

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



Big Brothers Big Sisters  
of Cape Cod & the Islands

**Me? A Big?** Yes, you! It's really simple. All you need to do is have fun with a great kid doing stuff you already do (or want to do) like: visit a museum, play sports, enjoy free tickets to events, wash your car, hike or explore new places. Whatever you decide!

**What's in it for me?** For a few hours, a couple of times each month you get to be a kid again! Even better, you'll make a BIG difference in your community and in the life of a child.

**Who are the Little Brothers and Little Sisters?** When initially enrolled our Littles are generally between 7 and 12 years of age. The one thing they all have in common is that they want a Big Brother or Sister to call their very own. Other than that, they represent all walks of life and come from all towns on the Cape & Martha's Vineyard.

**How do I know I'll get along with this child?** We get to know you first, so we can find the best Little for you. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cape Cod & the Islands matches you with a kid based on common interests, personality and geography. Since our Bigs are volunteers from all walks of life, we enroll and match children who can benefit from the friendship of typical caring adults rather than specialists or youth development professionals.

**Can I really do this?** Yes! If you're 18 years or older (currently, our oldest active volunteer is 80!) and can be a good, responsible friend who's willing to build a friendship over time.

**I don't know much about kids — is that OK?** You bet! Behind the scenes, you'll have a team of experts — the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Cape Cod & the Islands Match Support Team — cheering you on and giving helpful advice if you need it.

**How much is this going to cost me?** Other than providing your enthusiasm and some of your spare time, the cost of being a Big is nominal. The focus should be on doing everyday activities with your Little. We often provide Bigs with free tickets you can use to take your Little to sports games, museums, cultural events, etc. You'll also receive newsletters that let you know about low/no-cost events in the community. Plus, you may be able to claim an itemized tax deduction for any out-of-pocket expenses you might incur.

**I don't have a car. Is that OK?** Yes & No. Unfortunately, the Cape's public transportation system hasn't caught up with the rest of the world! If you are applying to be a Big on Cape it is a requirement of the program to have a car. On Martha's public transit runs year round and we take this on a case by case basis.

**Is it useful if I speak a foreign language?** At this time we are only able to serve English and Spanish speaking families, and hope to expand this as resources allow.

**Where can I volunteer?** Generally, where it is most convenient for you — near your home, your work or somewhere else where you spend time and can commute to relatively easily. We have Community Based options in all towns on the Cape & Martha's Vineyard, and Site Based mentoring options on the Upper & Mid-Cape.

**How far will I have to travel?** Usually, we like to make matches where the Big and Little are within 7-10 miles or up to 20 minutes by car. Beyond this, travel takes up too much time and this can undermine the longevity and quality of a match.

**When do I meet with my Little?** In the Community-Based Program it's up to you, but most matches meet on the weekends. Bigs and Littles in the School/Site-Based Program generally meet during weekday lunch periods or after school.

**What if I'm LGBTQIA?** Big Brothers Big Sisters does not discriminate based on race, sexual orientation, age, or gender. We will disclose such information to the parent/guardian as part of the matching process; the parent/guardian has the option to say yes or no to the match. If they approve, we move forward with the match; if not, we work to find another Little who we believe will be a good match for you.

**Do you make cross-gender matches, for example matching boys with women volunteers?** Yes. In some cases, when a family and volunteer is open to this option, we will match Big Sisters with Little Brothers.

**Am I able to ask for a match with a child of any specific ethnicity, language or national origin?** Our goal is to make matches that provide a high-quality, long-term experience. Though we do not discriminate, we try to take into account the preferences and interests of Bigs, Littles and parent/guardians. The more preferences an individual has the longer it may take to get them matched with a Little.

**What sort of background checks do you do?** All volunteers and employees are subject to background checks that include obtaining references from people who know them well. We also conduct criminal offender (CORI), sexual offender (SORI) and driving records checks.

**Can I volunteer even if I have a criminal record?** We handle this on a case-by-case basis. It is important that you disclose this to us and address it fully. In some instances an offense may not be an obstacle because it is minor or long ago. In other instances, for example a case that is still open, it is a disqualifier. If we decide to go forward, we will always share the facts with the parent of any child we are considering as a potential match for you and they will have the final say on whether or not the match is approved.