



Big Brothers Big Sisters
Southeastern Pennsylvania

Frequently Asked Questions & Answers About Becoming a Penn Big

1. Do I have enough time?

Yes. The time commitment is only one hour a week. You meet with your Little during the school day or on Saturdays. BBBS will take a look at your schedule and find a time slot when you can go to the school.

2. When do I get to see my Little?

The programs are during lunch time, after school hours, and Saturdays.

3. How many Penn students do this?

Over 300 students participated in the program this past year.

4. How will I get to the school?

BBBS will provide transportation if the school is not within walking distance.

5. Can I volunteer with my friends?

Yes, BBBS will try their best to accommodate your schedules so you can volunteer with your friends.

6. What kind of things do I do with my Little?

You are restricted to meeting at the school. However, each school has a dedicated space where BBBS has a box of games, puzzles, etc. You may also use additional space such as the gym, computer room, etc. Once you have been matched, BBBS will provide you with an activity guide and give you more specific information.

7. What is the process to get matched with a Little?

We will interview you to get to know you and conduct background checks (PA state police check, Child Abuse Clearance, references.) The brief interview will take place on campus at Leadership Hall (3814 Walnut Street.) The background check takes approximately 4-6 weeks.

8. How do you determine the matches?

BBBS will interview both the volunteer and the child, and match them based on personality and interests along with the schedule of the volunteer.

9. What type of staff support will I get?

BBBS has professionally trained staff to support you during your relationship. BBBS provides activities and celebrations at the school, as well as relationship management via email, in person meetings, and telephone calls.

10. Why should I volunteer with BBBS?

BBBS is a nationally recognized and premier mentoring organization with professional trained staff to support you while you are matched. They provide background checks for the safety of both the volunteers and the children.

11. What if I want to see my Little outside of the school?

During the beginning of the relationship with your Little, all contact will occur at the school. However, after a few months, you may be able to meet with your Little outside of school with additional parental permission. Let BBBS know when you are ready to take this step.

12. Are there programs available on the weekends?

Yes, BBBS has programs to meet the needs of those volunteers who wish to participate in BBBS programs on the weekend. BBBS had developed a program where the children come to campus for two hours every other Saturday. If you are interested in this program and want to sign up, let your interviewer know.

13. What are the partner schools?

Wilson, Our Mother of Sorrows, St. Ignatius, Lea, Powel, St. Francis de Sales, CPA, Shaw, & KIPP

14. What is the BBBS student organization? Can I get involved?

There is a BBBS student board. The board meets regularly to discuss ways to recruit more Bigs, to create a Penn Bigs community, and to make the BBBS program at Penn stronger. Please contact Laura Sharkey at LauraAlicen@gmail.com for more information on how to get involved.

15. Can I continue with the same Little after my year is up? Do I need to go through the same process?

You can stay with your Little for the entire time you are at Penn. You do not have to be rematched or go through the interview or background checks in order to start meeting with you Little again.

16. What do I do if my Little has a problem that is too big for me to deal with on my own?

You can always contact your Match Support Specialist with any questions about your relationship with your Little, and any problems that either of you are experiencing.

17. What do I do if I go abroad?

Contact your Match Support Specialist to let them know you are going abroad and for how long. When you return, you can pick up your relationship with your Little where you left off before you went away.

18. How can I stay involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters after I graduate?

If you will be in the Philadelphia area after graduation, you can begin the “enhancement” process, which will transition your existing relationship from a school-based match to a community based match. If you are moving to a new city, you can contact BBBS in that area and apply to be a part of the community based program.

19. How can I stay in touch with my Little over the summer?

You can exchange phone numbers or email addresses to keep in touch.

20. Can I go to my Little's school more than once a week?

You are only required to meet with your Little once a week. However, if you would like to meet with your Little more often, there are schools that have time scheduled for Bigs to come more than one day a week. If this is the case with your school, you are more than welcome to visit with your Little as often as you would like.

21. Are there special sessions or orientation sessions needed to become a Big?

There are very brief orientation sessions held at the beginning of each semester. These sessions are an opportunity for new volunteers to meet BBBS staff and hear about the experiences of current Big Brothers/Sisters. If you feel as though you need more instruction as to how to be a successful Big, your match support specialist can help you.

22. What will my first day be like?

Once you get to the school, your match support specialist will be waiting for you. They will introduce you to your Little and go over the specifics of the program at this particular school or after school program. You will get to know your Little through icebreakers and other fun activities.

23. How old are the Littles?

The Little Brothers and Sisters generally range from 7-13 years old (2nd -7th grade). If you have an age preference, you should discuss that in your interview.