



The Randolph B. Capone Cleft Lip and Palate Program

BUDDY PROGRAM

This program was developed to encourage engagement and relationship building between younger children in the early stages of cleft lip and/or cleft palate repair and older children who have completed their surgeries and treatments. This group will provide opportunities for children to develop important life skills such as empathy, sharing, teamwork, communication, and leadership. The interactions fostered by this program are developed with the intent of having positive influences on both the individual children and the group as a whole.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE BUDDY PROGRAM?

The Buddy Program was designed to foster fun, connection, and learning between Big Buddies (8 years and older) with Little Buddies (4 years and older). This strategy hopes to create opportunities for natural interactions between children along the cleft lip and/or cleft palate continuum of care.

HOW CAN MY CHILD BECOME A BIG BUDDY?

Big Buddies complete an application and an “All About Me” information section. They are then paired with a Little Buddy. For children 8 years and older, this is an opportunity to, quite literally, be the “big kid” and engage with, teach, and share with younger children by establishing personal connections as well as attending events to promote fun and learning. By providing support and serving as a role model to younger children, Big Buddies gain valuable leadership skills.



HOW CAN MY CHILD BECOME A LITTLE BUDDY?

Little Buddies will complete a brief survey and “All About Me” information section. Caregivers of Little Buddies are asked to indicate their interests and what they would like to gain from the program. Little Buddies and their families will have the opportunity to ask questions of their Big Buddy and their caregivers throughout the stages of cleft lip and/or cleft palate repair. Big Buddies will share experiences and will provide encouragement to the Little Buddy.

Building these formal relationships among young children will translate throughout each stage of the cleft lip and/or cleft palate continuum, and hopefully for life!

CAREGIVER GUIDELINES

Parents and guardians (caregivers) play an integral part in the Buddy Program. Caregivers will assist Big and Little Buddies in completing their “All About Me” information section and the accompanying application.

Caregivers and Big Buddies will attend an orientation and welcome reception, where training and will be provided and additional guidelines will be reviewed. Big Buddies will develop valuable leadership skills and will establish personal connections with their Little Buddies.

Caregivers may be invited to plan and attend certain events and interactions between the Big and Little Buddies. Little Buddies may reach their Big Buddies if they want to connect or ask questions about a new stage of cleft care. Big and Little Buddies will spend time together at events organized by the Cleft Team.

BUDDY PROGRAM GUIDELINES & APPLICATION

An application and an “All About Me” section will be completed for each Big and Little Buddy before being paired. As a Big Buddy, the child will be trained to provide support to their Little Buddy by talking to them, offering encouragement, and playing with them during group meetings and activities. You can also be creative and send mail or participate in phone or video calls with your Little Buddy. For the Big Buddies, this is an opportunity to be the “big kid” and engage with, teach, and share with younger children. You will also be invited to attend fun events!



For more information about The Randolph B. Capone Cleft Lip and Palate Program’s Buddy Program call 443-849-6050.

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