

Welcome to Big Sister Association of Greater Boston



Big Sister Training for
Site-Based Mentoring



» Training Objective

To prepare you with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and sustain an effective relationship with your Little Sister in the School-Based Mentoring program.



» Why Pre-Match Training?

Research has shown that when volunteers engage in training before being matched:

- › Relationships last longer
- › Relationships are higher quality
- › Both mentors and mentees report more satisfying relationships
- › Relationships result in better outcomes for mentees

(Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, Third Edition)



» Training Agenda

- › About Big Sister
- › Big Sister Role & Volunteer Guidelines
- › Why Girls Need Mentors
- › Building a Healthy Match Relationship
- › Next Steps



» About Big Sister Boston

- › Oldest and largest mentoring organization in Greater Boston exclusively serving girls
- › Founded in 1951
- › Grown from six girls served in our first year to more than 2,700 girls served annually
- › **ONLY** agency affiliated with Big Brothers Big Sisters of America that is solely serving women and girls and with a gender-specific lens on our research-based best practices



» About Site-Based Mentoring

Program Structure:

- › Visits take place on school grounds only.
- › Contact outside of school is **NOT permitted**; letter writing is permitted with consent from parent/guardian.

Commitment:

- › Minimum commitment is **one year**, equivalent to three academic semesters.
- › Research and experience has shown us that the **longer a match stays together, the more of a positive impact** it has on the Little Sister. We encourage you to continue past this initial commitment if you are able to!



» About Site-Based Mentoring

Match Visits:

- › Once a week for 45 minutes to one hour depending on Little Sister's lunch or after-school schedule.
- › Visits are one-to-one (just you and your Little Sister).

Program Information:

- › Girls in our program are in grades 2-5 and typically range in age from 7-11 years old. They come from diverse racial, ethnic, and socio-economic backgrounds.
- › Girls are referred to us by teachers, counselors, and parents, or girls can refer themselves. We believe that ALL girls can benefit from the added guidance and support of a caring adult mentor.



» Your Enrollment & Match Support Specialist

You will receive support from a team of professional staff at all stages of the Enrollment and Matching process, and once you are matched.

Before you are matched, your Enrollment & Match Support Specialist will...

- › Interview you to learn more about you, to help find the best Little Sister for you
- › Match you with a Little Sister, and tell you about her and why she is a good match
- › Facilitate your first meeting at the school to get your relationship off to a great start



» Your Enrollment & Match Support Specialist

After you are matched, your Enrollment and Match Support Specialist will...

- › Check in with you regularly by phone, email, or in person. You are required to communicate with your Match Support Specialist at least every other month.
- › Help you navigate your growing mentoring relationship with your Little Sister.
- › Support you when you have questions or concerns regarding your match.
- › **Be an ear to listen!**



» Program Expectations

- › Meet with your Little Sister **once a week** during the designated time at her school or after-school program.
- › Keep visits one-to-one and on **school grounds only**.
- › You may choose to **pen-pal** with your Little Sister during school vacations, if her parent or guardian has given written consent.
- › Respect your Little's **confidentiality** unless there is a safety concern.
- › Keep activities **low to no cost**, and refrain from elaborate gift giving: it's the memories that matter!
- › Maintain **open and honest communication** with your Little Sister and with school personnel.
- › Communicate **regularly** with your Match Support Specialist (contact is required every other month at minimum).



» Measuring Youth Outcomes

The **Big Brothers Big Sisters Youth Outcomes Survey (YOS)** is given to girls age 9 and older before they are matched, and again at the end of the school year. The YOS is given to Little Sisters every year and the results are compared with the previous years.

2014 Youth Outcome Survey Findings:

- › 94% of mentored youth improved or trended toward improving in measures of social acceptance
- › 90% of mentored youth improved or trended toward improving in measures of avoidance of risky behaviors
- › 90% of mentored youth improved or trended toward improving in measures of educational expectations, such as graduating high school and enrolling in college



» Qualities of Effective Mentors

- ✓ Recognize that it **takes time to build a relationship**, so the mentor may need to take the lead in the beginning stages.
- ✓ Pay attention to the **need for FUN!**
- ✓ **Respect** the youth's viewpoint.
- ✓ Seek and utilize the **help and advice** of program staff.



