

MENTOR 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. By spending just few hours each week with a child you will provide much needed stability, friendship, guidance and fun. We have 12 core mentoring programs designed to meet the needs of both our children ages 6-17 and volunteers.

Programs in the Community

- ✓ Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentoring
 - Couples for Kids
 - Big and Little Buddy
- ✓ BCAC Mentoring Program
- ✓ Group Mentoring

Programs in Schools

- ✓ In-School Mentoring
 - Between Generations
- ✓ Go Girls! *Healthy Bodies*
Healthy Minds
- ✓ Game On! Eat Smart, Play Smart, Live Smart

Programs for Newcomer Children and Youth

- ✓ Conversation Club
- ✓ Newcomer Art Program
- ✓ Newcomer Go Girls

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 reflecting the diversity of Peel Region: single & dual parent families, diverse cultural backgrounds and religions, languages, socio-economic status, interests, strengths and challenges
- Programs in Schools - children are referred through the local schools with Peel District School Board and the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board. Programs based in schools 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

PROGRAMS IN THE COMMUNITY:

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: In partnership with the Black Community Advisory Council (BCAC) of the United Way of Peel Region, this mentoring program matches Black youth (ages 7-16) with a Black adult (18+) mentor to promote positive self-identity. Matches are encouraged to regularly plan fun and low in cost outings for 1 year including participation in various cultural activities to help youth feel rooted in their community.

GROUP MENTORING: Five volunteers mentor ten 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.

PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS:

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 school-based mentoring opportunity in the above program for volunteers 55+

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.

PROGRAMS FOR NEWCOMER CHILDREN AND YOUTH:

CONVERSATION CLUB: Provides newcomer youth (12 – 18) with opportunities for social integration with youth mentors (18 – 24). The program focuses on English language conversation and presentation skills, learning about Canada, sharing common experiences and increasing peer connections across cultures. Offered in partnership with the Centre for Education and Training, Malton Neighbourhood Services, the Meadowvale Library and local schools.

NEWCOMER ART PROGRAM: A mentoring program for newcomer children, including Syrian newcomers, in grades 2-5 at elementary schools in Mississauga. The program provides opportunities for self-expression, English language skill development and supportive interactions with mentors. Children and mentors meet weekly in the school within a supportive group setting to share creative art, drama and music activities.

NEWCOMER GO GIRLS: The Go Girls Program described above has been adapted for newcomer girls ages 12-14 in middle school. The curriculum includes wellness and coping with stress, community resources and learning about Canada.

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

MENTOR APPLICATION PROCESS

- ✓ INQUIRE ABOUT VOLUNTEERING BY PHONE, E-MAIL OR ONLINE
- ✓ REVIEW ORIENTATION INFORMATION ON LINE OR SENT BY MAIL/E-MAIL
- ✓ COMPLETE APPLICATION FORM ON LINE OR DOWNLOAD A PAPER COPY
 - **Talk to your references and let them know we will be calling and/or emailing**
 - Please if possible provide both phone number and email addresses for all references as it helps us to complete them faster
 - If ANY of your references have known you **less than 2 years**, please add an additional character reference
 - Please list your programs of interest preferences, a program staff will speak with you during your interview about your strengths and experience as well as our program needs in order to find the program that will be the best fit for your volunteering goals
 - Make sure you **sign** the Volunteer Permission and Release Agreement – *we cannot accept any fonts that are typed into this space*
(This form must be submitted in its entirety either with your application. If you submit on line, we will send this Form to you by email.)
- ✓ SUBMIT PEEL REGIONAL VULNERABLE SECTOR POLICE CHECK – ***Please refer to the information sent with your Peel Police Check for a location in your area***
 - BBBSP will mail to you a blank police check form with an Authorization Letter once your application has been received by the agency
 - **There is a fee of \$33 for all Police Checks completed in Peel Region**
 - The agency may require household members over the age of 18 to complete a police check as part of the mentor screening process on a case by case basis
 - If you live outside Brampton or Mississauga, there will be a different form and process for the Police check. ***Please contact us if you live outside of Brampton or Mississauga.***
 - In Mississauga and Brampton, Police checks are submitted by the applicant and returned by mail to the applicant.
 - **We need to see the ORIGINAL version of your police check in order to accept it as valid.**
 - We can take a copy once the original has been seen by a staff person.
 - We will only accept vulnerable police checks completed in the last **6 months** from your application date
- ✓ IN-PERSON INTERVIEW by Program Staff – While we are completing your references a Program Staff person will be in touch to schedule your in-person volunteer interview
- ✓ PRE-MATCH & PROGRAM TRAINING
- ✓ YOU ARE READY TO BEGIN VOLUNTEERING!!

WORKING TOGETHER – EVERYONE HAS A ROLE TO PLAY

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

- **Your Program Staff will be in touch with you regularly** to check in, to hear about all the fun you are having with your Little and to problem-solve together if necessary. We will be there to support and encourage you throughout your entire volunteer experience.
- **The safety of children is extremely important** to all of us at Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel. Prior to becoming involved in our programs ALL volunteers, children and families participate in a Pre-Match Training with a focus on child safety, healthy relationships and establishing a mentoring relationship as well as everyone's responsibility in the event of a disclosure of abuse.
- **Regular check-ins are determined by BBBSC National Standards and are an essential element of child safety in our programs**

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).

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.

57% of our program volunteers have identified themselves as coming from a diverse background.

71% 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 individuals 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.

BBBSP's Commitment to The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act

Providing Goods and Services to People with Disabilities

BBBSP CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY

- BBBSP is committed to excellence in providing service to individuals, including people with disabilities
- Reasonable efforts will be made to provide all persons equal opportunity to obtain, use and benefit from BBBSP services.
- We will ensure that services are provided in a manner and format that respects the dignity and independence of persons with disabilities

SERVICE ACCESS ISSUES

- If you notice that someone with a disability is having difficulty accessing any BBBSP services, simply ask how you may help.
- Have concerns?? There is a feedback form available through our web-site and in hard-copy at the front desk of our office.
- If a person is unable to complete the form themselves, you need to fill it out on their behalf and submit it, as soon as practicable, to the Program Manager. Our agency is mandated to reply to all feedback within 10 business days.

INTERRUPTION OF ACCESS TO BBBSP SERVICES

- On occasion, a temporary problem could limit access to BBBSP, either by phone, internet or attending the office.
- If this occurs, a notice must be posted advising individuals of the problem, when it is expected to be addressed and alternate means of contacting the agency.

HOW TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

- Being able to interact with people with disabilities is a big part of providing accessible customer service.
- While involved with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Peel, you will likely encounter people with various abilities. Please make the time to review some tips on our website which will help you to assist these individuals, while respecting their independence and dignity.

Please contact us if you would like to receive a full length copy of our
Accessible Client Service Policy

More information about our Agency and Programs is available on our website at www.bbbspeel.com.

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