



Securing Host Sites

The first step in locating a potential host site for a chapter is to understand agencies in the area that serve individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). Appropriate Best Buddies host sites should service individuals who are willing and able to develop mutually enriching friendships with their college-aged peers; the host site should act as the point of contact for their participants and have full knowledge of the participant's background, home life, and history. Host sites are the college program's greatest partner in fostering genuine friendships and leadership opportunities for adults with IDD. Best Buddies staff should think critically about appropriate programs that can serve as a host site for their chapters.

Host sites can include but are not limited to:

- Group homes
- Advocacy groups
- Vocational workshops
- Social service agencies
- Residential facilities

Keep in mind that (typically) residential facilities make better host sites than work sites or day programs. The reason is simple: most chapter outings or activities happen during the evenings or weekends. Additionally, residential providers often have more insight into their clients' weekly schedules. When schools partner with host sites, all buddies that are matched must be affiliated with the host site. This is in order to ensure participants receive communication and transportation and for utmost safety of all buddy pairs.

For some chapters, staff may need to identify additional host sites for the chapter to accommodate the buddy participants who are not affiliated with the chapter's current host site, staff should identify additional agencies that currently work with and support participants. First, it is recommended that staff work with the buddies not affiliated with the host site to join the programming at the current host site in order to receive services and approval from the current host site. By providing opportunities for the buddies to join the current host site, staff and volunteers are assured that consistent communication and support will be provided for all members.

In some instances, this opportunity for buddies may not be possible. Staff may need to secure additional agencies to act as host sites. These agencies may not be a day program or group home, but a service provider, support agency, or other organization that has knowledge of the participants and can act as an additional support and take responsibility for buddies in the chapter.

Host Site Requirements

Best Buddies International (BBI) selects host sites based on logistics, proximity, interest, and need. Most importantly, though, are the participant's commitment to developing mutually enriching one-to-one friendships. In a Best Buddies match, all volunteers with and without disabilities are expected to share their time and energy to create a friendship. Best Buddies seeks host sites that value this expectation and work with participants to meet the requirements of a Best Buddies friendship.

Keep in mind that although Best Buddies partners with professional agencies committed to servicing people with IDD, Best Buddies is not a service provider. Best Buddies values inclusive, equal opportunities for friendship; because of this goal, expectations for membership do not exceed those outside of typical club participation. There are security precautions in place to ensure the safety of all members, but additional requirements typically expected of fulltime service providers are not expected of any volunteer. Best Buddies evaluates participants



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through the protocols outlined below, but in an effort to maintain the semblance of typical relationship building – and in keeping with the goal of fostering matches that mirror typical friendships – requirements to participation are kept to a minimum.

Approved Affiliation

All buddies who are matched in a friendship must be affiliated with the approved host site. This can mean that they receive services from the agency, live at the site, or are an active and approved client of the provider.

All matched peer buddies must be fulltime students at the college/university where they participate in Best Buddies. These students are required to have been accepted by the institution and carry a full case load to ensure their commitment to the school, and thus their commitment to the Best Buddies chapter on campus.

By guaranteeing all volunteers are accepted by trusted organizations like host sites and colleges/universities, Best Buddies can ensure that all volunteers have been vetted by additional establishments committed to safety. Best Buddies also relies on host site coordinators and faculty advisors – trusted volunteers from both the host site and the school who support the chapter fulltime – to know more about each individual participant and to approve their safety and ability to participate in the program. Teacher and parent recommendations are also encouraged prior to matching (reference forms can be found on Best Buddies University) and interviews are expected for all participants before they are matched in a one to one friendship. Additional safety measures for participants are outlined below.

Background screenings

All participants with and without disabilities are required to complete a Membership Application prior to approval to join the chapter. Membership applications will be flagged as “Under Review” when a volunteer answers “yes” to any of the four questions listed below in the Background section of the consent form:

- Have you been fired or asked to resign from a paid or volunteer position because of any kind of harassment or physical violence?
- Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense?
- Have you ever been charged with neglect, abuse, or assault?
- Other than the above, is there any fact involving you or your background that would call into question your participation in Best Buddies?

If a participant answer “yes” to any of the above questions that requires follow up, they must complete a background check through Best Buddies’ approved agency, Sterling Volunteers, within one week of completing their Membership Application. Best Buddies staff will oversee this process. The background check will then be reviewed by the BBI Risk Management team and approval for participation in the organization will be messaged through Best Buddies staff within one week of the completed background check.

Background checks and affiliation with approved agencies help to safeguard members and ensure all participants matched in the Best Buddies program are safe, committed, and prepared for a one-to-one friendship.

Messaging to new host sites

It is important that Best Buddies staff feel empowered and prepared to introduce new host sites who provide services and support to our members with knowledge, resources, and understanding of their role. Once a host site has been identified, either as a new site due to the proximity of the agency and interested participants or to officially recognize the site because the agency is currently providing services to individuals who already participate in Best Buddies, staff should ensure the following:



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- Expectations are communicated and a communication plan is set in place
- A host site coordinator is identified
- Information on the site is updated in BBO

Communication

Host sites should partner with Best Buddies based on the participants they service and their proximity to the chapter. Staff should message that the host site must be a willing partner of the Best Buddies organization. The host site should provide services to members willing and able to participate in the Best Buddies program, and the host site should be responsible for providing information, assistance, and support should anything happen with the participant at a Best Buddies affiliated event. Best Buddies needs to ensure that the buddy participants have a second source of support with background knowledge of the participant.

Host Site Coordinator Expectations

Depending on the number of buddy participants from that host site, the host site coordinator will have different levels of expectations. The host site coordinator should be willing and able to maintain communication between the Best Buddies staff and their participating clients for events, outings, and in the event a situation with their buddy participant arises at a Best Buddies activity. They should have knowledge of the participating buddies and can confirm the buddies' appropriateness for participation in Best Buddies.

Host Sites on BBO

All host sites should be added to Best Buddies Online once the agency agrees to serve as the host site for the Best Buddies chapter. Agreement to serve as a host site can be a verbal agreement or signed contract (template available below).

To update BBO with new host site information, simply login to www.bestbuddiesonline.org/admin, visit the administrative dashboard, and scroll to Host Sites. Click on Host Sites and the "Create New Host Site" button. Once the information is added, be sure to save the host site.

MAIN MENU

- Dashboard
- Member Applications
- Placeholders
- CP Applications
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- Host Sites

Search Host Site

Host Site

EXPORT TO EXCEL CREATE NEW HOST SITE

ID	Host Site Name
4	C.W. Resources
5	The ARC of New London County
6	City of Willimantic
7	Easter Seals Goodwill Industries

Once the host site information is saved on the portal, you will be able to select the host site from the drop down menu of available host sites in the college chapter's profile. This will officially link all buddy participants to approved host sites for participation in the Best Buddies chapter.

Host Site

Host site: People, Inc (Buffalo, New York)

Add Hostsite: [Select] ADD

Remove Hostsite: [Select] REMOVE