» Qualities of LESS Effective Mentors

- X **Demand** that the Little play an equal role in initiating contact.
- X Attempt to transform or reform, adopt a **parental/authoritative** role.
- X Have difficulty meeting **consistently**.
- X **Ignore** the advice of program staff.



» Role of a Big Sister

What it is:

- ✓ Adult friend
- ✓ Confidant
- ✓ Cheerleader
- ✓ Coach
- ✓ Role model
- ✓ Good listener

What it is not:

- ✗ Parent
- ✗ Therapist
- ✗ Peer
- ✗ Tutor
- ✗ Savior
- ✗ Someone with all the answers



» Volunteer Guidelines

Safety & Supervision:

You are responsible for the safety & supervision of your Little Sister during your visits. **Do not leave her unattended.** Additionally, be thoughtful about safety during any activities that you do together.

Consistency:

Visiting your Little Sister every week on your assigned visit day is the most important thing that you can do as a Big Sister. **You are showing her that adults can be trusted and follow through** with their promises, which is especially important for Little Sisters who may not have consistent adults in their life, or have experienced losses that make it harder for them to trust.



» Volunteer Guidelines

Privacy & Confidentiality:

Keep personal information about your Little Sister and her family confidential. If your Little Sister knows that she can confide in you and rely on you not to share personal things she shares, this will help build a strong relationship. Your Match Support Specialist is an exception to this rule – use her as a resource for any and all issues that arise in your match.

If your Little Sister shares something with you that indicates that she may be in danger (or that someone else is) and you are concerned about her wellbeing, this is not a secret you can keep. **Speak with your Match Support Specialist immediately, and inform the site contact or another adult in the school before you leave the building.**



» Volunteer Guidelines

Gift-giving:

We ask Big Sisters to keep their **focus on the “intangible”** aspects of the relationship, such as friendship. These things help your Little Sister feel good about herself. If given, gifts should be limited to something small, low-cost and meaningful at your Little Sister’s birthday or major holiday.

Dress:

Be conscious of **dressing in an appropriate and respectful manner** when visiting the school: avoid clothing that is overly revealing, or that has adult content (such as alcohol advertisement, sexual content, etc.). Remember you are a role model.



» Volunteer Guidelines

Food:

You are welcome to bring your own lunch or a snack to eat while you meet with your Little Sister. **While it is okay to bring a snack to share, be mindful that if you bring something every week you are setting the expectation that bringing food is your role.** Please be aware of modeling healthy eating habits, and know that many schools have restrictions on foods that can be brought in. Boston Public Schools provides free breakfast and lunch for all students, so it is not necessary to buy lunch for your Little Sister.



» Volunteer Guidelines

Positive Closure: Ending Your Match Relationship

Research shows that when a mentoring relationship **ends before the one year anniversary, it can do more harm** than good to the child. If you need to end your match, please be in touch with your Match Support Specialist to help plan a thoughtful good-bye.

When relationships end without an opportunity to say good-bye, it leaves room for misunderstandings. **Having a planned and thoughtful good-bye is vital** for the completion of your relationship with your Little Sister.



Why Girls Need Mentors

What are some of the challenges girls
face?



» Girls' Development

- › In childhood, many girls have a **strong sense of self** and feel confident speaking their minds
- › In early adolescence, girls **begin to question** what they think and feel
- › Girls' desire to connect with others can result in **inauthentic relationships**
- › All girls experience **development differently**



