



## **POLICIES**

### **Big Brothers Big Sisters of SWLA Mission:**

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

To: Program Volunteers, Parents/Guardians

As Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Louisiana (BBBS of SWLA) enters a new era, one in which we expect to serve more SWLA youth, the reputation of the organization and mentoring in general is being closely examined and celebrated.

A major component of this reputation is based upon the fact that in our commitment to bringing special friendships into the lives of the youth we serve, we do that meeting a standard of service established by our national office, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America.

The following policies reflect some of the areas in which each organization is required to establish procedures to be followed. As an organization that maintains complete compliance with the requirements of our affiliation agreement, we share these policies with you so that we can provide the highest quality of service possible.

One other area we would like to emphasize is the contact between the volunteer and youth as well as the communication with the responsible staff person. Your fulfillment of these expectations supports our commitment to protect the youth as well as the development of a meaningful relationship for both the volunteer and youth. At the same time, there is a rigid expectation on us as an organization that we will meet the expected standard for contacts and communication. Your mutual commitment to this is essential.

If you have questions, please discuss them first with your Intake & Enrollment Specialist, Match Relationship Specialist or Program Staff. Know that all are available if you feel you need additional information or clarification.

## **Youth Safety and Youth Protection Policies - General Youth Safety**

A primary commitment of BBBS of SWLA in serving the youth of SWLA is to ensure quality service delivery to youth and to protect their safety. This includes physical, sexual, and emotional safety at all levels. To this end, the following are in place:

- Standard procedures of program delivery incorporating the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America Standards and Required Procedures. These program procedures, as well as the agency service delivery manuals shall be dated and kept on file in the office of the Program Director.
- Ongoing documentation of issues relating to youth safety in supervision of the match.
- Orientations and training adapted to each of the parties: staff, parent/guardian, youth, and volunteer.
- A standardized process (written guide) for crisis management.

Any allegation or incident where sexual abuse of a child is in question will be investigated as outlined in the BBBS of SWLA Crisis Management Guide. Follow-up communications with the national office of Big Brothers Big Sisters shall be made in compliance with the Crisis Management Guide.

### **Screening of Volunteers**

#### **Policy: Obtaining Criminal History Record Checks**

All adult volunteers 18 years of age and older, as part of the enrollment process, will complete the screening established for the respective programs as detailed in the program manual.

A criminal history record check is required of all Volunteer Bigs, incoming Board Members, Board Members renewing their terms, Agency Staff and non-mentoring volunteers who come into meaningful contact with children. For Agency Staff, a multi-level criminal history record check may be carried out at any time and, at a minimum, is carried out at time of hire. This policy for staff is intended to provide guidelines that may be applied with discretion on the part of the agency President/CEO. For Volunteer Bigs, a multi-level criminal history record check may be carried out at any time and at a minimum is carried out at enrollment, at least every 3 years while in an active match, and at the time of re-assessment for re-match.

- We confirm the person's identity by government-issued photo ID and social security verification
- Public Domain Search
- BBBS of SWLA background check is carried out through First Advantage and includes:
  - Social Security Number Validation
  - County Courthouse Search including Outstanding Warrant and Temporary Restraining Order Search

- First Advantage proprietary information from multiple sources in all 50 states, including the National Sex Offender Registry and US Department of Justice
- Motor Vehicle Record

Where available and based on applicable state law, we obtain international check if in the U.S. less than 2 years, and military service checks. Additional records may be requested and will be the applicant's responsibility to obtain.

Potential Volunteer Bigs and volunteers who have been accepted as Volunteer Bigs, Board Members, and Agency Staff will be disqualified for reasons including but not limited to:

- Failure to complete the application and screening process.
- History of sexual abuse of children.
- Conviction of a violent crime and/or a crime against a child.
- A felony conviction within the past 10 years. (An applicant with a felony conviction more than 10 years in the past will receive additional assessment.)
- Being on probation or parole. An outstanding arrest warrant and/or an active restraining order.
- History of any sexually exploitive behavior.
- Termination from a paid or volunteer position caused by misconduct with a child.
- An applicant with pending charges in the above stated categories will not be considered until acquitted of such charges.
- Applicants with a misdemeanor conviction will receive further assessment.
- Applicants with pending misdemeanor charge will not be considered until the applicant produces case disposition.

