

# About these Materials

The following materials were developed by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Massachusetts Bay, which over the years has demonstrated a tremendous organizational commitment to research-guided practice. In developing these closure materials, the agency drew heavily from research conducted by Dr. Renee Spencer and others<sup>1</sup> on the reasons some matches fail and the often devastating impact that premature match closures can have on youth, families, and mentors.

Research is increasingly clear that a positive closure experience is an essential aspect of a mentoring relationship. With these tools, BBBS Mass Bay demonstrates an understanding that setting expectations around match closure, and empowering mentors to close matches well, is a critical piece of what they do—both staff and mentors now recognize closure as, “the last big mentoring moment.”

We have included three of the tools that they have developed for use in their program here:

- *“Let’s Finish What We Started” Closure Practices for Match Support* (practices for staff)
- *Keys for Healthy Closure for Mentors* (for community-based mentors)
- *Steps for a Healthy Goodbye with Your Site-Based Little* (for site-based mentors)

These research-to-practice resources are offered to help mentoring programs reflect on opportunities in their own organizations to support growth-promoting closure experiences for all of the youth, families, and mentors they serve. The National Mentoring Resource Center thanks BBBS Mass Bay for their leadership as a research-to-practice organization and for their willingness to share these resources with the broader mentoring community.

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<sup>1</sup> Spencer, R., Basualdo-Delmonico, A., Walsh, J., & Drew, A. (2017). Breaking up is hard to do: A qualitative interview study of how and why youth mentoring relationships end. *Youth & Society, 49*(4), 438-460.

# “Let’s Finish What We Started”

## Closure Practices for Match Support

All matches come to an end at some point. Some endings are planned, others are unexpected. Closures are handled on a case-by-case basis taking into account the match history, characteristics, length and individual traits of each match party. They happen for a variety of reasons and can be initiated by the agency, the Big, the Guardian or the Little. Match Support has an important role to play in normalizing closure as a part of the match experience, helping matches understand why it’s important, and determining the best plan for a healthy ending based on the unique attributes of each match.

### Helping Matches Understand Why Closure is Critical

- Research shows that the way mentoring relationships end matters. “Good closures to youth mentoring relationships require considerable scaffolding on the part of mentoring programs as well as follow through by all participants.”- Spencer et al, 2014
- The way a match ends can influence how a Little feels about their overall experience in the relationship and what they take with them from the match.
- Mentoring relationships are different than other relationships Bigs and Littles have and will have in their lives. Though they often evolve to feel natural over time, our matches have a set of expectations and responsibilities to us and each other that differ from relationships with their friends and family.
- Closure is an opportunity to role model and provide a Little with the experience of a healthy goodbye, and support the positive development of emotional competency and caring skills.
- Though goodbyes are a part of life, it’s important to acknowledge and normalize that they are hard for everyone, even in strong relationships.

**When Should We Proactively Bring Up Closure?** Talking about closure throughout the life of the match is critical to helping our match parties understand that 1) Closure is a normal part of every match’s experience in the program and 2) Part of our role is to help them be prepared when the time comes for the match to end.

- **During Enrollment** (ES will raise the idea of closure with Bigs and Guardians during the presentation call when discussing the life cycle of a match)
  - **Normalize:** All formal relationships will end and we expect this as a part of our program. Matches end for a variety of reasons (ex. Little has “outgrown” their need for a mentor or Big is pursuing a new job opportunity and no longer has the time to continue). We do not want match parties to feel guilty about ending a relationship when that time comes, but rather, be focused on ensuring a positive ending for the match.
  - **Characterize:** Ending a relationship can be difficult and that is why we are dedicated to helping you through the process. It is important that you partner with MS to develop a plan, which usually involves giving advance notice, having a final outing, reflecting, and creating a plan for the future. Clear and open communication between parties during this process is key. We want to ensure a positive closure by making it clear it is not the Little’s fault (internalizing) and that he/she has appropriate expectations of what will happen after this ending (ongoing communication vs. no communication, etc.).