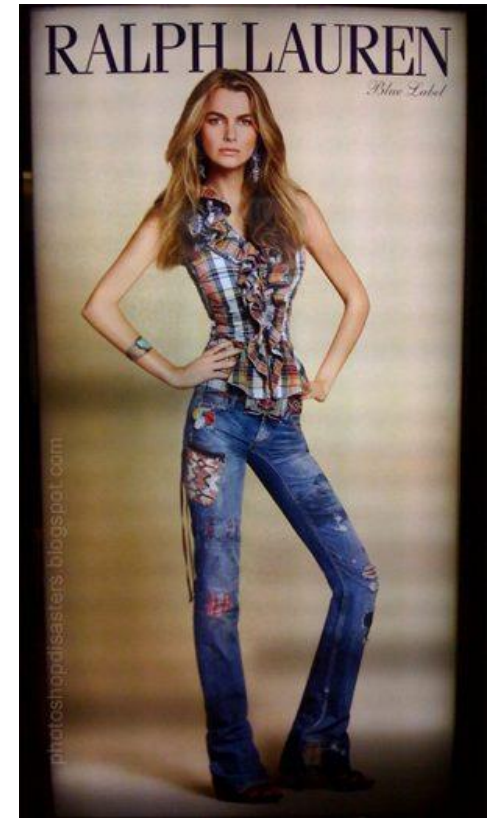
» School

- › In a 2004 Boston survey, 22% of girls cited **personal/family responsibilities** as a reason for truancy.
(Boston Youth Survey, 2004)
- › Girls from **Boston and Chelsea** are less likely to graduate from high school in four years and are approximately twice as likely to drop out of school than girls statewide.
(Girls' Initiative Report on High Risk Girls and Gender-Specific Programming, 2009)
- › More than half (60%) of **LGBT youth report feeling unsafe** in school because of their sexual orientation.
(National School Climate Survey, GLESN, 2007)



» Media

- › The proliferation of media imagery has “negative effects in a variety of domains, including cognitive functioning, physical and mental health, and healthy sexual development.”
(2007 American Psychological Association Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls)
- › Nationwide, 38% of young women reported that they thought they were overweight, despite the fact that only 10% were actually overweight.



Miss Representation

(2011)



» Mental Health: Using a Gender Lens

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

- › Girls experience **PTSD** at a rate twice that of boys.

Substance Abuse

- › Girls use **stimulants and cigarettes** more often to control weight.
- › Trauma is linked to increased rates of **smoking, drinking, and drug** use.

Depression

- › In a 2007 study, 31% of girls reported feeling so **sad or depressed** daily for two weeks during the previous year that they discontinued usual activities.





Girls need experiences in which they can exert control over more than their bodies, sexuality or appearance; where they can connect to their own worth, to a positive belief system and to others who will commit to them, and where they can experience support and encouragement to learn to persist in the face of struggles.

*-Cultivating Hardiness Zones for Adolescent Girls,
Dr. Lyn Mikel Brown, 2001*



» Building Resiliency

Confidence

Empower your Little Sister to **believe that there is no limit** to what she can dream, do, and achieve.

Competence

Encourage your Little Sister to **make healthy decisions** for herself and take hold of her future.

Caring

Help your Little Sister develop **authentic relationships** based on kindness, trust, and respect.





The positive
relationships
between women and
girls
that are built through
Big Sister Boston's
program act as
protective

factors for  **all girls.**
Big Sister Association
of Greater Boston

» Tips for Building a
**Healthy Match
Relationship**

- › Listen and accept feelings
- › Be patient
- › Be consistent
- › Set appropriate limits and boundaries
- › See your Little Sister's strengths
- › Reach out! Your Match Support Specialist is here to support you!



» Effective Communication

You can set the tone in the relationship by listening and talking with your Little Sister in a manner that lets her know that what she has to say is important. Some things to be aware of:

Non-verbal communication:

Facial expressions, body language, eye contact, and tone of voice, all contribute to your Little Sister believing that you are listening and interested.

Listening:

Pay attention to what she says. Ask for clarification if you need it. Listen completely and resist the temptation to respond immediately—avoid assumptions.

Talking:

Use age appropriate language and “I” statements, rather than “you” statements. Engage in open communication rather than closed communication.



» Open & Closed Communication

Open:

Acknowledging what your Little Sister is saying and facilitating further discussion and understanding.

Closed:

Shutting down the lines of communication and leaving your Little Sister feeling judged or misunderstood.

My teacher doesn't like me, he's really mean.