Active Volunteer Bigs, Board Members, and Agency Staff will be immediately released from the program if convicted of any violent crime and/or crime against a child, and/or a felony conviction.

**Policy: Reference when Volunteer Applicant has Prior Experience with Youth**

Professional Agency Staff must attempt to obtain in-depth phone reference(s) from any disclosed relevant prior volunteer or paid experience with children in the most recent five-year period. A written record of the reference(s) and attempts must be documented in the Volunteer Big applicant's file.

### **Policy: Volunteer Home Assessments**

Home assessments are conducted as prescribed by the service delivery model. A documented professional evaluation is obtained during the in-person interview with the volunteer through a series of targeted questions relative to the physical surrounding and immediate neighborhood, and the other residents of the home. A home visit may be conducted, on a case-by-case basis, if there is a need for further information.

An in-person interview with one or more persons residing in the volunteer applicant's household may be requested on a case-by-case basis at any time.

### **Policy: Obtaining In-depth Reference from Spouse or Spousal Equivalent**

As one of the three required references for community-based volunteers, professional Agency Staff will carry out an in-depth reference by phone or in-person from the Spouse/Spousal Equivalent (or when there is no spouse/spousal equivalent or when none is available, the reference must be with a Family Member), in order to assess child safety in the Volunteer Big applicant's home and to gain additional insight into the applicant's qualifications and appropriateness to serve as a Volunteer Big.

### **Policy: Volunteer Driving Record, Insurance, and Transporting Children**

The agency will review an applicant's current driving record of the state in which the license was issued. Additional records of states in which the applicant has previously lived may be requested by the Intake & Enrollment Specialist. This responsibility and expense will be covered by the prospective volunteer. Agency Staff will document in the volunteer's file verification of appropriate licensure and insurance held by the volunteer if they will be transporting the youth.

- Applicants with an alcohol- or drug-related moving vehicle conviction, including but not limited to Driving Under the Influence (DUI), Driving While Intoxicated (DWI), or Boating Under the Influence (BUI), within the last three years, or with more than one alcohol or drug-related moving vehicle arrest within the last five years, will not be accepted.
- Applicants with a non-alcohol or drug-related moving vehicle conviction that results in a driver's license suspension or revocation will receive additional assessment.
- Active Volunteer Bigs who have already been accepted into the program will be immediately released from the program if convicted of an alcohol or drug-related moving vehicle offense.
- All applicants and volunteers must report any moving violations to the agency. All moving violations will be reviewed and assessed for possible action up to and including non-acceptance of a prospective volunteer, or release of an active volunteer.

- Any volunteer who will operate an automotive vehicle while volunteering with the agency in any capacity must carry current auto insurance (with coverage always meeting the Louisiana State minimum). Once accepted, volunteers must comply with any request to prove insurance coverage.
- Any volunteer who will transport youth in a vehicle must abide by all Louisiana law, including but not limited to airbag, youth safety seat, cell phone and seat belt laws.

### **Volunteer Alcohol and Drug Use**

- Applicants who currently use an illicit drug and/or participate in underage drinking of alcohol will not be accepted.
- Applicants with a previous history of illegal use of drugs and/or alcohol will receive further assessment.
- Applicants who currently use a controlled substance or marijuana will receive further assessment.
- Use of any illegal substances by volunteers while matched with a Little Brother or Little Sister is strictly prohibited. Violation of this policy will result in the volunteer being immediately released from the program.
- Matched volunteer Bigs shall not be under the influence or use any substance (including alcohol, illicit drugs, and legal drugs, including medical marijuana, “legalized” marijuana, and prescription medications) that could potentially affect judgment, driving, reaction time, or otherwise jeopardize a child’s safety and wellbeing, while their Little is in the Volunteer Bigs care or company. Violation of this policy will result in the volunteer being immediately released from the program.
- Use of tobacco products by volunteers is strictly prohibited during a match activity. Violation of this policy may result in the volunteer being released from the program.
- Volunteers with a history of substance dependence/abuse who have less than one year of sobriety and/or abstinence will not be accepted.
- Additional assessment will be required for applicants who have been sober or clean for more than one year.

