

BEST BUDDIES®



BEST BUDDIES MIDDLE SCHOOLS PEER BUDDY MANUAL 2010-2011

The mission of Best Buddies is to establish a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Best Buddies Middle School: Peer Buddy Manual

The Best Buddies Movement

Our Mission

To establish a global volunteer movement that creates opportunities for one-to-one friendships, integrated employment and leadership development for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Our Vision

To put Best Buddies out of business.

The Big Picture

Best Buddies, a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization, was founded in 1989 by Anthony Kennedy Shriver. We are a vibrant organization that has grown from one original college chapter to more than 1,500 college, high school and middle school campuses across the globe. Best Buddies programs engage participants in each of the 50 United States, and we have accredited international programs on six continents. Best Buddies currently operates in: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Curaçao, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, England, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Hong Kong, Iceland, India, Ireland, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Scotland, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates and the United States of America with additional countries in advanced phases of development.

Our seven formal programs – Best Buddies Citizens, Colleges, e-Buddies®, High Schools, Jobs, Middle Schools and BUILD- Buddies United in Leadership Development – will positively impact more than 700,000 individuals this year. Even though Best Buddies has advanced tremendously in our short existence, many areas of the country and many regions of the world still lack programs to help people with intellectual and developmental disabilities become part of mainstream society. Best Buddies volunteers annually contribute, at no cost to their communities, support services that equate to more than \$170 million USD.

Our Lifetime of Support

Best Buddies International is a worldwide organization offering more than just the opportunity for students to participate in middle school, high school or college chapters. Once you join Best Buddies International, you can become a part of Best Buddies forever. Our e-Buddies program involves individuals ranging in age from 10 years to older adults. Our other adult programs include Best Buddies Citizens, Best Buddies Jobs, and BUILD and are available in numerous major cities. Best Buddies also greatly appreciates and needs donors, people who continue to give so that the gift of friendship can expand across the country and the world. For more information on staying involved in Best Buddies by becoming an active alumni, receiving our international newsletter, or if you or someone you know would like to make a financial contribution to Best Buddies please contact your Program Manager or Best Buddies Headquarters at 800-89-BUDDY (28339).



Chapter Members

Peer Buddy

A Peer Buddy is a middle school student who makes a commitment to be paired in a one-to-one friendship with a Buddy for one academic year.

Qualifications and Responsibilities:

- Must have the desire and ability to form a mutually enriching friendship.
- Must complete Membership Application and a Matching Survey on the chapter portal at www.bestbuddiesonline.org and obtain parent consent.
- Must complete a Friendship Update monthly to report weekly contact and monthly activities on the chapter portal at www.bestbuddiesonline.org.
- Attend chapter activities with Buddy at least once a month.
- Plan additional activities with Buddy twice a month.
- Honor the one-to-one commitment for an entire academic year.
- Contact Buddy once a week (in person, or by phone, letter, note, or e-mail).
- Attend chapter meetings and group activities.

Buddy

A student with a mild to moderate intellectual or developmental disabilities who is matched in a one-to-one friendship with a Peer Buddy for one academic year.

Qualifications and Responsibilities:

- Must have the desire and ability to form a mutually enriching friendship.
- Must complete Membership Application and Matching Survey on the chapter portal at www.bestbuddiesonline.org.
- Must be able to form a socially appropriate and mutually enriching friendship.
- Attend chapter activities with Peer Buddy at least once a month.
- Plan additional activities with Peer Buddy twice a month.
- Contact Peer Buddy (in person or by phone, note, letter, or e-mail) once a week.
- Honor the one-to-one commitment for an entire academic year.
- Attend all chapter activities and events.

Associate Member/Associate Buddy

A chapter member who is not matched in a one-to-one friendship. In the event there are a limited number of persons to be matched within the chapter, all people waiting to be matched would serve as Associate Members/Associate Buddies until additional volunteers are identified.

Qualifications & Responsibilities:

- Must be an enrolled student at the middle school
- Attend chapter meetings and group activities.
- Associate Members must still complete a Membership Application on the chapter portal at www.bestbuddiesonline.org.
- Join committees to help plan activities or fundraisers. Recommended to join the Friendship Update Committee.



Best Buddies Commitment

As a Peer Buddy you are going to have lots of FUN, but you also have a responsibility to your new Buddy. It is important that you keep up your contact with your Buddy in order to create the most meaningful friendship you can.

