

PARENT FACT SHEET

What is Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Kanawha/Putnam Area?

Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Kanawha/Putnam Area is an agency that serves children from single-parent homes. The child is introduced to an adult volunteer who we call Big Brothers, Big Sisters, or a Big Couple (a married couple) who will spend time with your child as a special friend at least twice a month for a minimum of one year. Once the child and volunteer are introduced, we call this a match. Girls or boys are matched to Big Sisters, and boys are matched to Big Brothers. A married couple is usually matched to a boy, but can be matched to either a boy or a girl.

How can my child qualify to be a Little Brother/Sister?

Your child can qualify for our services if either the mother or the father is absent from the home and you feel he or she could benefit from and enjoy the company of a Big Brother or Big Sister. Your child also needs to be between the ages of 6-14 And reside in Kanawha or Putnam Counties.

How can my child benefit from this program?

If your child is a boy who has little or no contact with his father or another male, he could benefit greatly from the companionship of an adult friend to do father/son type activities with him, whether it is going to a game, washing the car, or just talking over dinner. For girls, a Big Sister can also be a special friend with whom to confide in and do things, even if the mother is in the home. Sometimes when moms work and/or have several other children, they find that a Big Sister can add enjoyment to their daughter's routine by giving them a chance to experience different activities and get to know another adult closely. If your child has special needs or could benefit from spending time with a married couple, you may prefer that they be matched to a Big Couple.

The main goal of your child's relationship with a Big Brother or Sister is FRIENDSHIP and that alone, so the volunteer will not be taking your place or the place of the absent parent. The volunteer will not be responsible for disciplining your child nor will he or she serve as a baby-sitter or gift-giver--just as a friend.

Does it mean that I am not a good parent if I realize that my child needs a friendship such as that of a Big Brother/Big Sister?

No, not at all. In fact, the opposite is true. We realize that as children grow up they have many needs and interests that need to be met. By allowing your child to have a Big Brother or Sister, you are helping him or her to enjoy the special company of another person who can share with you in your child's best interest.

What types of people volunteer to be Big Brothers Big Sisters and how do you know that they will work well with children?

Volunteers who serve as Big Brothers or Big Sisters are 19 years of age and older. We are very careful in whom we select to spend time with your child, and we only accept people who we feel possess a sense of maturity and responsibility. We screen them carefully through several interviews, one of which is held in their home. We check references, run a police check, and the volunteers must attend a training session prior to meeting your child. Once a Big Brother/Sister is matched to a Little Brother/Sister, their case manager stays in touch with each of them to ensure the relationship is a positive one.

What must I do to enroll my child in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program?

Just fill out the applications and mail to us. If you do not have an application packet, please call 746-7900 and we will be happy to mail you the forms. Upon receiving the applications, we will contact you to schedule a time for the Case Manager to come to your home to meet you and your child and talk with you to determine your child's eligibility and needs.

How soon will my child be matched to a Big Brother Big Sister or a Couple?

Because Big Brothers Big Sisters is a voluntary program, it is our biggest challenge to recruit new volunteers who are willing and able to give the time required. We have a waiting list of children to be matched, although this does not mean that we match each child according to when he or she enrolled in the program. The average wait is a few months to a year. Of course, we give first consideration as to how long a child has been on the list, but our main goal in each match is to find the right volunteer for each child. This is mainly based on the interests and hobbies that they have in common, since it is from the activities they do together that their relationship grows.

Thank you for your interest in our program !!