

Frequently Asked Questions



Why be a Big? What is the approval process in becoming a Big and how long does it take?

Think back to when you were a kid who brought magic into your life just by being there? Who do you always remember with a smile? Maybe it was an uncle who taught you how to cook, or a neighbor who let you help her fix her car. Or maybe it was someone who just included you in everyday life activities because it was fun-for both of you.

Being a BIG is one of the best decisions you will ever make. It means a chance to make a positive impact in a child's life!

After you contact Big Brothers Big Sisters of Bartholomew County with your interest in becoming a volunteer:

- The Enrollment Specialist will schedule an in-person interview and orientation with you. This is a time for our agency to give you more details about Big Brothers Big Sisters of Bartholomew County, as well as a chance for us to get to know you better. Our goal is to provide positive customer service and make sure we have answered all your questions.
- During the interview you will be asked a series of questions about yourself and match preferences, as well as interests and hobbies.
- Our agency will complete a thorough background check (local, state, and national background checks) Safety is a priority at all times.

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- Next, our agency will contact the three references (spouse/domestic partner, employer or coworker, personal, and youth service organization if previous your work experience.
- Volunteers attend in-person training that will be scheduled with the BBBS team. Training will cover an overview of our agencies standards and procedures, stages of the match relationship, procedural directions, child safety, policy and procedures for disclosure of child abuse and/or exploitation, background to the program and mentoring, and any questions. It may be in a group session, or individual depending on availability.

What is my time commitment for each program and how often should I see my Little?

We ask for a minimum of a one year commitment for all our Volunteers. Community-Based Matches meet on average 4-6 hours per month, we prefer this to be in two visits if possible. This helps with connection and building a positive relationship at the beginning of the match. Community-Based volunteers must be at least 21 years of age.

In the School/Site-Based Program, matches generally meet weekly and follow the school calendar. The goal is for the match to meet on the same day each week at the Little's school or site program. Typically most matches usually meet during the child's lunch and recess time. School/Site Based Bigs must be at least a freshman in high school.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Bartholomew County has developed a new partnership with Cummins called **Empowering Littles**. This new Site-Based Plus program features pre-arranged activities in a unique group format for Cummins Bigs and their Littles twice a month. Matches are enrolled as a Community-Based Match and approved to meet out in the community.

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It's not the right volunteer opportunity for everyone! Apart from obvious safety concerns, we would likely not accept anyone who we felt couldn't meet the commitment required, or who might find connecting with a child challenging.

How long does it take to be matched once I'm approved?

We take the matching process very seriously. We start thinking about matching while you are still in the approval process. We want to be very intentional about each match, based on the needs, strengths, and preferences of the child, family and volunteer. We want to give the match the best chance to form a positive, constructive connection, so it's hard to give an exact timescale other than to say we want to match everyone as fast as possible!

How many kids are on the waitlist?

That number varies constantly as it depends on the number of people applying to be Bigs and the number of child referrals we get from teachers and parents. Right now, we have over 60 kids waiting to be matched with a Big. The majority of the children waiting on deck are boys.

How are children referred to the program?

In the Community Base Program, the family typically refer the children. Sometimes BBBS is suggested to them by another agency.

In School/Site Base Program, the referrals usually originate from site/school personnel- a teacher or counselor who identified that a child would benefit from having extra support from a Big.

For what reasons are kids referred?

Many different reasons! There are a few misconceptions about the "typical" Little. Children who are accepted into the program may be experiencing poor school performance, difficulty in making and keeping friendships, conflicts with family members or isolation. There is one thing our Littles' all have in common is that someone

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who cares about them recognizes that they would benefit from some extra one on one support from a positive adult or high school mentor.

What is the age range of the kids referred?

Typically 5-15 years of age

How often will I have contact with Match Support?

At least monthly in the first year of your match, but please be proactive about contacting your Match Support Specialist if you have any questions at any time, or if there's just something you want to process. They should be your "go-to"!

Are there agency activities offered throughout the year?

If the agency is offered free tickets for special events such as Pacer's Game or Indy Eleven Soccer, we communicate this opportunity to matches. Our agency also offers monthly activities to all matches and any child waiting to be matched. You can always check out [Foundation For Youth's Facebook](#) page and follow #BBBSBartholomew!

Your MSS will have other ideas and suggestions about activities. Our focus is on quality time together. Within the first couple of months of being matched, your Match Support Specialist will be meeting with both you and your Little as well as the Parent/Guardian to discuss a Youth Outcome Development Plan. The plan establishes goals that include strategies and activities to help achieve those goals.

How much contact will I have with my Little's family?

In the Site or School Based Program, not much direct contact but we always encourage parent/guardians/caregivers to be involved in the match. In the Community-Based Program, Site-Based Plus Program, and Empowering Littles Program (Site-Based Plus); Bigs will meet with the Little's Parent/Guardian/Caregiver prior to the match and discuss goals identified as well as other valuable information.