

General Effects:

Poverty: Single guardians may have less money and may expend resources dealing over custody or legal concerns. Poverty can cause increased guardian and child stress.

Substance Abuse: Children of divorced parents are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol to cope with the stress that often accompanies divorce.

Academic Problems: Children who are raised by happily married guardians perform better on numerous measures of child adjustment and welfare. The most notable of these measures is school performance.

Stress: Divorce often results in many changes in children's living situations such as changing schools, child care, homes, etc. Children often have to make adjustments in relationships with friends and extended family members. These changes create a more stressful environment for children.

Desertion: In divorce, it is common for one guardian to lose some level of contact with the child. In these circumstances, children may develop feelings of abandonment, loss and depression.

Guardian Loss: Divorce may result in loss of contact with one guardian resulting in the child also losing the knowledge, skills and resources (emotional, financial, etc.) of that guardian. As a result, they may seek out others who can provide them with these missing pieces.

Advice for Mentors:

Show commitment and allow your Little to understand that you are in this long-term.

- Express commitment to your Little in various ways. A Big may want to create a calendar with the match activities you will be scheduling with your Little. Allowing a Little to see this will illustrate that this is long-term, and show them that you are not leaving and build a sense of connection.
- Avoid cancelling hang outs as much as possible. It is especially important to show your Little that you will not break plans and leave. This will allow them to trust you. If you do need to cancel, be sure to do it in advance and provide your Little with an alternative time to hang out. Apologize for rescheduling and emphasize that you WANT to spend time together.

Model healthy relationships.

- Model humility, appreciation and pride in relationships. Be sure to express when you are wrong and apologize accordingly. Conversely, increase the amount of verbal affirmation in your relationship. Praise your Little when they do something well and show appreciation for nice gestures. This role modeling will build character in your Little.
- On rare occasions show your Little what good relationships look like. Maybe one time in the relationship, bring along a friend and show a Little how you act together. Do not make this a habit, but this may be a good one-time event to look forward to once the relationship has developed. Share examples of positive relationships with friends, family members or significant others. Set a good example.
- Respect closeness between child and guardian. Understand your role as a secondary figure. In a single guardian household, that individual has to act as both mother and father. This evidently leads to stress. If a child expresses frustration, be supportive and help to alleviate the pressure by giving the child an opportunity to talk about it or focusing on other enjoyable activities. Always remain positive and do not take sides.

Financial:

- While a Big may know that a family is struggling with finances, they should not feel responsible for payments or purchases. Even good intentions can demonstrate a lack of respect for a guardian's financial standing. A guardian's ability to contribute financially is not a reflection of their skills, support or role. Speak to guardians about what they can offer and what they would like you to offer for the child. Ensure that they are comfortable with all activities you are doing. A guardian can contribute in ways that are non-financial, such as snacks or packed lunches and transportation. Bringing up the topic of money can be difficult, so please speak to your Match Advocate in advance for support and guidance.

Scheduling:

- A Big may need to plan outings with several guardians, especially if there is shared custody or visitation. Make an effort to get to know each guardian and ensure that you respect the time a child may spend with a guardian on weekends, etc.

PLEASE CALL MATCH SUPPORT at (617) 956-0283 FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO DISCUSS YOUR MATCH