

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mid-Florida  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**BBBS Concentrates on Children of Prisoners**  
*Push to use funds available for at-risk children*

GAINESVILLE, Fla. – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mid-Florida urges local police stations, human service agencies and prisons to recommend its Mentoring Children of Prisoners program to guardians. Federal grants are ready and waiting to fund healthy, transforming relationships.

Studies reveal 70 percent of children with parents in jail will end up in prison themselves unless there is intervention. Executive Director Paul Halpern said he wants parents and guardians in Alachua county to know about BBBS's mentoring relationships, which reduce the chances for drug and alcohol abuse and improve academics.

“Think of a role model in your life,” Halpern said, “a special person who taught you to ride a bike, supported your dreams or was simply there to listen. We believe every child deserves this, and we want incarcerated parents especially to know we have mentors waiting to encourage their son or daughter.”

Although BBBS calls, writes and visits local agencies, prisons, etc., on a regular basis, it is prioritizing its service to children. This is a push to align resources and needs in our community.

Guardians of children with parents in prison can apply by visiting the BBBS office at 1155 NW 13th St. or calling 352-375-2525. Children must be ages 6-18.

Boys and girls are “Littles.” BBBS pairs them with carefully selected “Bigs,” who spend time with their Littles in school or non-school settings. According to a national study, this long-term relationship is one of the most effective ways to prevent delinquency and impact positive development.

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*Big Brothers Big Sisters of Mid-Florida has served thousands of children in Alachua, Marion and Bradford counties since 1975. Its mission is to help children reach their potential through professionally supported, one-to-one relationships.*