- Maximize: The ending of a match is a time to celebrate the friendship and reflect on the highlights of your time together. We want to ensure that the ending helps promote and sustain the positive impact that has occurred during the friendship. Ensuring positive closure can provide an opportunity for the Little (as well as the Big/Guardian) to learn how to end relationships in appropriate and healthy ways.
- **New Matches**
  - When explaining the role of match support, we can include “supporting healthy goodbyes if/when it comes time for the match to end” as a part of our areas of expertise and support. This does not need to be explored in depth unless questions arise, but mentioned so that we can normalize this as a part of the match experience and our role.
- **5-6 Months (MAP Mid-Year Review)**
  - Remind parties that we asked for a one year commitment, but if at any point something changes to be proactive about letting us know. Set the stage to revisit as we approach the one year mark.
- **9-10 Months**
  - Call back to one year commitment and ask intentions to continue.
  - Language for Match Support: “Your original commitment was a year. Let’s talk about what you envision moving forward. We will have this conversation with everyone and encourage you to talk to each other.”
  - Don’t assume they are going to continue. Create a space for them to share and normalize that we have some matches that continue and some that end at the year.
  - Encourage them to evaluate any life transitions (moves, jobs, relationships) and normalize that lives, schedules, availability often change for people and this program fits differently into their lives.
  - If they plan to end, emphasize importance of time and attention to a healthy goodbye and set stage for planning a healthy closure over the next few months (see *What Does a Healthy Closure Look Like* below).
  - If they plan to continue, encourage to proactively share with us if they are ever getting to a place where this is no longer the case.
  - If they don’t know, set a timeline with them for their decision and a firm plan for when you will revisit it.
  - Whether closing, continuing, or still deciding, discuss importance of celebrating their one year anniversary and marking milestones with their Little.
- **Annually**
  - We should plan to repeat this annually around the match anniversary- taking the opportunity to reflect, celebrate, and ask them what they envision the match will look like over the next year. Normalize that this may change at some point and if/when it does, to let us know so we can work together on a healthy strategy for closure.

#### **What Does a Healthy Closure Look Like?**

- Clear timeline/reason for the ending



- Bringing up conversations about endings sooner rather than later will help all match parties be prepared for the transition and will allow the match time to celebrate and reflect on the friendship. A positive closure is an opportunity for a Big to role-model having strong character by acting with integrity.
- When we know a match is closing, we recommend giving Littles as much notice as possible. Ideally, match parties can be informed about the closure at least 1-2 months prior to the final outing. This will vary based on the needs of the Little and circumstances surrounding the closure. Consulting with the guardian about what is an appropriate timeline for talking to the Little about closure and having a final outing is important - they know their child best. Prior to the last visit, the match should have continued conversations about this transition that are balanced - Bigs, guardians and Match Support should be careful not to overstate it to make them anxious.
- Match parties and Match Support should be as clear as possible about the reasoning behind closure and message to the Little that closure is not his/her fault. Sometimes the reason given by a match parties for the need to close the match is unclear/not completely honest.
  - Ex: Big using “time constraints” as a reason for closure, when potentially they are just not feeling satisfied in their role and/or feel incompatible with the Little or Guardian but don’t want to share this. We can use our role in Match Support to identify signs of this earlier and help to coach match parties on it, potentially preventing closure or loss of contact.
  - Language for Match Support: alternatives to the word *closure*: *goodbye*, *ending*, *fulfilled commitment to the program*, *transitioning out of the program*, *graduate from the program*, *becoming alumni of the program*.
- Clear expectations about what the relationship will look like moving forward
  - The plan for post-closure visits or communication should be discussed with match support and agreed upon by all parties. It’s critical that both big/family are in sync with their expectations/comfort level with this.
    - Ex. Sometimes the Big may want to keep in touch, but the P/GR decides continuing without program support (or enough regularity) is not something they’re comfortable with.
  - Some Bigs have a tendency to overpromise their post-closure commitment to their Little. We can help Bigs understand that it can be healthier for a Little to have a final, positive goodbye than to set up an unsustainable pattern of visits and communication that will lead to disappointment and can negatively impact the connection formed between the Big and Little.
  - This is largely dependent on the stage the match is in at the time of closure, the age of the Little, their relationship dynamics and how involved the guardian has been in facilitated communication.
    - Ex: An 8-year-old Little in a one year match may be less likely to continue regular communication with his/her Big after closure than a 16-year-old Little in a well-established match who can reach out to the Big regularly on his/her own.
  - Encourage Bigs to not make promises unless they are 100% sure they can keep them and understand that if/when anything changes in the future, they will be responsible for creating a healthy transition on their own. As the match has developed their connection over time, the Little has developed trust in the Big and their relationship. As a result, Bigs



should only agree to what they can commit to - and what the Little's guardian has given permission for.

