

# FAMILY & CHILD

## ORIENTATION & INFORMATION PACKAGE

Thank you for your interest in Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel!

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel is a mentoring organization that annually serves over 1800 children and youth in Peel Region. We are committed to providing caring adult relationships for children and youth to promote their healthy development. Our mentors inspire and empower our children and youth to reach their full potential both as individuals and citizens.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel has offered over 50 years of service to the community of Peel Region. Big Brothers opened its doors in 1967 and Big Sisters of Peel in 1982. As a merged agency, beginning in June 2001, we are a member of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Canada and our service is offered in accordance with BBBSC National Standards of Service Delivery. We are committed to child safety and confidentiality in the delivery of all of our programs.

**Our vision is simple;** Children and youth will realize their full potential through the power of mentoring.

We have 10 core mentoring programs designed to meet the needs of both our children ages 6-17 and volunteers.

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| ✓ Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Couples for Kids</li><li>○ Big and Little Buddy</li></ul> | <u>School-Based Programs</u>  |
| ✓ BCAC Mentoring Program   | ✓ In-School Mentoring <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Between Generations</li></ul> |
| ✓ Group Mentoring  | ✓ Teen Mentoring  |
| ✓ Conversation Club  | ✓ Go Girls! <i>Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds</i>   |
|  | ✓ Game On! Eat Smart, Play Smart, Live Smart  |

### **CHILDREN IN OUR PROGRAMS**

- Girls and boys in Peel Region, between the ages of 6 and 17, who will benefit from the special attention, friendship and support of an adult mentor.
- Children who are interested in participating in our programs and whose parents/guardians are supportive of their child's participation
- We reflect the diversity of Peel Region: single & dual parent families, diverse cultural backgrounds and religions, languages, socio-economic status, interests, strengths and challenges
- School-based Mentoring programs - children are referred through the local schools with Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. School-based Mentoring Programs are offered in over 80 schools in Peel.
- The results of mentoring for children are increased self-esteem, improved relationships with peers and family and improved attitude towards school. In the words of one of our children, "Having a mentor is like changing a kid's life....having a mentor has made my life go from dull to bright."

## OUR PROGRAMS

**Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring:** This program matches a child 6 – 17 years of age (Little Sister/Little Brother) with a caring adult (Big Sister/Big Brother) over the age of 18. Matches are encouraged to regularly plan activities that are fun and low cost for 1 year. Monthly agency sponsored recreational activities are provided. Unique opportunities to mentor a child together as a couple or as a female volunteer matched with a young boy are also available in our ***Couples for Kids Program and Big & Little Buddy Program***.

**BCAC Mentoring Program:** Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel in partnership with the Black Community Advisory Council of the United Way of Peel Region have developed a community-based mentoring program that matches Black youth (ages 7-15) with an adult Black mentor to provide support while promoting positive self-identity through participating in various cultural activities to help youth feel rooted in their community.

**Group Mentoring:** Six volunteer mentors, twelve children one weeknight from September to June in local schools throughout the Region. Groups participate in fun and skill-based activities. Outing costs are covered by the agency. Activities include floor hockey and sports, community tours, swimming and more.

**Conversation Club:** Provides new Canadian youth (13 – 18) with opportunities to integrate into Canadian society, to practice English conversation skills and receive homework help from youth mentors (18 – 24). Offered in partnership with the Centre for Education and Training, Malton Neighbourhood Services, the Meadowvale Library and local schools. The program is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

**In-School Mentoring:** Offered in partnership with the Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board this program matches elementary girls and boys with a caring adult mentor. Matches meet for one hour during school hours and on school property to share in fun activities.

**Between Generations:** A unique mentoring opportunity for volunteers 55 years and up

**Teen Mentoring:** This school-based program matches elementary students with caring youth mentors – ages 16 and up from a nearby secondary school. Matches meet at the same time each week in a supervised group setting.

**Go Girls! Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds:** A school-based mentoring program for girls in grades 7 – 8. The program curriculum promotes active living, healthy eating and positive self-esteem. Our female mentors are between the ages of 18 – 25 years and are trained to lead the fun and interactive sessions over 7 weeks.

**Game On! Eat Smart, Play Smart, Live Smart:** A school-based mentoring program for boys ages 11-14. The program provides young men with the information and support to make informed choices about healthy living through physical activities, healthy eating and facilitated discussion. Male mentors are trained to lead the interactive sessions over 7 weeks.

\*Any personal information shared with the Agency is held in the strictest confidence in adherence with our Confidentiality Policy\*

### **FAMILY & CHILD APPLICATION PROCESS**

1. INQUIRE ABOUT SERVICE BY PHONE, E-MAIL OR ONLINE
2. REVIEW PARENT ORIENTATION/INFORMATION PACKAGE ONLINE OR SENT BY MAIL or E-MAIL
3. COMPLETE AND SUBMIT APPLICATION FOR SERVICE
  - You can submit the completed application to the agency ONLINE at <https://peel.bigbrothersbigsisters.ca/enrol-a-young-person/>
  - Or submit by mail, fax, scan/email or in-person
  - When we receive your application a staff person will be in contact to confirm it's receipt and discuss Next Steps
  - We do ask that you complete the application in its entirety
  - Please ensure to sign the bottom of the final page - "Signature of Parent(s)/Caregiver(s)"
4. IN-PERSON ORIENTATION & INTERVIEW by Program Staff – A Program Staff person will be in touch to schedule your in-person [Orientation, Family and Child Interview](#) (It may take 3 to 6 months to receive this invitation)
  - i. An overview of our programs and their confidential nature
  - ii. The agency's responsibilities and expectations for parents and children
  - iii. The Mentor Enrolment process and the role of the Mentor
  - iv. Our matching process as well as Agency support and supervision
  - v. Child safety Information and tools from our Strong from the Start program
  - The Family & Child Interviews give us an opportunity to get to know you and your child better – this information is also helpful in finding the best match for your child
  - [Any personal information shared with the Agency is held in the strictest confidence in adherence with our Confidentiality Policy](#)
5. CASEWORKERS WILL BE IN TOUCH ABOUT GROUP MENTORING PROGRAMS AND MATCHING ONCE THERE IS AVAILABLE SPACE IN THE PROGRAMS.

