

The Buddy Program

Guidelines & Policies

Updated March 2017

These Guidelines and Policies amend, restate and replace in their entirety all prior versions of the Guidelines and Policies for the Buddy Program

The following Policies exist to keep the youth in our programs safe and ensure the safety of our adult volunteers. Any failure to comply with these Policies could result in dismissal from the program. This document is periodically updated and updated versions can be found on-line at www.buddyprogram.org and a copy can be obtained at any point by calling our office- 970-920-2130. All staff will be required to follow organization procedures set forth in the staff-training manual.

#1 Policy: General Child Safety

A primary commitment of the Buddy Program, Inc. ("Buddy Program") serving the children of Colorado is to protect their safety. This includes physical, sexual and emotional safety at all levels. To this end, the following are in place:

- a. Standard procedures of program delivery in written program delivery handbooks incorporating The Buddy Program's Policies and Procedures reflecting the highest standard of service delivery.
- b. Ongoing notes of issues relating to child safety in supervision of the match and/or youth participation in any program.
- c. Orientations and/or training adapted to each of the parties: staff, parent/guardian, child, volunteer.
- d. A standardized process for crisis management.

Any allegation or incident where abuse or otherwise concerning conduct involving a child is in question shall be referred to the Case Manager.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

#2 Policy: Background Checks and Screening of Applicants and Current Big Buddies

All Applicants as part of the application process will complete the screening established for the respective programs as detailed in the program manual.

Due to the transient nature of the Roaring Fork Valley and the importance of consistent, committed mentoring relationships, the Buddy Program asks that volunteers have lived in the Roaring Fork Valley for 1 year before being matched with a Little Buddy in the Community Program. At the discretion of the Buddy Program, volunteers may be

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invited to start the screening process at an earlier time if such volunteers are interested in the School-based Program with the understanding that they can commit to staying involved with the program for a minimum of two school semesters.

Current Big Buddies who are matched in the Program are asked to follow these policies as well as part of the on-going screening process.

With respect to all background checks:

- a. An Applicant or LEAD counselors with a violent crime or crime against a child will not be accepted.
- b. An Applicant or LEAD counselors with a felony conviction or a misdemeanor conviction will receive additional assessment.

During the Big Buddy interview process and while a Big Buddy is active in the program, individuals will be asked to disclose pending investigations and/or charges:

- c. An individual who is the subject of an ongoing criminal investigation will not be accepted and/or will be placed on hold with regard to their current relationship with their Little Buddy until the outcome of the investigation is known at which time a decision will be made as to their status in the program.
- d. An individual with pending charges of a violent crime, crime against a child or felony conviction categories will not be considered and their relationship with their Little Buddy will be terminated until acquitted of such charges.
- e. Applicants, LEAD counselors and Board candidates must complete the screening process and paperwork and be deemed an appropriate candidate before being accepted as a volunteer.
- f. If an individual discloses past or current physical, sexual, emotional abuse or thoughts of harming themselves or others to the Buddy Program staff, staff will be required to disclose that information following organizational procedures, in compliance with Colorado State Statutes governing the reporting of abuse and neglect. Their relationship with their Little Buddy may be further assessed.
- g. If an individual discloses that they have contact with a registered sex offender or someone with a prior conviction of a sexual offense in the community, the Buddy Program requires that they will not expose their Little

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Buddy to this individual at any time while spending time in the community together. The Buddy Program will give further assessment to the individual's application and the individuals' current Buddy relationship.

- h. If an individual discloses that they have a prior conviction or have currently been convicted of a sexual offense the Buddy Program will further assess their application and status as a participant.
- i. An individual's misrepresentation or neglect to inform the Buddy Program of personal information or history could result in termination or non-acceptance in the Buddy Program.
- j. The Buddy Program accepts or declines Applicants based on the information gathered and for reasons of confidentiality will not share this information or reasons of denial with any Applicant.
- k. There may be instances where a potential volunteer applies to become a Big Buddy within the Buddy Program during a difficult life transition; in which case the Buddy Program may ask the volunteer to consider re-applying at a later time.
- l. The Buddy Program will not accept an Applicant that has been previously rejected by The Buddy Program.
- m. National and State background checks are performed annually on the anniversary of the volunteer's match with their Little Buddy. Failure to comply with these annual background checks may result in suspension of a volunteer's status as a Big Buddy.
- n. It may be determined that additional information sources are needed in order to make an assessment of the Applicant's appropriateness as a volunteer. Such sources might include but are not limited to psychological counselors, therapists, medical doctors, probation officers, religious clergy, community members, and previous employers or supervisors in previous volunteer experience. If the Applicant has been involved with another child-serving agency in the past, a recommendation from that agency will be requested.
- o. The Buddy Program reserves the right to do a Colorado Department of Human Services background check and/or other background checks, on all Big Buddy volunteers, LEAD counselors, Board of Directors and the Leadership Development Board throughout their involvement with the

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Buddy Program. Failure to comply with these background checks may result in suspension of a volunteer's status as a Big Buddy.