- Ex: "Remember, whatever you decide is OK and it is sometimes better to simply say, 'I know this is hard, and I'm really going to miss you too. I'm excited to celebrate our friendship together next week during our last outing.'"
- There is risk involved in keeping in touch after closure.
- Incorporate the parent/guardian
  - Ensure that the guardian and any other prominent adults in the match are aware of the closure and timeline of this transition.
  - Gather feedback from the guardian on what they envision the relationship will look like moving forward/what is realistic for them, too. It's possible the guardian would not like to continue the relationship after closure.
- Closure with the parent/guardian
  - As Bigs and Littles are saying goodbye, we should provide space for the guardian and other important adults in the match to say goodbye to the Big as well.
  - Depending on the length and dynamics of the match, the Littles may have become close to their Big's loved ones. It may be appropriate to offer space for the Little to say goodbye to those adults as well.
- Acknowledge emotions
  - There are no "right" and "wrong" emotions that can be experienced by match parties during closure. Acknowledge this when working with them and normalize the feelings that they are experiencing, however surprising they may be. Ex. anger, hurt, relief, indifference.
  - Experiencing closure is a way for a Big to both role model appropriate emotional competence and provide an opportunity for the Little to grow in this area. Encourage Bigs to empathize with what their Little is feeling as a way to role-model caring.
  - Talking to the Little about saying goodbye is an opportunity for the Big to role model ending a relationship in a healthy way. Encourage the Big to ask questions and share his/her feelings (role modeling their own emotional competence, empathy and sympathy).
    - Ex: "We only have three visits left! Can you believe it? I'm really going to miss seeing you. How are you feeling?"
  - Match Support can draw parallels to other normal endings in the Little's life (Ex: saying goodbye to teachers or friends at the end of a school year)
  - While we tend to focus on the experience and well-being of the Little, it's important to acknowledge the emotions of the Big and Guardian as well. We often forget the difficulty many adults have when experiencing endings and that they can be vulnerable too.
    - Ex. A Guardian who has gone through a traumatic loss in their own life may take their child's disappointment to heart.
  - Acknowledge our own emotions as Match Support. We are integral players in our matches and when they close (whether positively or negatively) it can come with many emotions for us- sadness, disappointment, relief, guilt, frustration. Talk to your colleagues or your supervisor. Take care of yourself and each other.
- Remember and reflect on enduring memories



- Encourage match parties to find ways to reflect on and celebrate prominent memories of their match, both with us and each other, in a way in which both match parties can carry this into their future.
- Potential ideas for matches include do their favorite activity together on their final outing, exchanging a small gift/memento that will be meaningful to each person, making a scrapbook together of their past experiences.
- Consider growth and change in all match parties
  - Offer space for match parties to reflect on the growth of the Little and themselves throughout the course of the match, both with each other and with us. Has the Big seen changes in himself/herself since being matched?
  - Depending on the length of match and your relationship with the guardian, asking if he/she has seen changes within themselves may be appropriate.
  - Match Support can be a great resource for this as we are familiar with their match history. Point out areas of growth that match parties aren't able to see themselves.
    - Language for Littles: *You were brave and made a new friend.*
- Don't rush things
  - Provide match parties time to make decisions about closure, determine a plan and execute. It is important for everyone to feel comfortable with how the match ends.
  - Follow up to make sure that people follow through. Wait to process a closure until you have confirmed that the final visit (or whatever plan you decided on) has occurred. This helps hold match parties accountable and also allows you to jump in as needed if the match needs additional support or someone does not follow through (see below).

