

Citizens Information Packet

BEST BUDDIES[®]



Big Picture

Making a Difference

Best Buddies is a nonprofit 501 (C)(3) organization dedicated to establishing a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).

Founded in 1989 by Anthony K. Shriver, Best Buddies is comprised of eight programmatic divisions, which reach all 50 of the United States, and Best Buddies has active international programs in over 50 countries on six continents.

Best Buddies International and its programs are headquartered in Miami, Florida. The local programs are overseen by Program Managers working out of an office in Waterford, NY. Program Managers support each individual chapter and assure that participants are abiding by Best Buddies policies and procedures. The Program Managers are supervised by an Area Director and a State Director who are responsible for fundraising, publicity, and development on the regional level. Headquarters program staff oversees all Best Buddies International programs on a nationwide level. They perform such tasks as quality assurance, communication, program development and setting nationwide policies and procedures.

Even though Best Buddies has grown tremendously in its short existence, most of the country still lacks programs to help people with IDD become a part of mainstream society. Our goal is to bring Best Buddies to every corner of the United States and every corner of the world, making Best Buddies programs active in every community and on every middle school, high school and college campus.

Vision

Best Buddies envisions a world where people with IDD are so successfully integrated into our schools, our workplaces and our general communities that our current efforts and services will be unnecessary. Until that vision becomes a reality, our mission is to educate middle school, high school, and college students, community citizens, corporations, and employers about the emotional, functional, and natural needs and abilities of people with IDD, and to foster a network of supporters and advocates working to change the world, one friendship at a time.

Programs

Best Buddies Middle Schools matches students with and without intellectual disabilities in one-to-one friendships. By starting at such an early age, students are further encouraged to accept those with disabilities.

Best Buddies High Schools matches students with intellectual disabilities with high school students from general education to create one-to-one friendships. By introducing Best Buddies to public and private high schools, we are crossing the invisible line that too often separates those with disabilities from those without.

Best Buddies Colleges matches people with intellectual disabilities with college students in one-to-one friendships. In the past, individuals with intellectual disabilities have not had the opportunity to have friends outside of their own, often isolated, environments. By becoming a College Buddy, volunteers offer a Buddy the chance to explore life in a new way.

Best Buddies Citizens supports the development of friendships between adults with and without IDD in corporate and civic communities. This program helps people with IDD become part of mainstream society and creates an inclusive and diverse community for all. Buddy Pairs commit to one year of friendship, seeing one another twice a month or four hours a month and maintain weekly contact.

Citizens Program

Background

As Best Buddies Colleges expanded in the early 1990's, Best Buddies founder Anthony Kennedy Shriver, became interested in engaging the community at large in his mission of friendship. With that idea and interest, Best Buddies Citizens was launched in 1993 in Miami, Florida.

About

Best Buddies Citizens pairs adults with IDD in one-to-one friendships with adults without IDD from their community. This program is much more than community service. Citizens changes lives. Over the last several years, Best Buddies Citizens has not only enhanced the lives of adults with IDD but it has also changed the lives of the participants without IDD. Through learning to see things from a new perspective, people become more understanding, patient, and accepting of others within our community.

Matches

Citizens is a program for adults in the community 22 years or older. A Citizens match is formed between two adults of the same gender. Matches are based on age, similar interests and proximity. Best Buddies staff conducts a thorough screening process to ensure the right match is made.

Impact

By spending time together, both individuals are enhanced through this mutually-enriching friendship. While participants are asked to commit to their friendship for at least a year, these matches often grow into lifelong friendships!

Participant Roles and Expectations

Participant Roles

Peer Buddy – an adult volunteer **without** IDD from the community who is paired in a one-to-one friendship with a person *with* IDD.

Buddy – a volunteer **with** IDD who is paired in a one-to-one friendship with a person *without* IDD from the community.

Sponsor – a person who knows the buddy well and is willing to serve as a resource to the friendship. S/he will be able to answer questions that the buddy and peer buddy may have and can support the friendship in tandem with the program manager.

Member Commitment and Expectations

Each participant must agree to the following:

- Matched in a friendship for a minimum of a year
- Able and interested in forming a mutually enriching friendship
- Receive training lead by Best Buddies staff prior to being matched in a friendship
- Communicate with their buddy on a regular basis (Best Buddies recommends at least once a week)
- Meet with buddy twice a month or once a month for four hours or more (this can include group activities and statewide events)
- Attend group activities and statewide events
- Complete friendship updates each month on Best Buddies Online (BBO)

Corporate Citizens

Corporate Citizens matches individuals with IDD with employees at a business who do not have IDD. In addition to the one-to-one friendships, the Corporate Citizens chapter will hold monthly activities.

Steps to Getting Matched in Citizens

1. Recruitment

Best Buddies staff will advertise the Citizens program to attract interested volunteers, with and without IDD, from the community to apply for the program.

2. Application Process

All interested members must complete a membership application on Best Buddies Online.

3. Phone Screening

Best Buddies staff will conduct a phone screening for each person who submits a membership application. Phone screenings allow Best Buddies staff to get to know the participant and learn more about their interest in the program.

4. Background Checks

A background check must be run on *all* participants prior to matching.

5. Home Interview

Best Buddies staff will complete a home interview for *all* applicants. The home interview allows staff to learn more about the applicant's personality and interests in order to make the best match. During this time, Best Buddies staff will provide a general training with an overview of IDD and disability rights movement as well as best practices to forming a friendship.

6. Matching Process

Best Buddies staff will create a match.

7. Match Party

Match will be introduced and begin getting to know one another and exchange contact information.

8. One-on-One Outings

Newly matched pair begins spending time together.

9. Group Activities

Chapter will hold group activities throughout the year. Minimum of four activities per year.

10. Support and Monitor Matches

Each month, matches must complete a friendship update on Best Buddies Online.

Expenses

Depending upon the state, participants may be responsible for covering the cost of their background check; all participants must submit to a background check prior to being matched in a one-to-one friendship. Best Buddies staff will review the background check and membership application once received.

This is a friendship like any other. Each person is responsible for paying his or her own way. Matches can choose to do activities that cost nothing. It is up to the pair to decide what works best for them.

Liability

Best Buddies International carries liability insurance protecting the corporation, employees, volunteers, and all participants while conducting Best Buddies business or activities.

Liability insurance covers the above mentioned people during official Best Buddies business or activities from claims of bodily injury, property damage, personal injury (includes sexual abuse, sexual molestation, sexual exploitation, or sexual injury), and advertising injury due to their alleged negligence during a Best Buddies outing. The liability insurance does not cover various high risk events such as white water rafting and skydiving.

Chapters or participants that need verification of liability insurance or need to be listed as "Additionally Insured" will be provided with a certificate of insurance, which can be obtained from the Best Buddies Contracts Manager. Those requesting a copy must provide the name and mailing address of the person/organization requesting the information. If your chapter has an activity that requires a copy of the certificate of insurance, please contact your Program Manager and allow at least eight weeks processing time.

Best Buddies general liability insurance is considered a "last resort" insurance. Everyone involved with Best Buddies (employees, volunteers, participants, etc...) is expected to be reasonably responsible for their participation, their actions, and any incidents that may occur in association with individual participation and actions. Personal insurance coverage should always be utilized before making a claim to Best Buddies General Liability insurance.

In addition, Best Buddies general liability insurance does not cover medical payment or automobile damage that occurs during Best Buddies business or events. Participants and volunteers without medical insurance or automobile insurance will not be eligible for general liability insurance cover.