

Edition 09 – 1

Spring 2009

Research Précis

Best Practices: Safe and Drug-free Schools and Communities

Creating a better tomorrow...

Title: Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America

Overview:

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America is a community-based mentoring program intended to improve the social behavior, family and/or peer relationships, and academic achievement of each youth (e.g., Little Brother or Little Sister) with whom a Big Brother or Big Sister has been matched by an assigned case manager.

Target: Youth ages 6-18 with associated risk factors (e.g., residence in a single-parent home or history of abuse or neglect)

Extent/Duration of Program: Each volunteer mentor (Big) spends at least three to five hours per week with his/her assigned child (Little) for at least one year.

Program Costs:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of America does not have a prescribed curriculum. The cost of making and supporting a youth-adult match is about \$1,000. Overall program cost varies depending on the agency and geographic location of the program.
- Mentors are provided with training that varies from site to site.

For further information, or to order:

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America
Research and Development Program
230 North 13th St.
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Phone: 215-567-7000

Fax: 215-567-0394

E-mail: national@BBBSa.org

Web site: <http://www.bbbs.org>

Principles/Approaches/Components: *Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America* is based on the premise that positive, caring, supportive role models will assist young people in reaching their potential and impact a variety of behavioral outcomes without utilizing a behavior-specific intervention or targeting a specific behavior (e.g., academic improvement, drug use, or violence). Goals for the children who participate are set with project staff during an initial interview held with the parent and child. Mentors address these various issues in a wide range of activities within many settings, with the overall goal being the formation of a relationship through which the mentor can provide support to the youth as he or she develops.

Evidence-based Effectiveness: In a 1995 study of 1,138 youth randomly assigned to the program or designated as control, 959 (84.3 percent) completed the follow-up interview and were included in a subsequent analysis. The analysis utilized a four-part framework, examining the effect on boys, girls, whites, and minorities. Though the program does not employ a specific intervention to accomplish its goals, the study results indicated that it nevertheless tends to reduce the use of alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs among youth who participate. Significant results have not, however, been noted among white boys or girls, but only among minority youth of both genders. Though to a lesser degree, the study results also indicated that the program is effective in reducing violent behavior and other serious conduct problems.

Safe and Drug-free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) connections:

- A.iii - Activities that teach students that most people do not illegally use drugs.
- D - Professional development and training in prevention, education, early identification and intervention, mentoring, or rehabilitation referral, as related to drug and violence prevention.
- E.xi - Programs that encourage students to seek advice from, and to confide in, a trusted adult regarding concerns about violence and illegal drug use.
- E.xvii - Developing and implementing character education programs that take into account the views of parents of the students for whom the program is intended and such students.
- E.xxii - Programs that respond to the needs of students who are faced with domestic violence or child abuse.

National Standards connections:

Grades 1 through 12

Health Education Standard 4 – Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

Health Education Standard 5 – Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.

Health Education Standard 6 – Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health.

Health Education Standard 7 – Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

National Health Education Standards, Second Edition: Achieving Excellence. American Cancer Society, 2007.

Family and Consumer Sciences Area of Study 6.0 (Family): Comprehensive Standard – Evaluate the significance of family and its effects on the well-being of individuals and society.

Family and Consumer Sciences Area of Study 15.0 (Parenting): Comprehensive Standard – Evaluate the effects of parenting roles and responsibilities on strengthening the well-being of individuals and families.

National Standards for Family and Consumer Sciences Education, Second Edition. National Association of State Administrators of Family and Consumer Sciences, 2008.

Recognition and additional reports:

The following organizations/institutions have recognized *Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America*. The organizations are in alphabetical order and the status of the recognition is in parentheses.

- Promising Practices Network (Proven Program)
- SAMHSA (Effective Program)

GENERAL NOTES: The intent of the above synthesis and correlations is to assist teachers and school administrators dedicated to using best practices to reduce violence and substance abuse among students. To our knowledge, the information was current upon publication. However, details pertaining to status of program recognition, research and findings, costs, and contact information are subject to change.

Correlations to the Safe and Drug-free Schools and Communities Act (SDFSCA) federally approved activities and to national education standards have been limited in depth (“standard” level only) and breadth (number of standards and subjects) due to the encompassing nature of many programs that typically qualify as model or exemplary. The correlations listed should not be viewed as exhaustive.

Designed Instruction’s effective SDFS program research series was funded by the United States Department of Education. For information on other effective programs for promoting safe and drug-free schools and communities, visit www.designedinstruction.com/learningleads/effective-sdfs-programs.html

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