### **When Closure Doesn't Go According to Plan**

- Match Support plays an important role in creating a closure experience for our matches when they are unable to successfully accomplish this themselves. Ideally it's best for the match to tell each other directly, however, sometimes we have to share the news that a match is ending. Examples: 1) We lose contact with a match party and have to tell the Big or family ourselves 2) Little loses interest and is not comfortable sharing this with the Big themselves. 3) We hear from a Big that they can no longer continue and we decide based on their history of poor follow through it's best for the message to come from us.
  - Be honest and upfront, everyone deserves to know a clear rationale for why the match is ending.
  - Humanize the other party- saying goodbye is hard, and sometimes too stressful. We are stepping in to help and this is an opportunity to role model sympathy.
  - Listen and understand how they are feeling. Acknowledge when the other party didn't do what they agreed to. We can set a good example by not criticizing or over joining with a frustrated party, while acknowledging our disappointment they didn't follow through and also indicating that we understand what might be going on.
  - Decide with the Guardian who is going to tell the Little when it should happen and how.
  - Create space to reflect and if appropriate, celebrate.
  - Sometimes this news is surprising or upsetting and a match party may need time before they are ready to discuss or reflect. After empathizing, ask: "Do you feel you're in a place to have a productive conversation? If not, we can wait."
  - Language for Guardians: "I hear how you feel (validate). We know these transitions can be emotionally upsetting and have found it helps the Little when the parent/guardian has had a chance to process and think about how to talk it through with child first. I imagine



it's hard when you're just hearing this news yourself to think of putting it into words for your child. I'd like to offer support and suggestions on that."

- Make sure they leave the call knowing what the next steps are (if there are any).
  
- Sometimes we determine that it's best for a match not to have a final outing- a phone call or goodbye letter is a more appropriate route. Examples: 1) Match ended quickly and lacked connection. 2) Family is not interested or comfortable with a final outing. 3) We determine based match history that they likely will not follow through.
  - Explaining your perspective and the perspective of the other party. Why are we taking this route?
  - Frame the alternative closure strategy as the healthy route for closure.
  - Emphasize the importance being realistic with yourself and following through on whatever plan is laid out.
  - Match Support may need to facilitate a letter or message from a Big if we have doubts that they will do it on their own.
  - When a goodbye letter is the best route for closure: 1) send a clear message that it's not the Little's fault that the match is closing and 2) reflect on positive memories- when they were first matched, what they learned from Little, thank the Little.

### **Common Misconceptions about Closure**

- Closure is only between a Big and Little
  - Provide space for closure for Bigs and guardians as well.
  - Allow space for *you* to experience closure with the match! Saying goodbye to volunteers and families is also difficult for staff.
- The impact of a match ends at closure
  - There are many residual effects for all match parties of a healthy or unhealthy goodbye,
  - An unhealthy goodbye can actually negate the positive memories and skills gained within the relationship.
  - A healthy goodbye is a way to preserve the positive impacts of the relationship and is an opportunity for the Little to develop in multiple areas of PYD (emotional competence, caring, etc.)
- Good matches are likely to end well
  - Sometimes it's even harder for parties to say goodbye well when the relationship is positive-- or even to admit that it's time to end the match.
  - In strong, positive matches, there can be a tendency to have more ambiguity about what the relationship will look like post-closure - potentially leading to unsustainable patterns and disappointment.
  - The ending of a match relationship is different than other types of endings in a child's life, however natural it may feel.

### **A Guide to Decision Making:**

Consider the following factors on a scale of *Strong*, *Tenuous* or *Weak* and reference the below chart to determine which closure procedure you should pursue based on the unique attributes of the match. This guide is not designed to be definitive like a decision tree. As Match Support we have license to use our professional judgement, assessment skills and instincts in deciding what is in the best interest of our matches. Rather, the goal is to help us consider important factors play and evaluate the strengths/challenges of a match when determining the best approach for closure.

*\*Note, this scale may be adjusted as we implement our new documentation practices in 2016*

<p><b>Factors to Consider (Strong, Tenuous, Weak)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication Patterns (with us/each other)</li> <li>• Big's History of Follow Through</li> <li>• Level of Connection</li> <li>• Coachability of the Big</li> <li>• Interest Level of the Little in Match</li> <li>• Comfort Level of the P/GR</li> <li>• Timeframe for Closure</li> </ul>	<p><b>Messaging Closure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Tells Little/Family</li> <li>• Match Support Tells Little/Family</li> </ul> <p><b>Method for Goodbye</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final Outing</li> <li>• Call/Skype/Letter organized by the Big</li> <li>• Letter/message facilitated by MS</li> </ul> <p><b>Future Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep in touch post closure</li> <li>• Don't keep in touch post closure</li> </ul>
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<b>Messaging Closure</b>			
	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Tenuous</b>	<b>Weak</b>
<b>Communication Patterns (w/us and each other)</b>	Big tells Family	Big or MS tells Family	MS tells Family
<b>Big's History of Follow Through</b>	Big tells Family	MS tells Family	MS tells Family
<b>Level of Connection</b>	Big or MS tells Family	Big or MS tells Family	Big or MS tells Family
<b>Coachability of the Big</b>	Big tells Family	Big or MS tells Family	MS tells Family
<b>Little's Level of Interest in the Match</b>	Big or MS tells Family	Big or MS tells Family	Big or MS tells Family
<b>Comfort Level of P/GU</b>	Big or MS tells Family	Big or MS tells Family	MS tells Family
<b>Timeframe for Closure</b>	Big or MS tells Family	Big or MS tells Family	Big or MS tells Family

