



Help a Child • Encourage Promise • Become a Mentor • Give Hope

PROGRAM FAQs:

The following are answers to questions that are frequently asked of program staff.

What is "Children of Promise – Mentors of Hope?"

Children of Promise - Mentors of Hope is a community based mentoring program for children of prisoners (ages 4 – 15) in the state of Oklahoma.

I have never heard of this program before. How long has it been around?

Children of Promise – Mentors of Hope is a partnership between the University of Oklahoma OUTREACH and Big Brothers Big Sisters. Funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families was received in August 2004 for three years (July 2007). Program staff is working to acquire statewide funding support in order to continue the program beyond the three years.

How are children eligible for enrollment in the Program?

All children must currently reside in Oklahoma and be between 4-15 years of age. Both the caregiver and the child must request the service. Children referred to Children of Promise - Mentors of Hope that do not meet this criterion may be referred to outside agencies/resources. **See Child Eligibility Guidelines.**

How will mentoring benefit me?

As a volunteer mentor, you will gain a service opportunity, new relationships, practical knowledge and experience, communication and relationship building skills, support networks, appreciation, and most importantly, the joy and satisfaction of knowing that you have made a difference.

How old do I have to be to become a Volunteer Mentor?

Volunteer Mentors must be at least 18 years of age. **See Mentor Eligibility Guidelines.**



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What are the expectations of a Volunteer Mentor?

Primarily, we expect the volunteer mentor to be willing and committed to developing a trusting friendship with an enrolled child. The volunteer mentor is not a replacement for a parent, teacher, or counselor.

How often am I expected to meet with the child?

Volunteer Mentors meet with their young person for *at least* one hour each week. We ask for a commitment of at least one year.

Where will I meet with my child?

Children of Promise – Mentors of Hope is a community-based mentoring program, so many activities will take place away from the home. However, this decision will be made between the caregiver, the child, and the volunteer mentor. Our desire is for each person to be comfortable and for the child to be the focus of attention.

What type of training will I receive?

All volunteer mentors are required to attend a two-hour orientation and training session with Children of Promise - Mentors of Hope, preferably before they begin their match relationship. A One-to-One information session will also be provided by Big Brothers & Big Sisters. Children of Promise – Mentors of Hope will offer monthly and quarterly topical sessions in order to provide additional information on specific issues related to mentoring and relationship building.

What type of support will I receive?

All matches will be assigned a match support specialist from Big Brothers Big Sisters. The Match Support Specialist will contact you, the child, and the child's caregiver every month to provide support and monitoring for the match relationship. During this time, volunteers are encouraged to discuss concerns, issues, or ask questions about their match relationship. Big Brothers Big Sisters has resources on low or no cost activities, child and family issues, and successful mentoring practices readily available.



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How much does it cost to be a Volunteer Mentor?

It doesn't cost anything to enroll in the Program as a volunteer mentor. The most significant cost a volunteer mentor incurs is time for the child and family. A volunteer mentor has no financial responsibilities to the child or family. Numerous activities can be done at no cost, such as going to the park or playing board games. We encourage mentors and families to share expenses to cover meals and activities, if desired. Our Program also provides some match activities for no cost or discounted costs. We will inform you about match activities and events as the opportunities arise and are scheduled.

Do I need a car to be a Volunteer Mentor?

Generally, the answer to this question is yes. Because Children of Promise- Mentors of Hope is a community - based mentoring program, many of the activities that volunteer mentors and children do together will take place away from the home. Transportation is primarily the volunteer mentor's responsibility. However, special circumstances will be considered.

How will I be matched to a Child of Promise?

Big Brothers Big Sisters will take into consideration information gathered from the volunteer information, the caregiver, and the child before sealing a match. Matches will be made based on likes, interests, hobbies, and special requests. All three parties (the volunteer mentor, caregiver, and child) must agree to the match.

Am I allowed to "mentor" more than one child?

The mentoring relationship is designed to be a one-to-one relationship between one volunteer mentor and one child. We encourage one child for each volunteer mentor. However, special circumstances will be considered. If a volunteer mentor is matched with more than one child, the volunteer mentor is still asked to spend time with each individual child during each week.



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Will I have to communicate with the incarcerated parent?

It is not mandatory for volunteer mentors to communicate with the incarcerated parent. The caregiver must first be comfortable with the volunteer mentor communicating with the incarcerated parent. If the caregiver approves, the volunteer mentor can communicate with the incarcerated parent through letters, progress reports, or prison visits. Again, it is the choice of the volunteer mentor to determine whether or not s/he will communicate with the incarcerated parent.

What happens when the incarcerated parent is released?

We encourage the match relationship to continue, even after the incarcerated parent is released. If this is a problem for the volunteer mentor, we suggest that the volunteer mentor request being matched with a child whose parent is not expected to be released within the duration of the match relationship prior to being matched.

Can I share my faith with my child?

Volunteer Mentors who are strong in faith can share their faith through example. Our goal is not to convert children or families to a particular religion, but to demonstrate our love and concern for them by developing a consistent friendship with them. If your child desires to worship or to go to your place of worship with you, feel free to take them with permission from the caregiver. However, please do not use your religious observation as a consistent weekly activity with your child.

Am I responsible if something bad happens to my child while in my care?

All volunteer mentors agree and certify with their signature that they will conduct themselves in a responsible manner. Volunteer mentors agree to facilitate a positive physical, emotional, and social environment for their child to the best of their ability while the child is in their primary care. Volunteer mentors do not knowingly expose their child to unsafe and unhealthy physical, emotional, and social environments. Liability insurance is provided for all volunteer mentors through the program for accidents and situations that occur outside the immediate responsibility of the volunteer mentor.



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What happens when I take my child home and no one is there?

We encourage all volunteer mentors to acquire all forms of contact and emergency information from the caregiver prior to the first outing with the child. If contact and emergency information has been obtained and the caregiver is not at home, please call the contact and emergency numbers provided at the time of your match.

What should I do if I suspect child abuse or neglect?

It is required by federal and state law that you report all suspected child abuse, child neglect, and/or child molestation to the Oklahoma Department of Human Services and appropriate community authorities.

What happens if the child and I are incompatible?

Although Big Brothers Big Sisters goes through an extensive pre-match process in order to align children and volunteer mentors according to interests, we realize that some matches will close prematurely for various reasons. If you and your child are incompatible, every effort will be made by BBBS to rematch both the child and volunteer mentor with other program candidates so that everyone has the opportunity to get the most out of the mentoring experience. Both you and the child can also be re-matched.

Besides becoming a volunteer mentor, how else can I help?

We are grateful for all of the support we receive in this initiative! Other ways to help out may include becoming a volunteer mentor coordinator, or someone who will recruit or refer potential volunteers. You can also help with event planning, finding donations for match activities and other program needs, etc. If you would like to volunteer time or resources to Children of Promise – Mentors of Hope, please contact us.

Children of Promise – Mentors of Hope

Main: 405/325-5454 or

Toll Free: 877/322-4673 (HOPE)

E-mail: promise@cce.ou.edu

Visit us online at <http://promise.ou.edu>



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