A Peer Buddy agrees to:

- Contact your Buddy once a week!
 - The more you contact your Buddy, the more comfortable the two of you will be together and the better your friendship will be.
 - While talking on the phone or writing notes with friends may be an everyday activity for you, your Buddy may not have ever received a phone call or a note from a friend and having that experience would really brighten their day!
 - How can I do this?
 - Call your Buddy at home
 - Say “hi” to your Buddy during school
 - Write your Buddy a note/letter/card and deliver it to his/her classroom
 - Sit together at an assembly or at lunch
- Spend one-to-one time together TWICE per month!
 - Hanging out in person one-to-one is the best way to build a friendship, share stories, share laughs and have fun!
 - What can we do together?
 - Attend one of your chapter’s activities together – it’s easy and fun!
 - Eat lunch together at school
 - Walk to the buses together
 - Invite your Buddy to play at your house – have dinner, watch movies, go for a walk, etc.
 - Go to the movies
 - Go to the mall
 - Go to a sports game or school play at your school
 - Join a sports team together
 - Stay after school to play on the playground

The possibilities for what you can do together are endless, but make sure you ask your parents and your Buddy’s parents for help.

REMEMBER: You have made a commitment to another person. Your Buddy experiences excitement and happiness, but also disappointment and hurt feelings, just like you do. Sticking with your commitment and helping others in your chapter to do the same is the very important.

It is OK if it is hard at first!

Making a new friend can be a lot of fun, but it can also be a little scary. Just because you are matched with someone doesn’t automatically make them your friend. Friendships take time to develop. You and your Buddy have been matched together because you share common interests, so try to learn about the interests that you share!



Don't be sad if it takes time and effort for you and your Buddy to feel comfortable together. That is a normal part of building friendships. Remember that you can ask your Advisors for help!

Also, the more time you spend contacting your Buddy, the more comfortable you two will be with each other, so keep up with your contacting your Buddy weekly and seeing her/him twice a month!

Why one-to-one? Can I share my Buddy?

It is much easier to get to know someone if you take the time to focus on that one person. It is important to match one-to-one because when people are in a group it is easier for someone to be left out and nobody likes to be left out.

If you want to *really* get to know someone, you have got to take the time to focus on that individual and to share some of yourself. One-to-one matching makes it possible to have the best, highest quality, longest lasting friendships.

Your Buddy spends a lot of time in big groups, but very little time in a one-to-one friendship. That is why time spent with you will be even more special when it is just the two of you. It shows your Buddy that you really care about him/her and gives the two of you a chance to share memories, stories, and laughter that are special and unique to your friendship.

Of course it is a great idea to introduce your Buddy to your friends and to help them get to know other people, too! It is most important that your Buddy knows she/he can rely on you to keep up the once a week contact and twice a month in-person commitment because you are their Best Buddy!

Person First Language

No matter what kind of special needs your Buddy may have, **she or he is a person first**. In Best Buddies, we use "People First" language to convey the idea that a person is not defined by their disability, but rather is a person who has a disability.

You wouldn't describe a person with a broken leg as a "broken-legged person". In the same way, using people first language, you would not describe a person with an intellectual disability as a "disabled" person. It is more respectful to describe the person as "a person with a disability".

You will need to be a leader in your school. Show respect for your Buddy and all people with disabilities through your actions and choice of language.



Good tips for interacting with your Buddy

Just as you want to be thoughtful and respectful in your choice of language when speaking to your Buddy, be aware that there are certain actions which are more respectful than others. Here is a good list of things to remember if you are in a difficult situation with your Buddy.

DO:

- Remember that a person who has a disability is a person like anyone else.
- Relax. If you don't know what to do or say, allow the person who has a disability to help put you at ease.
- Ask. If you have a question about what to do, how to do it, what language to use, or what assistance to offer, ask the person with the disability. That person should be your first and best resource.
- Offer assistance if it seems needed. Respect your Buddy's right to say that they don't need help.
- Give your Buddy your full attention when you are together or in a group.
- Appreciate what the person can do. Remember that difficulties the person may be facing may stem more from the attitudes of others more than from the disability itself.
- Be considerate of the extra time it might take for a person with a disability to get things said or done. Let the person set the pace in walking or talking.
- Speak directly to a person who has a disability, rather than using a teacher or aide as a go between.
- Ask before pushing a wheelchair. The person in the wheelchair can tell you when or if she/he needs help getting around.
- Listen carefully and patiently to a person with a speech difference. Don't be afraid to let the person know if you do not understand. Be patient not only with the person with the disability but also with yourself.
- Anticipate. Be aware of your surroundings at all times. Try to anticipate the needs your Buddy might have or the situation demands and remember that safety always comes first.

Resource: Guide to Etiquette and Behavior for Relating to Persons with Disabilities
American Friends Service Committee <http://www.afsc.org>
Office: 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102

Get the facts on intellectual and developmental disabilities

In the United States 9.3 million individuals have intellectual disabilities and 100,000 babies are born with intellectual disabilities each year.

