

# NJ Big Brothers Big Sisters Selected for LGBTQ+ Peer Coaching Program



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OF COASTAL & NORTHERN  
NEW JERSEY

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal & Northern New Jersey (BBBSCNNJ) has been selected as a LGBTQ+ Peer Coach for agencies within the national federation of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA). The peer coaching program invites agencies from around the country to connect with BBBSCNNJ for guidance and advice in developing programs, staff, and volunteers to better support and serve the LGBTQ+ community.

BBBSCNNJ was selected as a leader in the LGBTQ+ mentoring space for a number of reasons including their dedication to work in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). In 2021 the agency formed a DEI Steering Committee made up of a diverse group of individuals including members of staff, interns, board members, Bigs, and even former Littles who are now adults. The committee meets quarterly with the goal of ensuring that the agency is keeping DEI at the forefront of all operations, specifically in three areas: recruitment, training and program initiatives.

“Expanding our reach and creating a safe and affirming space for the LGBTQ+ community is a top priority for the DEI Steering Committee,” said William Salcedo, Executive Director of BBBSCNNJ. “We are proud to say we have Bigs, Big Couples, Littles, Parents, Staff, Board Members, and Interns representing this community.”

In the 47 years of BBBSCNNJ’s operations in New Jersey, the mentoring programs have always welcomed all, including Bigs, Littles and their parents/guardians of every gender, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation.

“We’ve received a lot of guidance along our journey to create a more inclusive and safe space for our mentors, mentees, and families within the LGBTQ+ community, and are happy to share our knowledge as part of this peercoaching initiative,” Shannon Oreficé, Director of Programs at BBBSCNNJ.

BBBSCNNJ’s mission is more critical than ever as the agency continues to serve more than 1,500 children with oneto- one mentoring throughout 10 counties in New Jersey. From emotional support to the joy of having a trusted friend in their corner, Bigs provide stability and support that our Littles need as they grow on their paths to achieve greatest potential futures.