Friendship

Best Buddies began as one program to bring people with and without disabilities together in friendship and has since grown to provide opportunities for one-to-one friendships to youth and adults in communities around the world. Best Buddies has identified the population most in need of this service to be individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) who do not have many opportunities to socialize and form relationships with their peers without IDD.

All one-to-one friendships formed are peer relationships in which both members commit to participate in age-appropriate activities. By participating in these activities, Best Buddies members are given the opportunity to develop social skills in a fun, safe environment.

Many members gain self-esteem and greater independence, as well as improved communication and social skills. Strong social skills are necessary to secure a job, gain higher acceptance in the community, and increase a person’s likelihood of obtaining life skills and money to live independently. Our friends challenge us and give us the support to define and reach our goals.

The programs with one-to-one friendships as the model for social inclusion are Middle Schools, High Schools, Colleges, Citizens and e-Buddies.

Within Best Buddies’ friendship programs, there are several constants that maintain the fabric of the organization and its mission:

- **One-to-One Friendships**: In all of the friendship programs, a person with an IDD is matched one-to-one with a person without IDD. Matches with more than one participant with or without IDD are not recognized as Best Buddies friendships and do not fulfill our mission.

- Buddy pairs communicate with one another **once a week**. This communication can occur in person, over the phone/via text, via e-mail/social media, or through written correspondence. e-Buddies communicate with each other via e-mail.

- Buddy pairs interact in person **twice a month** (excluding e-Buddies). Any type of activity where the two friends are able to spend quality time together one-on-one and in person (whether with a group or exclusively, during or outside of school) is considered a one-to-one contact. Within the citizens program, once Best Buddies staff determines the friendship is strong, the buddy pairs are given the option to either see each other twice a month or meet for a single four-hour outing per month.

- Buddy pairs commit to their friendship for at least **one year** (academic year for school friendship programs, calendar year for the others). We believe that dedicating a year to the friendship will foster the foundation for a mutually-enriching, long-lasting friendship.

Though our Jobs, Promoters, and Ambassadors programs do not follow a friendship model, all Best Buddies programs foster an environment of inclusion and can ultimately lead towards lifelong friends.

**Click here to learn about our leadership programs**