Open:

You sound really upset. Did something happen at school?

Closed:

He's not mean. He's just doing his job. Teaching is difficult.



» Open & Closed Communication

Practice:

What are some open and closed responses to the following?

I hate school.
It's terrible.

My mom is so mean. She never listens to me.

I don't want to do that.
It's boring.



I hate school.
It's terrible.

Closed:

You should like school—it's important. I thought school was fun.

Open:

That sounds stressful. What don't you like about it?

My mom is so mean. She never listens to me.

Closed:

She's not trying to be mean; she has a lot of responsibility.

Open:

Were you trying to talk with her about something?



I don't
want
to do
that.
It's
boring.

Closed:

You think everything
is boring.

Open:

Have you tried it
before? Can we try
it for a few minutes
and see what
you think?



» Boundaries & Mentoring Relationships with Girls

Boundaries:

- › The framework within which the relationships occurs
- › Help set parameters and make relationship safe

Potential Boundary Issues:

- › Self-disclosure
- › Safety issues/concerns
- › Physical contact
- › Setting limits



» Boundaries & Mentoring Relationships with Girls

Physical contact

While a hug may seem harmless to you, people have varying levels of comfort with physical contact. It's important to respect your Little Sister's boundaries and for her to learn to set boundaries regarding her body and personal space.

Setting limits

Remember that while this is a friendship, you and your Little Sister are not peers. You are the adult, which means that there will be times when it is appropriate for you to set limits. This is different than disciplining your Little Sister, which you should not do.



» Boundaries & Mentoring Relationships with Girls

Self-disclosure

While we want you to be your authentic self as a mentor, it is not necessary for your Little Sister to know everything about your life. Be prepared for personal questions and practice establishing boundaries in a kind manner.

Safety issues/concerns

As discussed earlier, there is a difference between privacy and confidentiality. You have a responsibility for your Little Sister's safety and well-being that requires you to share concerns with Big Sister staff.



» Why Boundaries Are Important

- › **Role modeling:** girls see effective boundary setting
- › **Good practice:** an important skill for girls to learn
- › **Socialization:** girls often worry about being “nice” and/or put the needs of others first
- › **Role clarity:** especially about who is responsible for adult tasks
- › **Creates** a feeling of safety for girls
- › **Prevents** Big Sister from feeling overly responsible



» Myths & Realities

I will change
my Little
Sister's life
in big,
noticeable
ways.

Only girls with
significant
problems have
Big Sisters.



» Myths & Realities

Myth:

I will change my Little Sister's life in big, noticeable ways.

- › It is important to maintain realistic expectations and realize a Big Sister's role is to plant seeds of hope and caring. Therefore, a Big Sister may or may not see the positive impact of their relationship on the child's life in the present.
- › Your focus should be on being consistent, building trust, and having fun.

- › Girls are referred for a wide variety of reasons.
- › Participation is voluntary for all members.
- › We believe that all girls can benefit from a mentor and that positive relationships can help them grow into caring, confident and competent individuals.

Myth:

Only girls with significant problems have Big Sisters.



» Myths & Realities

My Little Sister
will pour her
heart out to me
because I am a
caring person who
wants to make a
difference.

The most
important
objective of the
program is to
have fun.



» Myths & Realities

Myth:

My Little Sister will pour her heart out to me because I am a caring person who wants to make a difference.

- › Not all girls want to talk about personal concerns. They may see a Big Sister as a respite or escape from other issues. Or, the family may have strong boundaries around discussing personal concerns with individuals outside of the family. Remember that you are making a difference by being consistent, engaged, and reliable.

- › Some people may think that the purpose of our program is to help your Little Sister do better in school or to increase her social skills. The reality is that it is activity-based. Focusing on fun is one of the best ways to build a relationship.

Reality:

The most important objective of the program is to have fun.



» Next Steps

- ✓ Please click here to complete a brief quiz:
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Pre-Match-Quiz>
This is vital to being matched with a Little Sister.
- ✓ Be in touch with your Enrollment & Match Support Specialist for any follow-up questions or additional material.

