



POST-SECONDARY SUCCESS & NEW GIRLS NETWORK SAFETY GUIDELINES

Introduction

Thank you for being a part of the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) community. Our program is rooted in the power of mentoring, where caring adults help young adults build confidence, access opportunities, and reach their goals.

Even though mentees in the Post-Secondary Success and New Girls Network programs are 18+ adults, the mentoring relationship still carries a power dynamic. Mentors are expected to remain role models and uphold the highest standards of safety, respect, and boundaries at all times.

Our goal is for all participants to feel supported, respected, and safe. These guidelines highlight the most important considerations for adult-to-adult mentoring relationships. The safety of each participant in our program is our top priority. We want you to be well-informed about our agency's safety guidelines and feel prepared to handle issues that may arise. The more prepared you are, the more confident you will be, and the less likely it is that you will encounter situations that require intervention.

The guidelines and recommendations in this document were developed by our professional staff based on our years of experience supporting thousands of mentoring relationships along with input from Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, child safety experts and best practices from the mentoring field. This document is not exhaustive; however, it does outline specific guidelines for most common issues.

Please remember that participants are required to adhere to local, state and federal laws and the guidelines provided in this document at all times; not doing so may result in the termination of a match.

In addition to this guide, remember that our Team is here to support each mentoring pair and we will provide ongoing guidance around mentoring best practices. We always want you to feel supported on your BBBS journey, so please do not hesitate to discuss with a Program Coordinator any questions or concerns that may arise about safety issues or these guidelines. That's what we're here for!

Trauma Informed Mentoring

Trauma Informed Mentoring Mentors are responsible for the emotional and physical safety and well-being of their mentees when they are spending time together.

If you ever suspect that a mentee is experiencing significant trauma or abuse in any form, please partner with our agency and contact your Program Coordinator as soon as possible (see Confidentiality section below). You do not need to have all the details or proof of harm to initiate a conversation with your support team. BBBS promotes a trauma informed approach to mentoring. Your first priority as a trauma informed mentor is to be consistent, trusting and collaborative. Here's some basic guidance on a trauma-informed approach to mentoring.

Trauma Informed Behaviors

- Be respectful and patient
- Listen first, ask open-ended questions and validate responses
- Indicate a willingness to help and act collaboratively
- Role model calming strategies
- Showcase a belief in your mentee's potential
- Separate behaviors from the person
- Celebrate what makes your mentee unique and brave

Mentor Self-Care

- Process your own emotions before mentoring activities
- Believe in your own goodness and return to your reasons for doing this work
- Find a sense of centeredness around your role; Know that change takes time
- Empower your mentee to share in authoring of this relationship
- Know that you are not alone; Connect with your community of mentors and mentee supports

Core Safety Principles

Power Dynamics -- Recognize that, even though your mentee is an adult, you are in a position of influence and trust.

Do not misuse this power dynamic. Mentorship must remain non-exploitative, supportive, and professional.

Boundaries & Physical Contact -- Respect personal boundaries always.

There should be no physical contact or interaction of a sexual nature between mentors & mentees even if both are consenting adults. This is a misuse of the power dynamics in a mentoring relationship and is a violation of trust. It is not acceptable for mentors and mentees to view, use or share pornography or sexually explicit materials

Confidentiality & Safety Concerns -- Conversations with your mentee are private unless you are concerned for their safety (e.g., threats of self-harm, harm to others, or risky/illegal behavior).

Do not promise to keep secrets. Be upfront that safety-related concerns must be shared with BBBS staff.

Transportation -- It is important for mentors to follow all local, state and federal laws while driving with your match party. If something unusual occurs while driving (e.g. being pulled over, an accident, etc.) it's important to let your Program Coordinator know what happened so that we can appropriately support all parties involved.

Firearms -- If a mentor owns or acquires any weapons or firearms, they must disclose this information to BBBS staff throughout the life of their match. BBBS staff will notify the mentee.

Substance Use -- Be mindful of your role as a mentor. If your mentee is under 21, you may not drink alcohol, smoke, or use substances in their presence.

With 21+ mentees, occasional social situations involving alcohol may occur, but excessive drinking, drug use, or impaired behavior is never acceptable.

If a mentor or mentee suspects that their mentoring partner is inebriated during a mentoring event or has an unhealthy relationship with substances, they should inform their Program Coordinator.

Gifts & Financial Boundaries -- Mentees may turn to their mentors to discuss financial uncertainty. It is very important that a mentor does not attempt to financially support a mentee in these circumstances. Providing financial support compromises the role of a mentor and disenfranchises the mentee. It also alters a fragile power dynamic in a mentoring relationship, often times leading to premature and unhealthy relationship closure.

If mentors feel concerned about the health and wellness of their mentee, related to their lack of resources, they should inform their Program Coordinator as soon as possible. Together, all parties will work with the mentee to identify resources. By doing so, we will role model a resourcefulness that will serve a mentee long-term

Birthdays, holidays and match anniversaries allow for thoughtful gift giving opportunities (small gifts in the realm of a printed photo-frame, mementos from an outing, a handmade item or heartfelt card). Gift giving is not an expectation of our program. That said, small gifts are reasonable and permitted when they serve the purpose of strengthening the relationship, celebrating a mentee or reinforcing positive habits

Overnights -- Overnights are not permitted in any form, including trips, vacations, or staying in one another's homes. In extraordinary circumstances BBBSEM may issue a waiver to this policy. To apply for consideration, please talk to your Match Support Coordinator and they will complete the appropriate paperwork to submit for leadership approval. This process takes 2 weeks to complete, any overnights scheduled within that time frame will not be considered. Waivers will not be considered within the 1st year of the match.

Online & Social Media -- Use discretion in connecting on social media. Obtain permission from your mentee to like or follow them and be mindful of what you post regarding this program. Please make the appropriate adjustments to photos, videos, comments, and posts to ensure that all content that can be viewed by your mentee is appropriate and empowering. Always role model positive digital citizenship.

Do not share your mentee's personal information (full name, address, family background) without consent.

Failure to comply with any of these rules will be cause for halting all mentoring activity and may result in your dismissal from the BBBS program.

Your role as a mentor is to support, encourage, and inspire, while also modeling healthy relationships and boundaries. Thank you for helping us maintain a safe, respectful, and empowering space for young adults to thrive.

BBBS Match Support: 617-956-0283.
(Monday–Thursday: 9–7pm, Friday: 9–5pm)