### **Policy: Health**

Any volunteer, youth, and/or parent/guardian who provides information about a health condition that may compromise the safety of others involved in the match or may have bearing on the match experience will be asked to sign a release of health information form that allows the agency to follow up with a clinical referral and inform the other adult involved in the match about the condition when relevant and applicable to the match. All relevant health conditions will be reviewed and assessed.

**Policy: Life Transition**

Any volunteer who is facing any major life change will be given further assessment. Major life changes may include but are not limited to recent death of a loved one, illness, pregnancy, birth of a child, divorce/separation, deployment, employment changes, and recent or impending move.

**Policy: Mandatory Youth Safety and Youth Protection Training for Volunteer Bigs, Parent/Guardians, Children, and all BBBS Agency Staff and Board Members**

All Agency Staff, both paid and unpaid, including interns, must successfully complete the BBBS Youth Safety and Youth Protection on-line training within 30 days of hire or prior to carrying out work that requires independent professional decision-making in service delivery, such as interviewing or conducting match support. Volunteer Bigs, parents/guardians, and youth must receive youth safety and youth protection training prior to matching, which must be documented in the file. Documentation is maintained, reflecting that all non-mentoring volunteers, including Board members, and non-program BBBS Agency Staff coming into meaningful contact with children, have completed a basic child safety and youth protection training that includes BBBS' approach to child protection.

**Policy: Firearms and Weapons Safety**

Possession of firearms is to be disclosed to BBBS of SWLA Agency Staff at enrollment and throughout the life of the match. Agency Staff will disclose this information with the other party in the match.

The Volunteer Big must attest to, and sign an affidavit affirming, the fact that any owned weapons, firearms, or ammunition are licensed, permitted, registered, and handled in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws.

Weapons, firearms, and ammunition will be made inaccessible at all times to a youth while in the Volunteer Bigs care.

The use of firearms is strictly prohibited during match activities. A violation of this policy will result in the volunteer being immediately released from the program.

**Policy: Mandatory Youth Abuse and Exploitation Reporting**

All BBBS of SWLA staff members are mandated reporters. As required by Louisiana law, staff will immediately file a report to law enforcement or child protection authorities, in accordance with state and federal law, when staff has knowledge of any incident or allegation of child abuse or exploitation involving a non-mentoring volunteer, a Volunteer Big, Board member, or Agency Staff associated with BBBS. BBBS of SWLA staff will also follow procedures set forth by law and in the Crisis Management Guide to report any incident or allegation of child abuse or exploitation to the agency Program Director, Executive Director/CEO. Volunteers who

suspect abuse are to report any suspicions or observations of child abuse and/or neglect to their Match Relationship Specialist or Program Director.

**Policy: Overnight Visits**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of SWLA **does not allow overnight visits**. Once a Little turns 18 years of age and graduates high school, overnight visits will be permissible. Any match who engages in an overnight visit of any kind, prior to the Little turning 18 and graduating from high school, will be closed immediately and the volunteer will be released from the program.

**Policy: Youth Visiting Volunteer's Home (Community Based matches only)**

Visits to the volunteer's home by the Little are not allowed within the first six months of the match to allow for the healthy development of the match relationship. After the first six months, the decision to allow the youth to visit the volunteer's home is at the parent/guardian's discretion.

During the six-month match support contact with the parent/guardian, the Match Relationship Specialist will discuss with the parent/guardian whether to allow his/her child to visit the volunteer's home. A review of any child safety-related concerns or issues will also be discussed at that time by the MRS with the volunteer.

A MRS has the authority to restrict the volunteer and Little's activities at the volunteer's home at any time if there are concerns regarding the safety level or appropriateness of such visits. In that case, the parent/guardian and volunteer will be informed of the professional staff's decision and of the basis for the decision.

