



Best Buddies is an international organization committed to increasing the integration and inclusion of individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities in the areas of social interactions, employment, and leadership.

What services or resources does this agency provide?

Best Buddies (BB) provides three main programs that revolve around friendship, jobs, and leadership development. The job program helps people gain meaningful employment by matching them to jobs that match their interests and skills. They are involved in recruitment, job training, and helping to build support networks for the individual within the organization. The friendship program, which exists at the elementary, middle, high school, and college level, provides socialization opportunities by pairing members up with a one-on-one buddy that they meet with regularly. The leadership program provides training and workshops to improve self-advocacy and leadership skills.

What areas of Tennessee do they serve?

Best Buddies has TN state offices that are located in Nashville and Memphis. Additionally, students can get involved with the many high school and college programs that exist. The job program currently only serves Davidson (Hermitage, Nashville), Rutherford, and Williamson (Brentwood, Franklin) counties.



Is there a cost and, if so, who pays?

There is a one-time fee that members of the community must pay to join Best Buddies, and that fee covers a background check. Other than that, there are no fees associated with joining Best Buddies.

For which students might this agency be appropriate?

Students looking for friendships, job coaching, and leadership opportunities might find the resources provided by BB to be helpful. The three programs offered by Best Buddies can benefit anyone, but especially those individuals who are transitioning out of school. It is important that these students have a network of friends and reliable job and leadership training to help them become more self-determined and independent.



Who is eligible to receive their services/ supports and when?

While there are no eligibility requirements to join Best Buddies, programs are designed for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities starting in elementary school and continuing throughout life. The job program is available to individuals who are leaving or have already left the school system.

What is the referral process?

What documents are needed?

Because services are not provided, there is no formal referral process for the friendship and leadership programs. There is simply an online application that one must fill out to join Best Buddies. For the job program, there is a more detailed referral process with more information at <https://www.bestbuddies.org/jobs/>

What is the family's responsibility?

The programs that are offered have the ability to significantly improve a student's life by helping individuals make friends in the community, teaching them how to advocate for themselves, and also providing training for different types of jobs. Parents who have a strong desire for the child to be more independent should contact their local BB chapter to see how they can get their son or daughter involved.

What is the student's responsibility?

It is the student's responsibility to take initiative by showing up for events, making plans with their citizen buddy, learning to communicate often, and more. If a student does not take advantage

Where can I learn more?

Visit the Best Buddies website at:

<https://www.bestbuddies.org/tennessee/>

of the opportunities that BB presents within its programs, there will be little benefit in joining this organization.

What is the responsibility of an educator?

Educators can provide students and families with information about the resources that their local Best Buddies chapter offers. Because the programs offered at each chapter are different, it is important to have the most current information before sharing a general list of programs with parents. Educators can encourage students to join their high school BB chapter if they have one.

How (and when) do you involve them in the transition planning process?

- Invite a representative from your local Best Buddies chapter to come speak to parents about the social, career and leadership benefits of joining BB.
- As students prepare to leave the school system, teachers can take the time to help students apply to be part of the job program (if offered by local chapter).
- Educators should consider that students who have social or community involvement goals can join Best Buddies in high school as a way of potentially fulfilling those goals.



What questions should I ask of my local Best Buddies Chapter?

- Does this chapter offer the job program?
- How can I get involved with the Friendship program?
- Do you offer Leadership programming? What types of trainings or workshops are coming up?
- Does BB offer any resources or services to parents/families of an individual with IDD?

Additional contact information:

- Give the Nashville office a call at: (615) 891-2046
- Give the Memphis office a call at: (901) 937-0005
- Send them an email at: JessicaWylie@bestbuddies.org