

Please review this entire document before filling out the Big Sister application.



Big Sisters Mentoring Program

The BIG Intro

Information for potential Big Sister volunteers.

Words from Big Sisters...



"Offering my time and support to my Little Sister is one of the most fulfilling things I have done in my life."

- Big Sister Carolyn

"Being a Big Sister is not about 'fixing' kids or making them 'better', it's about being there for them."

- Big Sister Muryn

Who We Are



Since 1960 Big Sisters of BC Lower Mainland has been providing mentoring programs to girls in Lower Mainland communities. Our programs provide girls, ages 7-17, with positive, adult female role models who help the girls build their self-esteem through supportive friendships.

Our Mission

Big Sisters is committed to enhancing the confidence, self-esteem and well-being of girls through supportive relationships with female mentors.

Because when a girl believes in herself...so much is possible.

Our Little Sisters

Who are the Little Sisters?

Girls are accepted into the program between the ages of 7-17 and they can be in the program until they're 19. Little Sisters are referred to us by family members, social workers, community agencies and school personnel. Most Little Sisters come from female-headed, single parent families; others live with their dads, in foster care, or other situations.

Why do they need a Big Sister?

They may be one of many siblings and lacking one-to-one attention, or they may be an only child. Some Little Sisters are dealing with issues such as social isolation, low self-esteem, or problems at school or home. Their families may be dealing with challenges such as poverty, unemployment, recent immigration, divorce, family death, or substance abuse.

Above all, Little Sisters are interested in developing a friendship with a positive female mentor. They need someone to listen to them, spend time with them and encourage them to reach their full potential!

Does Mentoring Work?

YES, mentoring works!

Children who spend time with a mentor gain confidence, acquire new skills and competencies, and develop an enhanced capacity to care for others and make better, healthier choices for themselves.



Children who have been in a Big Sisters program see real, positive change. Littles go on to graduate from high school at a rate of 20% higher than the national average. 78% of Littles who came from a social assistance background no longer rely on this form of income and a disproportionately high number of former Littles graduate from college or university compared to others in their age group. (Project Impact, Social Planning Council of Hamilton and District, 1994).

You can be assured that the time and energy you invest in the relationship with your Little Sister will make a BIG difference!

Who can be a Big Sister?

YOU CAN!

You don't need to be 'perfect' to be a Big Sister...you just need to be you! Simply offer a bit of your time, your listening ear, your open heart, and your consistent friendship to a young girl.

We Value Diversity

Big Sisters welcomes the participation of women of any race, culture, religion, sexual orientation or ability.

Who can be a Big Sister?

Here are the basic qualifications to be a Big Sister:

- Female; age 19 years or older (no upper age limit!)
- Canadian resident for at least 1 year (or be able to provide us with an international criminal records check); Lower Mainland resident for at least 6 months.
- Able to commit to spending 2 hours a week with your Little Sister for at least 1 year.
- Interested in developing a friendship with a girl (age 7-17).
- Mature, stable, reliable and accepting of others' differences.

What's expected of a Big Sister?

Develop a supportive friendship with your Little Sister by spending one-to-one time with her for 2-4 hours once a week (1 year minimum).

Ensure the activities you do together are low cost or no cost.

Model an attitude of acceptance and respect for yourself and others.

Strive for a democratic approach in the relationship.

Make use of the communication and self-awareness skills taught in the Big Sisters Training.

Be responsible for your Little Sister when you're together.

Maintain regular contact with your Big Sisters caseworker.

And...HAVE FUN TOGETHER!

The time commitment...

How much time per week? Big Sisters need to see their Little Sisters once a week, for 2-4 hours. (And - yes - you can certainly go on vacations, travel for work, or miss the occasion weekly meeting!)

For how long? Minimum of 1 year

Why is the time commitment important? Consistency and reliability are really important to our Little Sisters. Many of them have already experienced loss or abandonment in their lives, so we want to be sure to provide them with a friend and mentor who is going to be there each week to spend time with them and show them how special they are!