- p. All Buddy Program files, forms, and database are confidential property of the Buddy Program and will not be released, copied or shared with volunteers, parents/guardians, youth participants, outside agencies or corporations.
- q. Buddy Program has right to reject an Applicant with or without cause in its sole and absolute discretion.

Application: Community, School-based, LEAD, Board of Directors and Leadership Development Board, Buddy Program Staff

#3 Policy: Driving Records, Insurance, and Transporting youth

- a. The Buddy Program reviews an Applicant's driving record to determine the suitability for transporting a youth.
- b. Volunteers are required to carry auto limits of \$100,000/\$300,000 = bodily injury each person/each accident in order to be covered by The Buddy Program's liability insurance in the event of an accident.
- c. Applicants with a DUI/DWAI, license revocation or license suspension in the last three years, will be further assessed after the terms and conditions of their probation have been successfully completed.
- d. Current Big Buddies who receive a DUI/DWAI, license revocation and license suspension will receive further assessment for suitability of program involvement.
- e. It is the volunteer's obligation to inform Buddy Program staff of any infraction that occurs after being matched with a Little Buddy. Situations will be assessed on a case by case basis by the Community Program Director and/or Assistant Director.
- f. Youth must wear a seatbelt when being transported by the volunteer.
- g. While transporting their Little Buddy, Big Buddies will abide by all Colorado driving laws. Please note that it is the responsibility of the Big Buddy to be informed of such driving laws.

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- h. All volunteers will provide certification of current auto insurance annually on their anniversary date.

Application: Community, LEAD

#4 Policy: Home Assessments and Home Visits

- a. Home assessments on volunteer Applicants may be conducted during the screening process. These assessments may also happen at any point during the Applicant's Big Buddy tenure.
- b. The Buddy Program does not allow a Little Buddy to spend time in the Big Buddy's home until the Buddy Pair has been matched for six months, the Case Manager has given final approval for the home visits and a waiver and release has been signed by the Little Buddy's parent.
- c. The Buddy Program highly recommends parents to visit the homes of their children's Big Buddies, especially in the case that their children spend time in the homes of their Big Buddies.

Application: Community

#5: Match Process

- a. The Buddy Program matches youth with adults of the same gender.
- b. Volunteers are asked to commit to seeing their Little Buddy 3-4 times a month for one year in the Community Program and weekly throughout the school year for the School-based Program.
- c. The Buddy Program matches Big Buddies with Little Buddies based on mutual interests. Matches will not be made until a volunteer has completed every step of the screening and training process.
- d. When a Big Buddy comes to the Buddy Program with a designated Little Buddy in mind, the Buddy Program-after completing the screening process for the Big Buddy and the family intake for the Little Buddy- reserves the right to determine whether this match is appropriate or not.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer

#6 Policy: Alcohol and Drug Use

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- a. Current use of an illegal use or abuse of a controlled substance such as alcohol, marijuana, or prescription drugs may be grounds for not accepting an Applicant or LEAD counselor after further assessment has been conducted.
- b. Volunteers and LEAD counselors will not consume controlled substances, including but not limited to alcohol or marijuana, prior to or while with their Little Buddy or youth participants. Failure to comply will result in termination from the Buddy Program.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD Program

#7 Policy: Firearms

- a. No volunteer or LEAD counselor will have a firearm in the presence of or available to a youth.
- b. If a volunteer or LEAD counselor has firearms in the home, automobile, or any place they take the youth, the firearm(s) must be safely stored in a locked cabinet and/or not accessible by the youth.
- c. The Buddy Program does not have liability coverage for Buddy Pairs when they visit a shooting range. Buddy Pairs are not allowed to visit a shooting range as part of any Buddy Program activity.
- d. Any youth involved with our program are prohibited from bringing weapons (defined as any instrument that can harm themselves or others) to any Buddy Program sponsored activities or events.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD Program

#8 Policy: Health & Mental Health

- a. Applicants must demonstrate stable, emotional health to the satisfaction of the Buddy Program.
- b. LEAD participants must have a physical on file from a physician that is current within one year of the activity.
- c. LEAD Counselors may be asked to have a physical on file prior to participating in the program.

