

# Big Brother Big Sister Program Needs YOU



by Ashley  
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What kind of place could New Bedford become if all of today's children attended school, set goals, rejected peer pressure, and had the confidence to dream and succeed in life? This is the vision of the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program, and in the Greater New Bedford area, this objective couldn't be more critical. Although 'all children' may be a lofty ideal, helping some of the most challenged kids is what counts most.

In urban settings, youth face unique problems that can negatively impact school performance, self-esteem, and the overall chance at future stability. In New Bedford, single-parent homes, neighborhood safety, gang influence, drug/alcohol abuse, an increasing drop-out rate and failing academic performance are just some of the unique risk factors that inner-city youth struggle with.

So what can be done to help children facing adversity? Communities need to provide positive role models for inner city youth, and fortunately, one local program has proven successful. The New Bedford chapter of Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) prepares to celebrate 40 years of adherence to the organization's mission to "change children's lives for the better, forever." BBBS fills a critical gap by emphasizing strong social bonds in children's lives and by providing positive adults to support children in need. Although more

than 75 children currently have a “Big” to support them, many (too many) are waitlisted.



Me and my “Little” Aisha.

**114 children are currently on the waiting list. There are more children on the current waiting list than there are matches. This is where YOU can help.** I became a ‘Big Sister’ a few years ago and getting involved is one of the best decisions I’ve ever made. This comes after years of avoidance for fear that I would not have the time to commit. I was wrong and in fact, committing is easy. It is my hope that the following information will dispel any of *your* hesitations and inspire you to get involved too.

**A quick ‘101’ on Big Brothers Big Sisters. Let’s take action! Let’s see if we can get some of the 114 waiting children the mentors they need...**

**Who are the “Littles”?** According to Deanna Bodeau, Program Coordinator for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Child and Family Services in New Bedford, those currently waiting are ages 7-14 and most come from either single parent homes or live with their grandparents. Current ‘matches’ may have “Littles” as old as 18 due to long-term relationships that were started when they were young.

### **What is the time commitment?**

BBBS asks that “Bigs” commit to a one-year minimum. This is critical because many of the children involved have already been abandoned or have experienced failed long-term support networks in life.

“Bigs” are expected to spend four hours per month with their “Little.” This sounds like a lot, but it’s not. Pick a Saturday, grab ice cream, go to the park, the zoo, stop by the library, and before you know it, it’s been four hours! So if you’re really busy, one day a month is really all it takes!



**What do matches do together?** This is all based on your “Little” and their unique interests. Some enjoy reading and visiting the library, while others prefer the park and playing outside. You can go bowling, see a movie, or play mini-golf. You might surprise them on occasion by taking them somewhere truly amazing, like a show, the theatre, or an amusement park. This is your chance to show them a world they have never dreamed of.

**How does BBBS help kids?** BBBS promotes accountability. Children aim higher, enhance their confidence, and learn to create stronger, more positive relationships. A strong role model helps them avoid risky behaviors (drop-out, drug/alcohol abuse, gang affiliation, etc.). A positive and encouraging mentor also helps children obtain and retain educational success – one of the greatest challenges faces youth in New Bedford today. National research has shown that by participating, Little Brothers and Sisters are more confident in their schoolwork performance, are able to get along better with their families, and are 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs, 27% less likely to begin using alcohol, 52% less likely to skip school. [1]

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**, Contact Deanna Bodeau, Program Coordinator, at [dbodeau@cfsservices.org](mailto:dbodeau@cfsservices.org) or 508-990-0894

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[1] [www.bbbs.org](http://www.bbbs.org)