

Volunteer Guidelines

“**Volunteer Guidelines**” is your reference tool for building and maintaining a rewarding relationship with your Little Sister. Refer to it often for policies and guidelines in the following areas.

- You and Your Little
- Scheduling Match Visits
- Match Activities
- Working with the Family
- Setting Limits — Money and Gift Giving
- Including Others
- Child Safety

You and Your Little

- Be consistent and dependable; your Little Sister must learn to trust you. Don't oversleep, break dates, or make promises you can't keep!
- Never break confidence by sharing your Little Sister's personal information with others. Discuss **limits** of confidentiality with your social worker.
- Never discuss your Little Sister, her situation or her problems with others, particularly in front of her.
- We trust you! Be yourself and focus on fun.

Scheduling Match Visits

- We suggest that you keep your time with your Little Sister to the 3-4 hour limit and not keep her all day. This will help her maintain realistic expectations and establish consistency in your relationship.
- We suggest that you plan your next outing at the end of each visit. Call your Little Sister midweek and discuss the activity and solidify a time to get together. **You will be the one doing most of the calling and it will at times feel very one-sided. THIS IS NORMAL!**
- Let your Little Sister share in activity ideas and decision-making.
- Be sure that you get her parent's or guardian's approval of the day and time before you hang up.
- Always call the night before to remind your Little Sister and her Guardian. You also want to call before you leave the house and tell your Little Sister and her Guardian that you will be there soon.

Match Activities

Excerpt from Volunteer Training and Resource Guide

Page 1

S:\Community Based\Member's Portal\Big Resources\Training Guides and Helpful Tips\Volunteer Guidelines CBM6.07.doc

- All Big Sisters and Little Sisters are encouraged to attend agency-sponsored activities so that your match has the opportunity to share and participate in a group setting. Some of the agency's programs include:
 - Girl Power (Girl's Safety Program for Little Sisters age 7 - 11)
 - Teen Choices Weekend (a Girl's Safety Program for Little Sisters age 12-17)
 - Big Sister Support Groups (for Big Sisters only)
 - Holiday parties, and many others
- Be sure to check the Big Sister monthly online calendar, the intranet, and your email for additional agency sponsored activities and ticket offerings.
- Focus on low-cost or no-cost events.
- Always return your Little Sister to her home at the agreed upon time.

Working with the family

- Be non-judgmental about your Little Sister's family. If your Little Sister complains or vents about her family, provide support and a compassionate, listening ear. Refrain from commenting in ways that put the parent or guardian down. Always be supportive of her parent even when you disagree. The key is to listen to your Little Sister without judgment and to assure her of your empathy and caring.
- Leave parenting to the parent. Do not give advice on parenting. For example, while it can be appropriate for the Big Sister to correct misbehavior within the context of the relationship, *do not* interfere if the parent disciplines the Little Sister in your presence.
- Always remember that your primary relationship is with your Little Sister, not the family. Avoid being drawn into family tensions and do not intrude upon family matters. Focus the conversation on what you are doing with your Little Sister and on scheduling match visits. Focus on one-to-one visits with your Little Sister.
- Please say "no" to any and all inappropriate requests, such as babysitting or helping the guardian run errands. When in doubt, check with your Match Support social worker.
- If a family asks about basic needs such as clothing, food or other supports, contact your Match Support social worker, who can work with the family and possibly help locate resources to assist.

Setting Limits — Money and Gift Giving

- We suggest that you set limits on the amount of money you spend on outings. This could be a good opportunity for you to teach your Little Sister about budgeting! Let her help plan the activities but also feel free to say no to something that is too expensive or to redirect her to something which is lower-cost.
- We suggest that most of your activities be low-cost or no-cost. Your Match Support social worker will help you talk to the guardian about his or her ability to provide

Excerpt from Volunteer Training and Resource Guide

Page 2

S:\Community Based\Member's Portal\Big Resources\Training Guides and Helpful Tips\Volunteer Guidelines CBM6.07.doc

money for the outings at the match meeting.

- Don't try to be Santa Claus, her mother, her taxi cab service, a "child savior" or a "child-rehabilitator". **Focus on activities and just have fun!**
- Be prudent about buying your Little Sister material things: your relationship is about friendship, not what you can buy her. Children will sometimes test you on this or innocently ask for something without a true understanding of cost. It is a good idea to think about how you will handle money before you enter into the relationship.
- A gift should be limited to something small and meaningful at her birthday or major holiday. An example might be a framed picture of the two of you together.

Including Others

- During the first three months after your Match Meeting, we suggest that you keep your outings to a one-to-one basis and not include others (such as your relatives or her relatives or friends). This provides the time for you and Little Sister to build the trust and friendship between the two of you.
- After three months, at times when you do **occasionally** include others, remember that your Little Sister trusts you as a confidant. Never break that confidence by sharing your Little Sister's personal information with others.
- You may **NEVER** leave your Little Sister alone with anyone, even a trusted friend or family member.
- Sleepovers may happen after the first three months, but check in with your Match Support social worker before suggesting them.

Child Safety

If your Little Sister discloses abuse, take action.

- Be calm and listen carefully.
- Let your Little Sister know that you believe it is not her fault. Do not confuse mistakes in judgment for blame. Sometimes people use poor judgment in situations that lead up to the assault. However, abuse or assault is **never** your Little Sister's fault. Avoid statements like:
 - "If you had only done what I told you..."
 - "You should have known better..."
 - "Why did you let him/her do that?"
 - "I told you not to..."

While these statements might be well intentioned, they blame the Little Sister, thereby re-victimizing her. Little Sisters will often feel guilty and will need the support of adults to alleviate self-blame. *Offenders are 100% responsible for abuse.*

- **CALL YOUR SOCIAL WORKER FOR SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE.**

Excerpt from Volunteer Training and Resource Guide

Page 3

S:\Community Based\Member's Portal\Big Resources\Training Guides and Helpful Tips\Volunteer Guidelines CBM6.07.doc

Err on the side of caution and call them even if you are unsure about whether something happened. Your Social Worker will help you handle the situation appropriately.

- Outside of regular business hours, if you feel that something is an emergency, don't wait to take action.

To report a possible child at-risk situation, call 1-800-792-5200.

The Judge Baker Children's Center has a 30-member staff, trained to assess the urgency of each call, elicit critical information and provide a sympathetic ear. In situations where children are at imminent risk, an emergency response is initiated, with DSS field staff launching the investigations. The Hotline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, with DSS area offices fielding calls weekdays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and JBCC covering evening and weekends.

- In subsequent match visits, do not push or pressure her to talk about the abuse. Let her take the lead. Sometimes being a good listener is the best thing you can do.

General Advice for all Big Sisters

- **Please call your social worker often.**
- We would like to talk with you more frequently in the early stages of your relationship—a minimum of once per month after the initial few visits, when we will check in weekly.
- Talking frequently provides an opportunity to discuss problems, concerns, or successes of the relationship. The social worker can also provide the volunteer with a better understanding of certain situations which may arise, and can also obtain information which can aid the Big Sister in her relationships with the child/family.
- Don't ever hesitate to call your Match Support Social Worker for any reason! We love to hear your successes and happy match stories, and are experienced in helping matches navigate through challenges. We look forward to your calls.