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- d. Any Applicant or LEAD counselor presenting a physical or mental health condition or situation which may have a bearing on the volunteer experience will be asked to sign a release of information form so that a full understanding of the condition or situation can be explored.
- e. Any Applicant who has been hospitalized or reported past mental health issues such as, but not limited to, depression, obsessive compulsive or substance abuse disorders, or suicidal behaviors, must demonstrate stable emotional adjustment. An additional reference from a counselor, primary treatment provider, or other credible source of information in regard to the status of the Applicant's mental health will be required.
- f. If the Applicant is currently in psychotherapy or intensive counseling or has been involved in such within the past five years, a release of information from the therapist or counselor may be requested.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

#9 Policy: Applicants with a History of Alcohol/Drug dependence/abuse

- a. Big Buddy or LEAD counselor Applicants with a history of abuse of alcohol and/or drugs must have at least two years of sobriety and/or abstinence from alcohol and/or drugs to be accepted in the Community Program or LEAD Program. The Buddy Program may ask for a release to speak with the Applicant's sponsor.
- b. Big Buddy or LEAD counselor Applicants who disclose a history of abuse of alcohol and/or drugs with more than 1 year of sobriety may be considered to participate in the School-based program with the understanding that the Buddy Program staff will obtain a release to speak with Applicant's sponsor at the time of application and any time thereafter that Buddy Program staff deem necessary.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

#10 Policy: Life Transition

- a. Any Applicant, who is facing any major life change, will be given further assessment. Major life changes may include but are not limited to: recent death of a loved one, marriage, illness, pregnancy, and divorce.
- b. The Buddy Program asks that all individuals (applicants or current Big Buddies) notify the Buddy Program of any new life changing events or any criminal or felony investigations and/or charges. Failure to disclose this information may result in non-acceptance or termination as a Big Buddy.

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Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

#11 Policy: Child Safety Orientation

- a. Child safety orientation will be completed by Buddy Program staff within the first two weeks of employment.

Application: All Buddy Program Staff, LEAD

- b. Child safety issues will be monitored through supervision and case notes.

Application: All Program Staff, LEAD

- c. Family and child interviews will be completed and Big Buddies, LEAD Staff and Little Buddy and LEAD Youth Participants files will be complete before a match is made. Files will be audited yearly to ensure staff compliance with this policy.

Application: Community, School-based, LEAD

- d. Volunteer training will be completed prior to the match introduction during the application phase. All Applicant documentation must be completed prior to the match introduction.
- e. Applicant's confidential files must be complete prior to a matching a Buddy Pair.

Application: All Staff, Community, School-based, Peer-To-Peer, LEAD

- f. Parents of Little Buddies in the Community Program are required to attend a ninety minute training after a Case Manager has completed the family intake and within the first year of their involvement in the Buddy Program.

Application: Community

#12 Policy: Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Orientation

- a. Child sexual abuse prevention orientation will be completed by Buddy Program staff within the first two weeks of employment.
- b. Volunteer training will be completed prior to the match introduction during the application phase.
- c. Staff will address issues of safe-touch and sexual abuse prevention with parents of Little Buddies and gain their permission before addressing safe-touch with the youth.

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Application: All Staff, Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

#13 Policy: Abuse and Neglect Allegations

- a. All staff and LEAD counselors who have knowledge of any situation with a potential or actual threat to a child's safety will be required to disclose that information following organizational procedures, in compliance with Colorado State Statutes governing the reporting of child abuse and/or neglect.
- b. Volunteers who have knowledge of child abuse and/or neglect will speak with their Case Manager who will then follow the procedures set forth in the Volunteer Training.
- c. Buddy Program staff will follow in accordance with mandatory reporting laws as outlined by the State of Colorado.
- d. Depending on the nature of the information disclosed, local law enforcement and/or Human Services will be contacted.

Application: All Staff, Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

#14 Policy: Threats to Harm Self or Others

- a. All staff and volunteers who have knowledge of any situation or reasonable cause to believe that a Little Buddy, Applicant/volunteer, LEAD counselors or parent is in such mental or emotional condition as to be dangerous to himself/herself or to the person or property of another will disclose and communicate the necessary information to prevent the threatened danger.
- b. Depending on the nature of the information disclosed, local law enforcement and/or Human Services will be contacted.

