

# Big Brothers Big Sisters – Parent Information

## DO I WANT A MENTOR FOR MY CHILD?

### *What is Mentoring?*

A mentor is generally someone who is an adult who befriends a younger person. It's all about being friends, sharing common interests, and being exposed to new activities and interests. It's about sharing new skills with the youth and being a positive role model. In Big Brothers Big Sisters, the mentor is referred to as "the Big" and the child as "the Little". The mentor and child get together 2 – 4 times a month and commit to one year. Often the match will continue beyond that first year.

### *What kind of mentoring options are there?*

Our **Community-based mentoring** program involves the matched pairs meeting outside of the school day and doing activities "in the community" as well as possibly at the Big's home on occasion. The Big communicates directly with the parent/guardian to make arrangements for the outings. Another mentoring option is our **Site-based mentoring program** where the Big and Little meet once a week at a school site either over lunch/recess or after school at an after-school program.

### *Why would a child need a mentor?*

All kids need many positive caring adults in their life. With families being spread out geographically, and many families split up by divorce - access to adults may be limited. Some families are experiencing situations where additional support is needed, such as a grandparent raising grandchildren or a parent dealing with another child with a disability or illness, or a parent struggling with their own health concerns. Some kids simply need extra attention or a boost in their self-esteem. Some need more opportunities to experience positive leisure activities. Some may need a little help in their friendship skills.

### *What about me - the parent?*

The parent's role always comes first. The mentor is not there to replace the parent's authority or role. He or she is there to be another special adult in the life of your child - much like a favorite aunt or uncle, grandma or grandpa. Studies have shown that many parents experience an improved relationship with their child after their child has been matched with a mentor.

### *Where do the mentors come from?*

They are caring adults in the community who truly like kids. They believe in the philosophy "It takes a village to raise a child." Our mentors tell us they enjoy the mentoring relationship as much as the child. Their application process is very thorough – providing references, a background check, driving record check, an extensive interview, home visit and an orientation prior to being matched. After your child is matched, one of our Match Support Specialists will consistently monitor and support the match.

### *Do I have a say in who my child is matched with?*

Absolutely! The parent always has the final approval. You know your child best.

### *What do I do to apply to get a mentor for my child?*

Contact Big Brothers Big Sisters at 920-498-2227. For site-based mentoring, you can talk to your child's school counselor to get the process started. For Community based mentoring, the first step will be an interview with you, the parent, and then with your child. This will help us know what kind of person would be a good mentor for your child.