<b>Method for Goodbye</b>			
	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Tenuous</b>	<b>Weak</b>
<b>Communication Patterns (w/us and each other)</b>	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes)	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)	Letter/Msg (MS organizes)
<b>Big's History of Follow Through</b>	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes)	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)	Letter/Msg (MS organizes)
<b>Level of Connection</b>	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)	Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)





<b>Coachability of the Big</b>	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes)	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)	Letter/Msg (MS organizes)
<b>Little's Level of Interest in the Match</b>	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)	Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)
<b>Comfort Level of P/GU</b>	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)	Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)	Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)
<b>Timeframe for Closure</b>	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)	Final Outing or Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)	Call/Skype/Letter (Big organizes) or Letter/Msg (MS organizes)

<b>Future Communication</b>			
	<b>Strong</b>	<b>Tenuous</b>	<b>Weak</b>
<b>Communication Patterns (w/us and each other)</b>	Keep in Touch	Do Not Keep in Touch	Do Not Keep in Touch
<b>Big's History of Follow Through</b>	Keep in Touch	Do Not Keep in Touch	Do Not Keep in Touch
<b>Level of Connection</b>	Keep in Touch	Do Not Keep in Touch	Do Not Keep in Touch
<b>Coachability of the Big</b>	Keep in Touch	Do Not Keep in Touch	Do Not Keep in Touch
<b>Little's Level of Interest in the Match</b>	Keep in Touch	Do Not Keep in Touch	Do Not Keep in Touch
<b>Comfort Level of P/GU</b>	Keep in Touch	Do Not Keep in Touch	Do Not Keep in Touch
<b>Timeframe for Closure</b>	Either	Either	Either

# Keys for a Healthy Goodbye

All matches come to an end at some point. Research suggests that when mentoring relationships end well, they have longer lasting effects and positive outcomes for youth. Mentoring relationships are different than other types of relationships, and though they may evolve to feel natural over time, Bigs have an obligation to end their commitment in a healthy way for their Little. Match Support staff understand that ending a match is often difficult and that is why we are dedicated to partnering with you through the process. Want to have a lasting impact? Here are the keys for a healthy goodbye with your Little.

## 1. When to Start the Conversation

Bringing up conversations about endings sooner rather than later will help your Little and their family be better prepared for the transition and will allow you time to celebrate and reflect on your friendship. While timing may vary based on your Little's individual needs and the circumstances surrounding the transition, we recommend that you introduce the idea at least **one to two months** prior to your final outing and continue the conversation as a part of your ongoing dialogue. During your **second or third to last outing**, you should emphasize to your Little **when** your final outing will be and discuss **what** your relationship will look like after saying goodbye. Having this conversation before the very end will allow you to spend your last day reflecting and celebrating your friendship together.

## 2. Who to Involve

Use your supports! Talk to your Match Advocate as soon as you think your match might be ending. All matches come to an end at some point and we are here to partner with you on your plan for a healthy goodbye. Your Little's parent or guardian is also a key partner for you and we encourage you to share the news with them first. They know their child best and may have insights into the best approach to prepare your Little, share the news, and in determining what your relationship with your Little will look like moving forward.

## 3. What to Say: Preparing Yourself and Your Little

Talking to your Little about your goodbye is an important part of the process and an opportunity to role model ending a relationship in a healthy way. There are no "right" or "wrong" feelings when saying goodbye and your Little may have a wide range of emotions through the process. Ask questions and role model verbalizing your own emotions. "We only have 3 outings left! Can you believe it? I'm really going to miss seeing you. How are you feeling?" It's important to make sure your Little understands why you're saying goodbye and hears the message: "it's not your fault."

