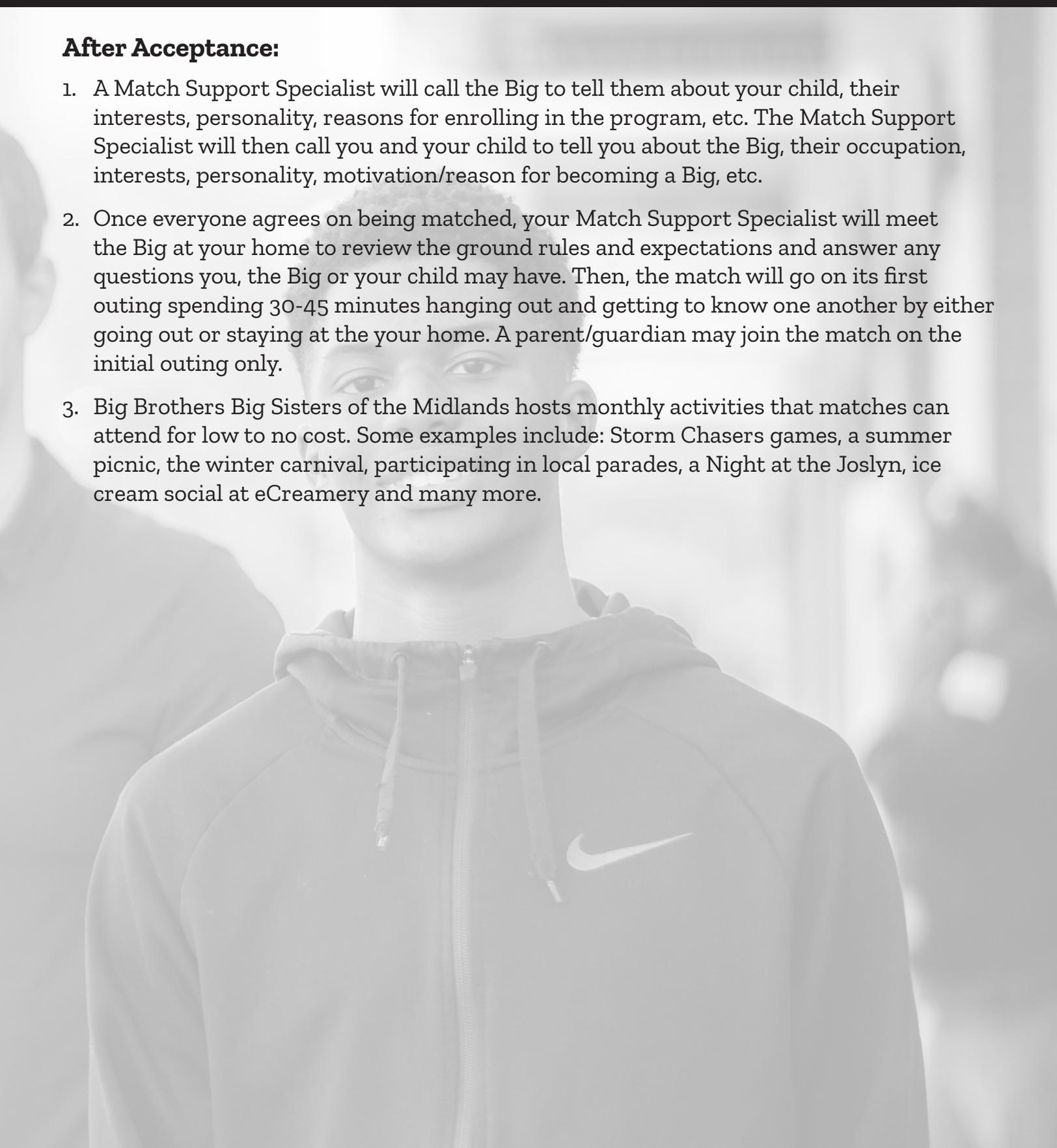
1. Attend an information session.
2. Complete application.
3. Provide names and contact information for references.
4. Authorize background screening.
5. Provide copies of a valid driver's license and current car insurance.
6. Complete mandatory two-hour training session.
7. Complete in-home interview with an Enrollment & Match Coordinator.