### **THE MENTOR SCREENING PROCESS**

We thoroughly screen all applicants to ensure our mentors will be positive role models, who want to make a difference in the lives of children

#### **Screening Steps Completed:**

- Supportive references from various areas of the mentor's life
- Screened and interviewed in person by a BBBSP Caseworker to determine suitability
- A current vulnerable sector police records check
- Attend a thorough volunteer safety and Pre-Match training
- Have a current drivers license with recommended 1 million dollar liability (where applicable to program)

## **WORKING TOGETHER – EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY**

### **Parent's Role**

- Our parents/guardians are collaborators, coaches, and mediators in the mentoring relationship & essential to positive youth development
- Check in regularly with their child to ensure they are having fun and feeling safe in their match/program
- Help their child with being on time and committing to their planned activities
- Participate in all contacts from the agency such as regular phone check-ins and match supervision (including annual meetings).
- **National Standards contacts must take place for the child to remain in our programs**

### **Mentor's Role**

- Take the lead in establishing and building the friendship. Strong friendships are built by having fun together, talking and listening to each other
- Safety First! Placing the safety and well-being of the child first whenever you are together
- Committing to regular, open communication with both the mentee and parent/guardian while respecting the family's boundaries and confidentiality
- Conducting themselves as a positive role model and in a manner consistent with the values of the agency
- Keep others informed about what you are doing. **Regular and essential check-ins with Program Staff to ensure child safety in our programs**

### **Program Staff's Role**

- Adequate screening of the volunteers
- Treating the child, family and volunteer with respect
- Training of child and parent on child safety
- Respecting the role of the parent in the child's life
- Regularly checking in with parents to ascertain program and/or match satisfaction and progress
- **Regular check-ins are determined by BBBSC National Standards and are an essential element of child safety in our programs**

***Report any changes in contact information (email, phone number, address) or concerns about your child's involvement to your caseworker as soon as possible***

## **VALUING DIVERSITY**

Our Agency strives to be an inclusive organization that reflects the diversity of our community at all levels. Our families and volunteers are unique and we are respectful of their diversity.

**Our families and volunteers reflect the diversity of Peel Region:** Ethnicity, Cultural Background, Language, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Age, Religion, Socio-Economics, Physical Ability, Challenges, Strengths, Experiences and Education.

**60% of our program volunteers** have identified themselves as coming from a diverse background.

**75% of our children and youth** have identified themselves as coming from a diverse background.

### **MENTORING NEEDS TRUST**

The key to creating effective mentoring relationships lies in the development of trust between two strangers of different ages:

- Without establishing trust, mentors can never truly support the Little
- Learning to trust, especially for youth who have been let down before, requires time
- Youth cannot be expected to trust their mentor simply because the staff has matched them together
- Mentors who focus first on building trust and becoming a friend to their youth tend to be more effective than those who immediately try to change or reform the mentee

### **Effective mentors are more likely to engage in the following practices:**

- **They make a commitment to being consistent and dependable**, to maintaining a steady presence in the mentee's life. They recognize that the relationship may be fairly one-sided and take responsibility for keeping the relationship alive. They acknowledge that youth often test adults to determine whether they will actually stick around; successful mentors regularly initiated contact and ensured that meetings were scheduled, rather than waiting to hear from the youth. Other research found that successful mentors exhibit an attitude of caring.
- **They involve the youth in deciding how the pair will spend time together**. Although youth are often somewhat uncommunicative, successful mentors take the time to learn about the youth's interests and provide them with options for how to spend their time, rather than planning everything without input from the youth. It is important to remember that, similar to adults, children's moods and energy levels differ each day. Therefore, it is helpful to be flexible about the plans you may have made.
- **They pay attention to kids' need for "fun."** Not only is having fun a key part of building a relationship, but it provides youth with valuable opportunities that are often not available otherwise. Children can learn a lot when doing fun activities.
- **They respect the mentee's viewpoint**. Effective mentors are open and flexible; they listen to what the child has to say and pay attention to what the child thinks is important.
- **They get to know their mentee's families and communicate regularly with them**. Successful mentors have found it helpful to build a relationship of openness and mutual respect with their mentee's family. The family knows their child well and can offer helpful suggestions and support.
- **They focus on the mentee's strengths**, ensuring that the youth experiences success and a sense of self mastery. It is better to build from a strength rather than a weakness.

- **Finally, successful mentors seek and use available resources such as the support and guidance of staff.** These mentors recognize that it can be helpful to talk with staff, especially when they are struggling with issues arising from the match. It is normal for most mentors to experience some

frustration, especially in the early stages of the relationship. Help and advice from program staff can benefit mentors (and consequently mentees) tremendously.

Adults who become effective mentors often see themselves as *“friends”* rather than teachers or parents and define their role as supporting the youth in a variety of ways.

- A mentor is caring, steady, patient, realistic, resourceful, respectful and resilient.
- Building trust and establishing a friendship are the key goals.

**More information about our Agency and Programs is available on our website at [www.bbbspeel.com](http://www.bbbspeel.com).**

**Thank you for your interest in Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel! If you have any questions, please contact our Enrolment Support at 905-457-7288 ext. 265**