

A Top Priority – Child Safety

Children’s safety is our #1 priority. We focus on the child’s safety and well-being throughout the match. We do this by providing:

- Thorough professional screening of volunteers and children.
- Child Safety and Youth Protection information for volunteers, parents/guardians and children.
- Guidelines that establish appropriate boundaries and respect a child's right to feel safe.
- Ongoing BBBS Match Support contact with each party in the match. This helps provide up-to-date information about safety issues and early warnings of potential problems throughout the match relationship.
- The BBBS Match Support Specialist maintains required consistent scheduled contacts with each member of the match party.

As a Big you play a role in supporting the parent/guardian’s primary role of keeping their child safe. Bigs need to model appropriate behavior as well as assume responsibility for their Little’s safety during outings.

Our agency has expectations and guidelines relating to Child Safety & Youth Protection. We expect you to know and follow these guidelines.

If the child gets sick:

- Take the child home and inform the parent/guardian of the child’s symptoms.
- Utilize the emergency contact person/phone number, if necessary.

When using public restrooms:

- Escort the child to any public restroom to ensure safety.
- Cross gender matches-escort the child to the outside door of the restroom.

When riding in motor vehicles:

- General safety rules must be followed.
- Seatbelts must be used and airbag safety guidelines followed, i.e. it is recommended that a child under the age of 13 sit in the back seat.
- Children/youth should be 4’9” tall and/or 90 pounds before sitting in the front seat with airbags.
- The safest place for a child of any age to sit is in the rear seat.

- Supervision and transportation of child:
- Bigs are responsible for the supervision of Littles.
- At no time should the child be left unsupervised or left with someone else during a match activity.
- Other persons are not allowed to transport Littles.

Visiting the Volunteer's home

- There are to be no visits to the Volunteer's home during the first 6 months of the match.

Pet care/control:

- Littles should be carefully introduced to pets. Be aware that Littles may have had no experience with animals.
- Consider the child's fears, allergies, establish boundaries and instruct the child about appropriate care and treatment of a pet.
- Make sure the pet is secured if it does not like children or if the child is afraid of the pet.

When the Big drops the child off at home after an outing:

- He/she will make sure that the child is safely inside the house.
- Create a safety plan at the Introduction

Gift giving:

- Gifts are okay for birthday, holidays, special events or recognition of personal achievements. Cost should be reasonable, not excessive.

Personal boundaries:

- Respect the child's need for personal space and privacy.
- Consult with the parent/guardian before discussing values, sexuality, religion, life choices with a Little.
- Never come between the parent/guardian and child; respect parental role and authority.

Discipline/setting limits:

- Physical discipline is never allowed.
- State expectations for behavior and any boundaries.
- Verbally address behavior concerns, clarify what needs to change or happen.
- If the child does not respond, take the child home and inform the parent/guardian.
- Review child development information and consult with the Match Support Specialist.

Use of alcohol and drugs:

- Alcohol is prohibited before or during a match meeting.
- Alcohol is prohibited during any agency-sponsored event where children are present.
- Illegal drugs are prohibited at all times and use may be grounds for match closure and/or termination from the program.

Overnight Policy:

- It is important that your relationship be given time to develop before an overnight stay occurs. Therefore, the agency requires that mentors wait at least one year before having any overnight visits with their Littles.
- After one year, mentors must seek parental approval before the overnight visit occurs. Bigs are also required to share overnight dates and times with their Match Support Specialist prior to the visits.

Firearms and Weapons Policy:

- The agency requires that mentors must inform BBBSCO of the ownership of weapons or the presence of weapons in the home.
- For purposes of this policy, "weapons" may include, but are not limited to, all firearms, handguns, zip guns, bows and arrows, tasers, stun guns, BB guns, knives (except for kitchen knives or small pocket knives not used or intended for use as a weapon to inflict bodily injury) and explosive devices.

Digital Technology & Social Networking:

- Mentors should ensure that posts, tweets, photos and comments are appropriate and kid-friendly.
- BBBSCO requires its mentors to respect the confidentiality and privacy of the children and families of Big Brothers Big Sisters in every respect, including social networking, whether or not "connected" with their mentee through social media. Mentors must follow these requirements regarding confidentiality on their own and others' social media sites.
 - Written parental permission is required to post, share or tweet photos or videos of their mentee.
 - Never post, share, tweet or tag their mentee's full name, location, city, address, school or other personal information such as where his/her parent/guardian works.
 - Volunteers should not use geo-positioning applications when they are with their mentee.
- Mentors may not initiate or accept an invitation to "connect" or "follow" his/her Little or member of the Little's family on any social media site without written parental permission.