

Working Together

Appendix A

Typical Big Brothers Big Sisters Programs

The following is a list of the typical programs that are provided by most Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies. Each Big Brothers Big Sisters organization has the autonomy to determine which services it will provide. Not all Big Brothers Big Sisters organizations offer every program listed here, and some Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies have branched out into many other types of endeavors not listed here.

Traditional Community Based One-to-One Mentoring (often referred to simply as "Big Brothers Big Sisters")

Big Brothers and Big Sisters are caring adult volunteer mentors who are dedicated to helping in the development of young boys and girls. They are carefully screened and trained, and then matched with Little Brothers or Little Sisters in one-to-one relationships. Little Brothers and Little Sisters are boys and girls typically between the ages of 6 and 16, who would greatly benefit from having the support, guidance, and positive influence of an adult mentor. The "Big" typically spends a few hours a week with his or her "Little", sharing activities in the community that interest them both. The volunteer's minimum commitment is one year, but a valuable friendship and bond may be developed between a Big and Little that could last a lifetime. The Big Brothers Big Sisters agency regularly monitors the match as long as it remains active with the organization.

Couples for Kids

This program is a variation of the "traditional" Big Brother Big Sister program. It matches a screened, trained couple with a child for a unique two-to-one friendship. The children are generally between the ages of 6 and 16. In order for a boy or girl to be matched with a couple, the child (with the permission of his or her guardian) must want to join the Couples for Kids program. Being matched with a couple, (rather than just one adult), can benefit the child immensely by exposing him or her to a caring, respectful adult relationship. The Big Brothers Big Sisters agency regularly monitors the match as long as it remains active with the organization.

In School Mentoring Program

This program matches an adult volunteer (mentor) with a child (mentee) in a school environment. The school is a partner in this program, and allows weekly breaks from regular programming for the child to take part in one-to-one activities with the mentor. Through these weekly activities, the mentor and mentee build a positive friendship, which has been found to strengthen the mentee's self-esteem, school performance and other areas of functioning. The Big Brothers Big Sisters agency and the school regularly monitor the match throughout the school year.

Kids 'n Kops

This program is generally offered to kids on the waiting list for a Big Brother or Big Sister. It is based on a partnership between the local agency and the local police department. Operating as a March Break or summer program, Kids 'N' Kops provides a mini-police academy for children. This group program sees officers volunteer to mentor a group of children by teaching them many aspects of police work. The educational component is combined with a recreational element that integrates fun through sports and games into the weeklong experience. The recreational sessions are supervised by agency staff, police, parents, or other volunteers.

Digital Heroes

The Digital Heroes program is an electronic version of the traditional Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program. The mentor and mentee have one-to-one, regular contact via the Internet. The "e-mentoring" program provides young people with unequalled access to volunteer mentors in a convenient communication, which is appropriately monitored and evaluated. It allows mentors and mentees to communicate across long distances, something which would not be possible in a traditional one-to-one mentoring relationship. It allows youth in rural settings who do not always have access to mentoring relationships to benefit from such an experience. Finally, it allows adults whose schedules or life circumstances do not allow for a traditional mentoring relationship to participate in one that accommodates their situation.

BIG/Bunch

BIG/Bunch is a group mentoring program that was designed for children on the waiting list. In this program, group activities are organized and supervised by adult volunteers. The BIG/Bunch program is suitable for all kids on the waiting list, and also for children who have different needs than those in the one-to-one program

Life Skills

Life Skills Mentoring involves two separate group mentoring programs for adolescent boys and girls respectively. 'Right For Me' is designed for boys between the ages of 11 and 13 who are facing the difficulty of adolescent development. This is a group oriented program, with adult volunteers leading the weekly sessions. Topics of discussion include peer pressure, problem solving skills, body image, alcoholism and careers.

'Life Choices' is the counterpart of 'Right For Me'. It is designed for adolescent girls, and focuses on self esteem development. Led by an adult volunteer, the weekly sessions include topics such as decision making, values, problem solving skills, body image and careers.