**Clear expectation setting about what your relationship will look like moving forward is key.** You may be tempted to say "Let's keep in touch!" but it's vital that you don't make promises unless you are 100% sure you can keep them. For some Littles and families, *keeping in touch* without a clear plan can be more detrimental than a *clean goodbye*. If you decide to keep in touch with your Little, remember that you will be responsible for creating a healthy transition if/when something changes in the future. Take some time to really think about what is



sustainable for you and only agree to what you can commit to – and what both Match Support and your Little’s parent/guardian have given permission for. Remember, whatever you decide is OK and it is sometimes better to simply say, “I know this is hard, and I’m really going to miss you too. I’m excited to celebrate our friendship together in 2 weeks during our last outing.”

#### 4. How to Celebrate your Match!

Your final outing should be a time to celebrate the positive memories you have made together and an opportunity to reflect on how both you and your Little have grown throughout your friendship. What were your favorite experiences together? How does your Little feel different now compared to when you first met? How do *you* feel different? What have you learned about each other and what have you learned *from* each other? What does your Little think he/she will take from this experience into the future? Create space to reflect and celebrate with your Little’s family too. Here are some ideas we recommend: Recreate a favorite outing or be brave and try something new. Make a scrapbook or comic book of your favorite memories together. Write goodbye or thank you cards to each other. Looking for more ways to make your goodbye memorable and impactful? Match Support is here to help you throughout the process.

# Steps for a Healthy Goodbye with Your Site-Based Little

Research suggests that when mentoring relationships are ended well they have longer lasting effects and positive outcomes for youth. During your match, your Little has gained confidence and self-worth. The way you say goodbye plays an important role in how that self-worth continues to develop, even after the relationship ends. An unhealthy goodbye can negate the positive contributions you have worked hard to add to your Little's life, limiting the residual effects of your match. **Whether it's the end of your match or the end of the school-year, here are some steps for a positive ending with your Little...**

## 1. Who to Involve

Use your supports! Talk to your Match Advocate about your plan for a healthy goodbye. Connect with your Little's teacher and/or your site's contact so they can help prepare your Little. Depending on your unique match, you may have established a relationship with your Little's parent/guardian. If so, talk to your Match Advocate about including them in your conversations, too.

## 2. When to Start the Conversation

Bringing up conversations about endings sooner rather than later, will help your Little be prepared for the transition and will allow you both time to celebrate and reflect on your friendship. We recommend that you introduce the idea to your Little **six to eight weeks** prior to your last visit and continue the conversation as a part of your ongoing dialogue. During your **second or third to last visit** of the year, you should emphasize to your Little **when** your final visit will be and discuss **what** your relationship will look like after saying goodbye. Having this conversation before the very end will allow you to spend your last day reflecting and celebrating your friendship together.

## 3. What to Say: Preparing Yourself and Your Little

Talking to your Little about saying goodbye is an important part of the process and an opportunity to role model ending a relationship in a healthy way. Ask questions and share your feelings. Ex. "We only have 3 visits left! Can you believe it? I'm really going to miss seeing you. How are you feeling?" It's important to make sure your Little understands why you're saying goodbye and hears the message "It's not your fault." Even if you are confident that you will be able to continue with the program next year, it is still important to say goodbye to each other. In these cases, you can use language such as, "I hope we can see each other next year."

**Clear expectation setting for what your relationship will look like moving forward is key.**

As you plan, remind yourself: **DON'T** make promises unless you are 100% sure you can keep them. Take some time before your last visit to really think about what is sustainable and realistic for you. *Only agree to what you can commit to – and what your Little's parent/guardian has*



*given permission for.* Remember, whatever you decide is OK and it is sometimes better to simply say, "I know this is hard, and I'm really going to miss you too. I'm excited to celebrate our friendship together next week during our last visit."

#### 4. How to Celebrate your Match!

Your final visit with your Little should be a time to celebrate all of the positive memories you have made together. It's an opportunity to reflect on the changes that have occurred in both you and your Little since first meeting. What were your favorite experiences together? How does your Little feel different now compared to when you first met? How do YOU feel different? What have you learned about each other and what have you learned *from* each other? What does your Little think he/she can bring from this experience into his/her future? **Your final visit should be personal and we recommend spending it completely one-on-one, ideally in a quiet area of your school/site.** Some ideas on how to celebrate together include: trying a new activity you both have never done before, making a scrapbook/comic book of your favorite memories together or writing goodbye cards to each other. Looking for more ideas on how to celebrate in a fun way? Talk to your Match Advocate!