NOTE: The above numbers are estimates based on information from experts in the field of intellectual disabilities.

An intellectual or developmental disability is not a disease, nor should it be confused with mental illness. People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have a slower rate of learning. They may also have difficulty managing ordinary activities of daily living, understanding the behavior of others, and determining their own appropriate social responses. Children with



intellectual and developmental disabilities grow into adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Your Buddy is just like you! He/she has the same needs, wants, and desires that you experience each day.

For more information on intellectual and developmental disabilities please see your Special Education Advisor or visit the websites listed below:

- www.bestbuddies.org
- www.aaid.org
- www.thearc.org



Meetings and Activities

Group Activities

Group activities bring the members of your chapter together for a shared experience. They enable everyone in the chapter to have a chance to meet and have fun with each other as a group. During the Group Activities, there will also be time where Buddy Pairs can fulfill their one-to-one commitment. There will be at least five group activities over the course of the academic year including one community service project.

The Advisors, Chapter President and Chapter Representatives, including the Buddy Director, are responsible for making activity schedules and will try to plan outings that everyone will enjoy. If you have ideas or suggestions for group activities, please share them with the Chapter President or the Buddy Director.

One-to-One Activities

By far, the most important part of any Best Buddies friendship is spending time together one-to-one. One-to-one time allows you and your Peer Buddy to spend time developing a friendship. What the two of you choose to do together will depend on the type of activities both of you enjoy.

One-to-one friendships are the core of the Best Buddies program. Peer Buddies and Buddies who are matched in a mutually enriching one-to-one friendship must commit to the following minimum requirements:

- **Contact each other on a weekly basis (telephone calls, letters, e-mails, text messages, Facebook or brief visits during the day)**
- **Have two one-to-one activities per month, which can include participation in group activities that take place during the chapter meetings**
- **Attend all chapter meetings, group activities, and fundraisers.**

One-to-one activities are not only limited to the activities your chapter holds at school. Buddy Pairs are also encouraged to spend time together outside of school. What the two of you choose to do together will depend on the type of activities both of you enjoy.

Please know that spending time together does not mean spending a lot of money or going far away. Spending time together is what Best Buddies is all about! Try to be creative and plan things that do not cost much, or better yet, are FREE. You can go to the school basketball games together, join an after school sport or club together, play on the playground after school, visit each other's houses, go for a walk – the possibilities are endless and making fun times happen is up to you!

Chapter Meetings

Chapter Meetings bring the Buddy Pairs together to talk about what is going on in the chapter, plan fun activities, and most importantly spend time with your Buddy! It is a time for the Buddy Pairs to spend time together during school. It is a good idea to have these meetings during lunch, so you can eat while you plan. You can also play games, make crafts, or talk with your



Peer Buddy! Chapter meetings are led by the Chapter President and are held once or twice each month.

Making the Matches

Best Buddies friendship matches are based on:

- Same Gender
- Common Interests
- Similar Commitment Levels
- Additional information gathered from the Matching Survey, during an interview or discussion with an Advisor

Best Buddies always tries to make matches based on same gender. However, if you definitely do not want to be paired with a Peer Buddy of the opposite gender, please make sure to note this on your application or to tell your Special Education Advisor.

It is not always possible to match every interested person in a Best Buddies friendship. If you have not been matched, there are still ways you can be involved. Please talk to the Chapter President or Special Education Advisor for more details on how to be an Associate Buddy!

Things to Consider Before You Start

- Do I have time for Best Buddies?
- What activities might get in the way of my being able to see my Peer Buddy?
- Am I committed to forming a new friendship?

PLEASE, only join Best Buddies if you are prepared to participate for the entire school year!



Some Frequently Asked Questions

1) If Best Buddies is about one-to-one friendship, why do we form chapters?

Best Buddies chapters act as a network of support that unifies all members. If Peer Buddies are having difficulty with their one-to-one friendship, being part of a chapter gives them the chance to look toward the group for support. Chapters provide structure and guidelines for the friendships. Peer Buddies are also given the opportunity to plan group activities and fundraisers or exchange ideas for one-to-one outings.

When you make the commitment to serve as a Peer Buddy, you become an integral part of the Best Buddies team, which stretches you locally, statewide, and internationally. When your chapter joins for group activities, you not only have the opportunity to have fun, but you also play a role in helping Best Buddies spread its mission of friendship.

2) How do I get to/from group activities and one-to-one outings?

