

BIG BROTHERS OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY, BOSTON, MA

In response to requests by families and Big Brothers to help them take more initiative in the children's academic life, BB of Massachusetts Bay developed the Educational Advocacy and Scholarship Program. Workshops teach parents useful skills to support their child's academic aspirations in tandem with their Big Brothers' involvement. Program staffers stay in constant contact with parents via focus groups, one-on-one meetings, surveys and e-mail. Building trust, the staff is able to offer additional guidance and encourage parents to take part in agency activities. Other practices that help families succeed include summer camp scholarships for children, increased support for families during winter holidays and referrals for social services.

BBBS OF CENTRAL OHIO, COLUMBUS, OH

At BBBS of Central Ohio, flexibility is the key to effectively supporting families. Enrollment sessions at the agency free up parents to apply and talk with staff by providing entertainment for the children, while individual enrollment is offered in the homes of those who cannot attend sessions. For school-based programs, open house sessions give parents a chance to meet with program coordinators and mentors. Information is readily available in Spanish, including by phone, to accommodate Central Ohio's growing number of Hispanic families. Scholarships of up to \$250 are available to help families support their children's interests with reference materials, musical instruments, athletic equipment, art supplies and other items.

BBBS OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA, ASHEVILLE, NC

As requests from families living in poverty increased, BBBS of WNC took steps to ramp up its support to help them succeed. The agency started making free, healthy produce available to families every weekend through a partnership with MANNA Food Bank. It also incorporated lessons from Ruby Payne's book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* into its staff and volunteer training, practices and procedures. For example, a more detailed Needs Assessment shows areas where families require additional support, such as health, education and finance, so staffers can refer parents to other community resources.

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize outstanding Big Brothers Big Sisters programs that work to give children what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.



BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS:

RENO, NV • EL PASO, TX • ST. PAUL, MN • ANN ARBOR, MI
TERRE HAUTE, IN • BALTIMORE, MD • MT. HOLLY, NJ
BOSTON, MA • COLUMBUS, OH • ASHEVILLE, NC

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

BIG BROTHERS BIG SISTERS OF AMERICA

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The Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) agencies featured here have been honored to receive Family Strengthening Awards, a joint venture of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and the Annie E. Casey Foundation. While all 10 agencies share a commitment to excellence, each one uses different strategies to take the next step in our historic commitment to families. Through staff and volunteers, these agencies work with parents and children to understand and help realize their aspirations for their families.

Our organization serves diverse populations throughout the country. Specific practices and resources are constantly evolving—scholarships, activities, workshops, technology and information, to name but a few. What doesn't change is our goal of reaching out to parents as partners. That's how we make a lasting impact on the entire family.

When our staff and volunteers take the extra initiative to support parents in achieving their goals, the results are clear: longer matches, higher quality relationships, children with brighter futures. These award-winning strategies reflect that ideal.

—Joyce Corlett, Director of Program Development, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America

BBBS OF NORTHERN NEVADA, RENO, NV

Building strong relationships among agency staff, families and volunteers has led to a 90 percent six-month retention rate for Little Brothers and Sisters at BBBS of Northern Nevada. The focus on long-term support for families begins at enrollment, when agency staff connects families with an extensive network of community resources. During the first eight weeks of Match Support, coaching at least every two weeks helps volunteers work with families and celebrate the child's successes. As families develop new hope and increased confidence in their child's future, they see BBBS of Northern Nevada as a strong ally in creating a promising future for their families.

BBBS OF EL PASO, EL PASO, TX

BBBS of El Paso's Adventure Mentors program takes an active approach to family engagement: parents participate alongside their children and volunteers in a variety of monthly activities such as hiking and bike riding. Responding to families' requests for a "more focused and active" way to take part in their children's development, the

program has become a big hit. These activities provide a gateway to services that strengthen the families, including counseling, parenting classes and assistance with rent/utilities. Since 80 percent of the parents speak only Spanish, BBBS of El Paso offers bilingual services to encourage their involvement.

BBBS OF THE GREATER TWIN CITIES, ST. PAUL, MN

To help families realize their aspirations for their children, BBBS of the Greater Twin Cities actively promotes educational opportunities and helps families secure college scholarships. Working with donors, the agency offers tuition assistance for higher education. These funds provide access for children who otherwise might not be able to continue their education beyond high school. The agency also trains volunteers to overcome language barriers, understand cultural differences and take other steps that help them reach out to families. This training leads to stronger, long-term matches between volunteers and families.

BBBS OF WASHTENAW COUNTY, ANN ARBOR, MI

Right from the start, BBBS of Washtenaw County teaches its parents and volunteers the importance of joint planning and goal setting so children get the maximum benefit from match relationships. During orientation sessions and the interview process, parents and volunteers brainstorm ways to help children unlock the positive characteristics outlined in the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets. With support from the agency, parents then work with volunteers to shape activities to realize these characteristics. The first year of the relationship typically includes goals and action steps based on at least two or three of the Assets.

BBBS OF VIGO COUNTY, TERRE HAUTE, IN

To support families in achieving their goals, BBBS of Vigo County gets parents involved in setting direction for its programs and services. The agency recruited parents to join its Board of Directors and to take an active role alongside volunteers and staff members in a quarterly advisory group. Here they help plan events, provide input on current policies and procedures, and suggest ideas for program improvement, fundraising and recruiting new volunteers. While parents are strengthening the organization first-hand, they're also developing communication, leadership and interpersonal skills that will benefit them at work and at home.

BBBS OF CENTRAL MARYLAND, BALTIMORE, MD

BBBS of Central Maryland, through its Roots and Wings program, supports non-parental caregivers with classes like "Raising Resilient Children." The agency has increased attendance and participation in the classes by offering free transportation, child care and door prizes. With 15 percent of the children being raised by relatives, the agency's special programming for these caregivers is making an impact: Participants have expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to share their concerns in a safe, nonjudgmental environment. Having a staff fluent in Spanish also helps bolster communications with the region's growing number of Hispanic families.

BBBS OF BURLINGTON COUNTY, MT. HOLLY, NJ

BBBS of Burlington County engages parents throughout the enrollment and match process, starting with the letter of welcome the agency writes to each family. Parents are invited to join their children and volunteers in activities that range from playing sports and riding bikes to visiting museums. The agency also encourages parents to attend community information sessions, such as New Jersey Family Care Program for Uninsured Children, which help them handle family issues. To more effectively serve and support families with an incarcerated parent, the agency's staff completes specialized training from the Amachi Institute.



WHEN OUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS TAKE THE EXTRA INITIATIVE TO SUPPORT PARENTS IN ACHIEVING THEIR GOALS, THE RESULTS ARE CLEAR: LONGER MATCHES, HIGHER QUALITY RELATIONSHIPS, CHILDREN WITH BRIGHTER FUTURES.

—Joyce Corlett, Director of Program Development, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America