

# OUR COMMITMENT

At Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, we believe that all children and youth deserve to live in a world that makes them feel cared for and protected.

Helping to ensure the safety and well-being in the life of every child that engages with one of our local agencies is our highest priority.

## THE CRITICAL ROLE OF CARING ADULTS IN PREVENTING VIOLENCE AND HEALING TRAUMA

As a nationwide organization, we are committed to being part of the solution toward reducing the violence and victimization children and youth face, and addressing the impact of trauma in children's lives across the hundreds of communities served by our local agencies.

Research shows that children need caring adults in their lives to build protective factors that help to reduce their chances of victimization of all kinds.

Research also demonstrates that caring adults can play a critically important role in helping to heal youth that have been exposed to violence and trauma in their neighborhoods, schools, communities and sometimes their own homes.



## QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

If you have any questions or concerns, contact your local affiliate through

[www.bbbs.org/get-involved](http://www.bbbs.org/get-involved)

or contact Big Brothers Big Sisters of America at

[childsafety@bbbsa.org](mailto:childsafety@bbbsa.org)



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# YOUTH PROTECTION IN BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS

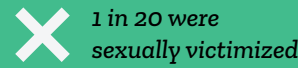
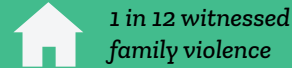
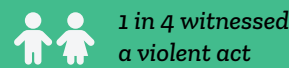
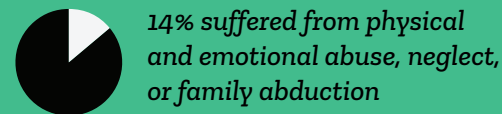
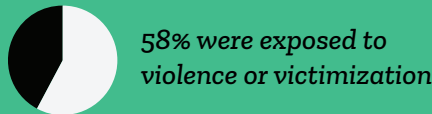




## THE SCOPE OF CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE AND VICTIMIZATION

Adverse Childhood Experiences research informs us that more than 50% of children in the U.S. will experience at least one type of trauma. Some children will experience multiple types of trauma, severe enough to negatively impact their ability to learn, grow, and develop their full potential.

### 2015 study by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention



To achieve the best possible outcomes for children and families, and to best protect children served by Big Brothers Big Sisters from emotional, physical, or sexual harm, we continue to build on our decades-long history of being an industry leader among youth-serving organizations in youth protection practices.

Following the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's framework, we are working to ensure that everyone associated with our organization is trained to:

- Realize the impact of trauma and the potential for recovery
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma
- Respond by integrating knowledge into policies, procedures and practices
- Seek to actively reduce re-traumatization

## SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN LOCAL BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS PROGRAMS

Sadly, all youth serving organizations, including sports, schools, recreation, and mentoring programs, face the reality that the children served may be hurt by the adults who are supposed to protect them. Each Big Brothers Big Sisters agency has put in place important policies, procedures, and training designed to help keep children safer while participating in a local program.

Child sexual abuse is a tragic and complex societal issue. Although leading experts report that annual rates of substantiated child sexual abuse in the U.S. have declined significantly over the past two decades, we recognize that childhood victimization remains much too prevalent. Experts believe that in the U.S., 1 out of 4 girls, and 1 out of 6 boys will be sexually abused by the age of 18.

## HOW DO LOCAL PROGRAMS PROTECT CHILDREN WHILE IN THEIR CARE?

### Nationally Required Standards of Excellence

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) affiliated agencies are separate 501©3 organizations that have the primary responsibility for risk management and youth protection in their organizations. This includes the establishment of local policies and procedures that best protect youth, effective screening and selection of staff and volunteers, and professional monitoring of match relationships.

For decades, BBBSA has worked with local agencies and national violence prevention experts to implement nationwide standards based on industry best practice of high quality in service delivery. On a constant basis, we work with agencies and outside experts to carefully examine our standards and service delivery model as emerging best practices in child safety evolve.

### Training in Child Protection

Everyone associated with a Big Brothers Big Sisters program, including professional staff, parents, volunteers, children and board members, is required to be trained in recognizing and responding to suspected child abuse.

### Parents as Partners

When it comes to the future of our children and the well-being of our communities, we are all in this together. So it should come as no surprise that we need the parents and guardians of Littles to be involved every step of the way. Parents approve the selection of their child's Big and remain in close contact with professional staff to look out for their child's best interests and to help achieve the best possible outcomes for their child. Parents approve all activities and outings between Bigs and Littles and communicate regularly with their child and their Big to help ensure healthy and safe relationship development.

### Screening & Selection of Bigs

Making the best possible match between a Little and a Big is critical to the growth and development of a child. But before we begin the matching process, agency professional staff start by thoroughly screening potential Bigs.

Big Brothers Big Sisters National Standards of Excellence require each volunteer to complete an extensive screening process that includes:

- Completion of a formal written application
- Background and reference checks
- An in-person interview
- An orientation and training process that outlines the individualized needs of the child and provides information and resources on how to encourage each child's development

### Professional Match Support

Our highly qualified, specially trained match support professionals are responsible for helping to ensure that relationships between Littles and Bigs are developing in a healthy, safe way for everyone involved. They're also responsible for helping guide mentoring relationships that will be enduring and enriching, and result in positive outcomes for youth, unique to Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Our ongoing match support process is extensive, and includes:

- Required match supervision by trained staff, including ongoing communication with match participants for the life of a match
- Professional monitoring of adherence to safety-related policies and procedures focused on maintaining appropriate boundaries and healthy relationship development
- Nationwide technology that tracks and monitors match activities and Littles' progress in areas such as academics, avoidance of risky behaviors, socio-emotional development, and aspirations

## REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

Our child abuse response protocols were developed in consultation with federal law enforcement and require that local agencies train professional staff to recognize, respond, and immediately report any suspicions or allegations of child abuse or exploitation to child protection or law enforcement professionals. Agencies are also required by national standard to report any allegation or suspicion of child abuse or exploitation involving an adult associated with Big Brothers Big Sisters to BBBSA's youth protection team and to law enforcement within 24 hours.

The rate of reports made to Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies involving child sexual abuse or exploitation occurring between individuals associated with the organization amounts to a very small fraction of a percentage point per year based on children served annually. Included in those reports are incidents that may have occurred years or even decades before the report was submitted. We are profoundly saddened by accounts of any child being abused, harmed, or exploited and work tirelessly to prevent harm.

For more information on how you can help protect children, we encourage you to visit our website at: [www.bbbs.org/youthprotection](http://www.bbbs.org/youthprotection).