Research shows that one of the most important factors in building a close, trusting friendship is spending regular, frequent time together. Research also shows that when a match ends before the commitment is fulfilled, it can be quite damaging to the Little Sister's self-esteem.

....so, we do ask that you really consider the commitment you are making to a vulnerable child before you apply as a Big Sister.

Benefits of being a Big Sister

- An enriching friendship and the opportunity to contribute to the development of today's girls into tomorrow's strong women!
- A 2009 survey compared the attitudes of Big Sister/Big Brother mentors with those of average Canadians and found the 'Bigs' tended to be happier, more optimistic and more energetic!
- Increased self-confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness.



- Professional development through training and workshops offered by Big Sisters - gain leadership and communication skills.
- Networking opportunities with other volunteers.
- Feeling energized and renewed with added balance to your life!

How to become a Big Sister

- 1. Review this "BIG Intro" presentation** in its entirety and ensure you meet all of the Big Sister qualifications (slide #6).
- 2. Submit your Application & Criminal Record Check to Big Sisters** - Visit our website to [download the Big Sister Application](#) and criminal record check instructions/letter(s).
- 3. Attend a Screening Interview** - A Big Sisters caseworker will contact you to schedule an interview.
- 4. Attend a Training Session (3 hours)** - We will contact you to schedule you for an upcoming training session.
- 5. Application Review** - Our casework team will review your entire application and inform you if you have been accepted as a Big Sister.
- 6. Meet your Little Sister!** - Once you are accepted, we will work to match you with a suitable Little Sister and the fun begins!

How am I matched?

How is a Little Sister picked for me? Your Big Sisters caseworker will review your application, noting your preferences, activities you enjoy, where you live (we try to match Bigs & Littles in the same city), and other information you share with us. Before introducing you, your caseworker will tell you about the girl she's chosen for you to ensure you are comfortable with her choice (you have the option to say no).

How long will it take before I'm matched?

Depending on a variety of factors such as where you live, your interests/skill set, and the various needs of the girls on our waitlist, it takes some time for us to make each match. But, it'll be worth the wait!



What do we do together?

You don't need to have a car and you don't need to spend money!

We encourage Big & Little Sister matches to choose **free or low-cost activities** you both enjoy (we do our best to match up Bigs & Littles with similar interests!). Many matches enjoy things like watching movies, swimming, baking, going for hot chocolate, and doing crafts.

But...what if I run out of ideas?? No problem! We always have a list of agency group activities, community events, and free tickets in our newsletter and [online](#), or you can call your caseworker for ideas!

Remember...It's not about WHAT you do together, it's simply about spending time together!



What if I need help?

We're here for you!

Before you are matched, you will complete a 3 hour Big Sisters Training Session, facilitated by one of our staff caseworkers.

Each Big & Little Sister match is assigned a caseworker at Big Sisters who is available to you for support, advice and activity ideas.



Your caseworker will maintain regular contact (by phone, email, and in-person) with you, your Little Sister, and her parent/guardian.

In addition, we provide a series of optional workshops for Big Sisters to help support you in your match.

The Next Step

Ready to Apply?

GREAT! You can get started right now - visit our website to [download the Big Sister Application package](#).

We also encourage you to watch this inspiring and informative [Big Sisters video](#) on the power of mentoring.

Still Not Sure?

Let us help you! Call us at 604.873.4525 x300 or [email us](#) so we can chat about any questions or concerns you have.



Check us out on
[Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)!



How else can I help?

If you are unable to be a Big Sister right now, there are many other ways you can help Big Sisters! You can make a financial contribution, invite us to speak at your work, or simply tell a friend about Big Sisters.



We also have volunteer opportunities that require less time commitment:

- * [Study Buddy tutor](#)
- * [Go Girls! group mentor](#)
- * [Activities Committee](#)
- * [Fundraising Committee](#)
- * [Fundraising Event Volunteers](#)



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