Transportation is not the responsibility of Best Buddies; it is your responsibility. Transportation will depend on the situation and whether or not your parents will be able to drive you or whether or not they will allow you to ride in the car with another student's parents. Please talk to your parents about the best way for you to get to/from group activities and one-to-one outings.

3) Who pays for group activities and one-to-one outings?

You and your Buddy are each responsible for paying your own way to group activities and one-to-one outings. So, be sure to plan activities that both of you can afford. Remember, spending time together does not mean spending a lot of money.

4) How can I be sure to continue fulfilling my commitment to my Buddy?

Throughout the year, there may be times when one of you might not have a lot of extra time for one-to-one outings. A few suggestions for maintaining your friendship include:

- Schedule a specific time, the same day each week, to call or see your Buddy. This way, spending time with your Buddy becomes part of your regular routine.
- As you might do with any of your other friends, explain the situation to your Buddy. Let your Buddy know if you will be more busy than normal so that the Buddy understands why you don't have as much time. Give him/her the same time and effort you would give any of your friends.

5) What happens if I don't fulfill my commitment to my Buddy?

If at any time you fail to meet the mission of Best Buddies or you don't see your Buddy for more than a month, your match will be dissolved and you will be asked to leave the chapter.

6) How do I handle vacations or school ending for the summer?

Closure is an important part of the friendship, especially if you are graduating or will not be returning to Best Buddies next year. The best approach is to tell your Buddy that you will be leaving and/or write a letter to explain the situation clearly. However, remember that you can still keep in touch via e-mail, mail, or phone if you would like to.



e-Buddies®

e-Buddies is an e-mail pen pal program that pairs people with intellectual and developmental disabilities in one-to-one e-mail friendships with peer volunteers who do not have intellectual and developmental disabilities. Participants are matched based on age, gender and common interests. e-Buddies agree to e-mail each other at least once a week for one calendar year.

Computers are an integral part of society and by joining e-Buddies, participants can develop the skills necessary to become technology-literate and therefore able to compete for higher-level employment and to communicate using a variety of sources. e-Buddies is also a safe way to make a new friend and connect with someone across the country.

Encourage your Buddy to sign up for e-Buddies! By participating in e-Buddies along with the High School program, Buddies are included in both our neighborhoods and online communities.

For more information on getting your Buddies signed up for e-Buddies, please visit www.ebuddies.org.

Buddies United in Leadership Development- BUILD

Since 1989, Best Buddies has been committed to enhancing the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. As an organization, we have pursued that commitment by expanding from one-to-one friendships in schools and communities to securing white-collar jobs for people with disabilities. In our 20th year, we revamped our mission statement to include providing opportunities for leadership development. Buddies United in Leadership Development (*BUILD*) is the manifestation of this promise, by providing speech writing and leadership training for participants with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Separated into two tracks, Buddy Ambassador (BA) and Buddy Director (BD), the program offers options for people with IDD to expand their roles in their chapters and communities. The Buddy Director track prepares participants with disabilities to be effective chapter leaders, work successfully as a team, and support one-to-one friendships. The Buddy Ambassador track aims to improve public-speaking skills and confidence in speaking about personal experiences, Best Buddies friendships/jobs, and our mission. You have the option of completing both trainings as many times as you would like.

Buddy Director is a title for an officer position reserved for a participant with IDD. The Buddy Director track is specially designed to enhance leadership skills that are needed hold this officer position. Both participants who are currently Buddy Directors and those who are interested in that role should strongly consider this track.

The Buddy Ambassador track provides training for participants who would like to speak publicly about their lives and the importance of friendship. Buddy Ambassadors use their skills to recruit for Best Buddies, share information at meetings, advocate for people with intellectual disabilities in their community, and more. Participants who are interested in speaking eloquently to an audience should consider this track.

Best Buddies welcomes you to join us in this celebration of leadership and self-advocacy of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.



Chapter Contacts

My Buddy: _____
Phone #: _____
E-mail: _____
Address: _____
Emergency Contact and Phone #: _____

Special Education Advisor: _____
Phone #: _____
E-mail: _____

Faculty Advisor: _____
Phone #: _____
E-mail: _____

Chapter President: _____
Phone #: _____
E-mail: _____

Buddy Director: _____
Phone #: _____
E-mail: _____

Friendship Update Coordinator: _____
Phone #: _____
E-mail: _____

Chapter Representative: _____
Phone #: _____
E-mail: _____

Chapter Representative: _____
Phone #: _____
E-mail: _____

Program Manager: _____
Phone #: _____
E-mail: _____
Office Address: _____

For more information on Best Buddies International please visit our website at
www.bestbuddies.org. To access all chapter documents please visit
www.bestbuddiesonline.org.