Application: All Staff, Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

#15 Policy: Re-match and Annual Review

- a. If a volunteer or youth participants moves from one program to another, within the Buddy Program, the corresponding application process must be completed. The volunteer will then attend the appropriate training.

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Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer

#16 Activities

- a. In addition to Buddy Program sponsored activities, Buddy Pairs take part in a variety of activities on their own. The Buddy Program general liability policy does not cover hazardous activities such as paragliding or motorcycle riding (this is not an inclusive list). Please check with your case manager if you have questions about what is covered and what is not.
- b. The Buddy Program has a cancellation policy for all Community Buddy Program sponsored activities.
- c. All matches in the Community Program are required to attend at least one group activity sponsored by the Buddy Program during the year (including the Annual Celebration Dinner or Ski Day).
- d. New matches in the Community Program are required to attend at least three group activities sponsored by the Buddy Program during the first year.
- e. Youth in the Buddy Program will receive a **Code of Conduct** prior to being involved in the program. Youth, their parents and their Big Buddies (if applicable) are asked to sign the Code of Conduct.
- f. Should concerning behavior or conduct arise on the part of any Big or Little Buddy, counselor or youth at a Buddy Program sponsored activity, the Dispute Resolution as identified in #25 shall be followed.

Application: Community

#17 Policy: Youth's background

- a. Youth who are interested or active participants in the program who have a pending legal charge, a conviction, current or history of alcohol, tobacco or other substance abuse may be eligible to participate in programs based on an assessment by the Buddy Program staff.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

18 Policy: Incident Reports

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- a. An incident report will be filed by the case manager should there be an incident concerning a youths' or Big Buddies' medical or mental health well-being or a behavioral issue during a Buddy Program sponsored event.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

#19 Policy: Overnight Visits

- a. The Buddy Program does not allow overnight visits, unless the activity is supervised by the Buddy Program.
- b. If a pair chooses to participate in a Buddy Program sponsored group overnight activity, special parent permission will be required.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

#20 Policy: Match Support

- a. The Case Manager shall adhere to a monthly contact schedule with Big Buddies and the family of Little Buddies.
- b. If contact is initiated by a Case Manager and follow-through is not completed within 8 weeks or 3 attempts to contact the Big Buddy and the Little Buddy/family, the pair will be given further assessment.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer

#21 Resource List Support

- a. In order to support youth who may have grown out of the program or their Buddy Relationship, they will be placed on a resource list and are eligible for services.

Application: Community, School-based

#22 Policy: Confidentiality

Other than a health/safety issue or an incident that must be reported to law enforcement, information will be treated as confidential as follows:

- a. All information that a Buddy Program Staff, Board of Director, Leadership Development Board member, volunteer, LEAD counselor, contract staff or

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parent/guardian may encounter about any child, child's family, Big Buddy/Little Buddy, the Big Buddy's/Little Buddy's family or anything else of a confidential nature about any child or volunteer in any way connected with the Buddy Program Inc. WILL BE HELD CONFIDENTIAL within the Buddy Program.

- b. Any information that reveals or tends to reveal the identity of any person who is the subject of the record WILL BE HELD CONFIDENTIAL.
- c. The identity of any person who contributes information to the subject WILL BE HELD CONFIDENTIAL. The results of any inquiry into school records or medical records of any description WILL BE HELD CONFIDENTIAL within the Buddy Program.
- d. Buddy Program staff, volunteers and parents/guardians will NOT discuss any privileged or confidential information that they receive with any other person without the prior verbal or written permission of the Case Manager.
- e. Buddy Program staff, volunteers and parents/guardians will only release prior approved information to the individual to whom they have been given permission to release the information.
- f. Buddy Program staff, volunteers and parents/guardians agree to hold all related information confidential and, except as they may be legally required, will NOT disclose or release it to any individual or entity at any time.
- g. Buddy Program staff, volunteers and parents/guardians understand that the Buddy Program, agrees to hold all related information confidential and, except as may be legally required will NOT disclose or release it to any individual or corporation at anytime.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

#23 Policy: Counseling

- a. The Buddy Program offers counseling services by referring family and child to an outside therapist free of charge to youth and families who demonstrate a need for counseling.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

#24 Scholarship Policy

The Buddy Program is able to offer Empowerment Scholarships two times a year to youth participants in our programs. Additionally, continuing education scholarships are offered to high school seniors.