Any violation of this policy will be reviewed by a Program Director to determine whether match suspension or closure is warranted.

**Policy: Off-site Match Contact (Site-Based matches only)**

The agency does not allow site-based matches to meet outside of the school setting unless supervised by a Big Brothers Big Sisters staff member, or if approval is provided by staff and parent/guardian. The matches may have phone contact outside of designated session times if contact information exchange is approved by both volunteer and parent/guardian. The agency will host off-site events that site-based matches can attend.

### **Policy: Match Support**

Big Brothers Big Sisters adheres to the match support contact schedule set forth in the Big Brothers Big Sisters of America Standards of Practice, which is the following:

#### **Community-Based Mentoring Matches:**

- Match Support Specialist will have contact with parent/guardian, youth, and volunteer within two weeks after the match is introduced.
- Match Support Specialist will have contact with the parent/guardian, youth, and volunteer monthly, or greater as needed, within the first year of the match.
- Match Support Specialist will have contact with the parent/guardian, youth, and volunteer on a quarterly basis, or greater as needed, when the match is over one year.

#### **Site-Based Mentoring Matches:**

- Program Staff will have contact with the youth and volunteer within two weeks after the match is introduced.
- Program Staff will have bi-monthly contact, or greater as needed, with the youth and volunteer for the life of the match.
- Parent/guardian contact with Program Staff is required a minimum of twice per year.

### **Policy: Program Transfer**

- If a volunteer moves from one program to another all forms and processes required of the new program must be completed.

### **Policy: Annual Match Review and Ongoing Review**

- At the anniversary and closure of each match, a review will be completed as prescribed by each program.
- At time of annual match review or as requested, Big Brother and Big Sister volunteers must submit an updated copy of their auto insurance coverage to BBBS staff if they transport a child in their personal vehicle.
- It is required that an active Big Brother or Big Sister volunteer disclose to professional BBBS staff if he/she has been arrested, charged with a crime (including a driving offense such as a DUI or a reckless driving charge), develops an alcohol or drug dependency, obtains a firearm, develops a long-term illness or has any significant change in his/her health status, or if he/she is going through any significant life transition while he/she is matched with a Little Brother/Little Sister. BBBS Staff will then assess that information.



**Policy: Rematch**

- For all volunteers requesting a rematch with a new Little Brother/Little Sister, the agency will conduct a re-enrollment interview, review all information on the application and run all required background checks, regardless of the amount of time that has passed since the last background checks were completed.
- When a youth requests a rematch with a new volunteer, the agency will conduct a re-enrollment interview with the child and parent/guardian and will review all information on the application.
- The agency will ensure that all required and updated forms and processes for re-matching are completed.

**Policy: Policy Changes to be Posted on Website**

- These Program Policies may be updated, revised, or revoked by BBBS at any time. Updates and revisions to these Program Policies will be posted on the BBBS website (<http://www.bbbsswla.org>) and shall automatically be applicable to Volunteers. Volunteers shall monitor the BBBS website to stay apprised of any changes to the Program Policies. If you have any questions regarding these Program Policies, please contact your Match Relationship Specialist or Program Director.

**Policy: Treatment of Volunteers, Parents/Guardians, and Children**

The agency shall not cause or allow conditions, procedures, or decisions that are unsafe, disrespectful, undignified, unnecessarily intrusive, or fail to provide appropriate confidentiality and privacy. When a volunteer or parent/guardian has a concern, he or she should first attempt to resolve the situation with the assigned agency staff person. If further discussion is needed, the volunteer or parent/guardian should contact assigned staff person's supervisor.

**Policy: Confidentiality – As stated in the BBBS of SDC Confidentiality Agreement**

1. All information that programs participants may encounter about any child, child's family, Big Brother/Big Sister, the Big Brothers/Big Sisters' family or anything else of a confidential nature about any youth or volunteer in any way connected with Big Brothers Big Sisters of SWLA will be held confidential.
2. Any information that reveals or tends to reveal the identity of any person who is the subject of the record will be held confidential.
3. The identity of any person who contributes information to the subject record will be held confidential.
4. The results of any inquiry into school records or medical records of any description will be held confidential.
5. Program participants will not discuss any confidential information pertaining to the youth, child's family, or the volunteer in the match that they are privileged to receive with any other person without the verbal or written permission of either a Program Director or Executive Director/CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of SWLA.