Once these steps are completed and the volunteer is approved, they will be matched with a youth based on their preferences and those of the parent/guardian and youth.



After Acceptance:

1. A Match Support Specialist will call the Big to tell them about your child, their interests, personality, reasons for enrolling in the program, etc. The Match Support Specialist will then call you and your child to tell you about the Big, their occupation, interests, personality, motivation/reason for becoming a Big, etc.
2. Once everyone agrees on being matched, your Match Support Specialist will meet the Big at your home to review the ground rules and expectations and answer any questions you, the Big or your child may have. Then, the match will go on its first outing spending 30-45 minutes hanging out and getting to know one another by either going out or staying at the your home. A parent/guardian may join the match on the initial outing only.
3. Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands hosts monthly activities that matches can attend for low to no cost. Some examples include: Storm Chasers games, a summer picnic, the winter carnival, participating in local parades, a Night at the Joslyn, ice cream social at eCreamery and many more.



COMMUNITY-BASED MENTORING GROUND RULES



- 1.** A Match Support Specialist will be assigned to each match. The Match Support Specialist will be in touch with all parties on a monthly basis to monitor the progress of the match and administer surveys. The Big, parent/guardian and Little MUST stay in touch with their Match Support Specialist and notify their Match Support Specialist of any issues with the match or changes in contact information.
- 2.** The Big and Little commit to meeting a minimum of 4 hours in 2-4 outings per month for a minimum of 12 months. Any concerns regarding this commitment must be discussed with their Match Support Specialist as soon as the concerns arise.
- 3.** If all parties agree to continue the match beyond the 12-month commitment, Big Brothers Big Sisters will support the match until the Little turns 21 years old. If any party is considering closure, it is that person's responsibility to inform their Match Support Specialist. No party should just stop communication.
- 4.** The Big will directly speak with the Little's parent/guardian when the Little is picked up and will inform the parent/guardian where they will be going and when they will return. The parent/guardian, or a pre-arranged responsible adult, will be home when the Little returns from an outing with the Big.
- 5.** The first 3-6 months of the match relationship will only be one-to-one outings in the community. After 3 months, the Big can request approval from their Match Support Specialist and the Little's parent/guardian to do an outing at the Big's home or to introduce the Little to a friend or family member. At that time, the Match Support Specialist will review future guidelines for having others on outings or doing activities at the Big's home.
- 6.** The Big cannot take other friends and family members of the Little on outings. The only exception is to allow a sibling of the Little who is enrolled in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands community-based mentoring program to attend an agency activity supervised by Big Brothers Big Sisters staff.
- 7.** The Big is expected to comply with all local, state and federal laws. There is to be no alcohol, drug or tobacco use before meeting or in the presence of the Little.



8. The Big and Little will wear seat belts whenever in a motor vehicle. Littles under the age of 12 must ride in the back seat. Littles up to the age of eight must ride secured in a booster seat provided by the Little's family. The Big will refrain from using a cell phone to make or receive calls, send or receive text messages and will follow all traffic rules and laws while operating a motor vehicle.

9. The Big and Little will respect personal space and avoid inappropriate physical contact (examples include: tickling, wrestling, sitting on laps, backrubs, etc.).

10. Overnight stays are prohibited. No exceptions.

11. A High-Risk Activity Form, signed by the Big and the Little's parent/guardian, must be submitted to Big Brothers Big Sisters prior to the match participating in the high-risk activity.

12. The Big and Little will share the cost of all activities.

13. Gifts are not encouraged, but if the Big would like to give a gift to the Little, the Big must discuss it with their Match Support Specialist and the Little's parent/guardian prior to purchasing or giving the gift.

14. The Big does not become involved in the discipline of the Little. The Big is a mentor, not a parent/guardian.

15. Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands discourages the parent/guardian from keeping the Little from visits with their Big as a means of discipline.

16. Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands reserves the right to suspend or close any match at any time.







Big Brothers Big Sisters.

OF THE MIDLANDS

DEFENDERS OF POTENTIAL

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