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PLEASE NOTE: THE BUDDY PROGRAM'S SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS ARE WEIGHTED IN FAVOR OF DEMONSTRATED NEED BUT ALL ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS ARE INVITED TO APPLY.

Application: Community, Peer-to-Peer Big Buddies, LEAD

#25 Policy: Dispute Resolution Procedure

- a. The Buddy Program utilizes progressive dispute resolution procedures to increase our client's awareness of areas of deficiency as well as any policy violations and to assist them in taking appropriate action to improve their interactions with the Little Buddy, Big Buddy, staff, LEAD counselors, families, etc. The Buddy Program additionally wishes to provide a receptive forum for all persons involved with the Buddy Program or community at large to address conflicts, misunderstandings and disputes.
- b. The Executive Director has the absolute right to immediately close any relationship with or without cause and to investigate cases of serious misconduct and illegal activity. Cause includes, but is not limited to: charge or conviction of a felony, any legal charge involving intoxication or substance abuse, assaultive or aggressive acts, any sexual related offense or any conduct not in compliance with The Buddy Program Policies and Procedures. The Buddy Program reserves the right to remove any volunteer from the Buddy Program at any time.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD

#26 Policy: Site-Based Programs

- a. Volunteers who are involved in the School-based and Peer-to-Peer programs will spend time with their Little Buddy at the respective school campus and are asked not to have contact outside of school. Site-based volunteers will assume all liability should they wish to see their Little Buddy during the summer or outside of school meeting time as meetings should only take place on school grounds, within the confines of the school day and school year.
- b. Volunteers are asked to follow proper cancellation procedures as addressed in the training if they cannot make it for their scheduled meeting with their Little Buddy.
- c. Volunteers who see their Little Buddy at the school, must follow all school rules and regulations when on campus.

Application: School-based, Peer- to- Peer, Community

#27 Social Media/Networking

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- a. The Buddy Program will obtain a release of information and release of photos for any client in the Program to be used in Social Media. Parents will sign this release for youth under the age of 18.
- b. The Buddy Program does not promote nor prohibit our Buddy Pairs to connect and communicate via social media.
- c. To protect the confidentiality and privacy of all participants, the basis for our program's integrity, we ask our client's to follow specific guidelines.
- d. What is acceptable to share:
 - I. First names;
 - II. Reflections on past meetings and activities from your perspective; and
 - III. Anything your Big or Little Buddy would be comfortable with other people reading
 - IV. Blog or update social media sites with your Big or Little buddy to ensure their buy-in and comfort with the process.
- e. What is NOT acceptable to share:
 - i. For Big Buddies:
 - ii. Anything that would in any way compromise the safety of your Little Buddy;
 - iii. Confidential identifying information like last names, address, telephone number, or which school he/she attends;
 - iv. Confidential information, including history of your Little Buddy's family, educational experiences, and any physical, mental, emotional health or economic issues;
 - v. Details about upcoming meetings, including Buddy Program activities;
 - vi. Information that would be hurtful or embarrassing if your Big or Little Buddy saw it posted
 - vii. Information that displays any illegal activity (i.e. under-age drinking, drug use, violence, etc.)
 - viii. Photographs and/or identifying information about other Big and Little Buddies from Buddy Program activities.
- f. If you are not sure about content you'd like to share, please contact your Case Manager.
- g. The Buddy Program strives to use social media to keep our supporters up-to-date on our current Buddy Pair happenings, to highlight mentoring success stories, and to inspire our followers to get involved. The rapid growth of communication through social media is emerging as opportunities for outreach, information-sharing, and advocacy. Used responsibly, they provide an effective way to stay connected to and expand our community, and share information and perspectives.
- h. Public and Private Boundaries:

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- I. The Buddy Program advocates that those who choose to tell their story online understand what is recommended, expected, and required. Given the reach of the Internet, it's important that when you use these various media, you follow some basic procedures that protect the privacy of our Big Buddies and our Little Buddies and their families, as well as maintain our identity as a high-quality nonprofit youth organization.

- II. Please feel free to inform the Buddy Program (info@buddyprogram.org) if you do include any program-related content in your social media use. By providing your story to us through one of our sites, be aware that you authorize us to use your story in both online and offline formats.

- III. Should a conflict arise, please do not use social media tools to confront or criticize the Buddy Program, our staff, our program participants, or our donors. If you have a problem or suggestions for improvements, please state them constructively and go through the proper channels – first, by contacting your Case Manager – to air your concerns and share your suggestions.

Application: Community, School-based, Peer-to-Peer, LEAD