6. Program participants will only release prior approved information to the individuals for whom they have been given permission to release the information.
7. Program participants agree to hold all related information confidential and, except as they may be legally required, will not disclose, or release it to any individual or organization at any time.
8. BBBS of SWLA agrees to hold all related information confidential and, except as the organization may be legally required, will not disclose, or release it to any individual or organization at any time.
9. The information listed below is the exception in which it is relevant and necessary for BBBS of SWLA to disclose information to the other match party (parent/guardian, youth, and volunteer) in the pre-match process prior to all parties accepting the match:

Information about the Little Brother/Little Sister to be shared with the Big Brother/Big Sister:

First name, age, general location of Little Brother's/Little Sister's home and travel time, grade in school, interests, personality, child/family situation and/or concerns which may affect the match, health and/or behavioral issues which may affect the match (Match Relationship Specialist will provide training/support to the Big Brother/Big Sister for these issues when applicable/available), religious preference, ethnicity, language(s) spoken, and firearms in the home.

Information about the Big Brother/Big Sister to be shared with the Parent/Guardian:

First name, age, general location of Big Brother/Big Sister's home and travel time, occupation, interests, motivation for volunteering, ethnicity, health conditions, including mental health, or relevant health history that may affect the match, sexual orientation, sexual identification, religious preference, marital status/living status, pets in the home, experience with children, language(s) spoken, and firearms in the home.

Information about the Big Brother/Big Sister to be shared with the Little Brother/Little Sister:

First name, interests, occupation, age, pets in the home, ethnicity, marital status/living situation, and religious preference.

**Volunteers and parents in all programs are required to read and sign a confidentiality agreement prior to being matched.**

**Policy: Nondiscrimination/Equal opportunity participation**

Volunteer Bigs, parents/guardians, children and Board Members are not excluded based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, gender identity, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status or disability.

## **Policy: Confidentiality and Document Retention**

Considering certain legal requirements, and to the extent permissible by law, the following procedures shall be adhered to:

- All client and volunteer computer records (such as Matchforce records) are accessible only by assigned staff who are provided appropriate passwords and permission levels.
- All client and volunteer paper records are kept in locked cabinets or in locked offices.
- All application and enrollment paperwork is uploaded into the client or volunteer Matchforce file and then shredded. A copy of the applicant's driver's license and the applicant's assessment are maintained in the file.
- Computers are kept in staff's locked offices and/or are password protected.
- Paper files may not be taken out of the BBBS of SWLA office without approval of one's supervisor.
- The Volunteer Big and the parent/guardian sign the BBBS of SWLA Confidentiality Policy Agreement that describes how information about the Little is shared with the Volunteer Big, information about the Volunteer Big is shared with the parent/guardian, and that the information will not be shared with any individual or organization except as BBBS of SWLA may be legally required.
- Client and Volunteer files shall be maintained indefinitely.
- Any form, which is used in the service delivery process, is to be completed in full. All sections of any form shall be completed. Any section that does not apply shall state N/A.
- When Agency Staff leave employment, they provide all records to their supervisor. Access to Matchforce records and any other agency computer records is terminated.
- Copies of all current BBBS of SWLA policies/procedures, service delivery manuals, and the Crisis Management Guide shall be maintained by the Program Director.
- All changes to policies/procedures, service delivery manuals, the Crisis Management Guide, and the Risk Management Plan shall be dated and kept on file in the office of the Program Director.
- A list of legal counsel specific to program delivery issues, over the above period, shall be kept current.
- A summary record of any cases where concern is noted, or action is taken shall be maintained in the office of the Program Director.
- To cover any liability period, an ongoing record of individuals employed in the following positions shall be maintained in the office of human resources:
  - Executive Director/CEO
  - Program Director
  - Finance Director