

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

MELISSA RAMIREZ



This year, Oklahoma earned the status of having the highest incarceration rate in the world. With that unfortunate crowning comes thousands of kids who will experience the trauma (or adverse childhood experience) of having one or both parents incarcerated. In fact, the Annie E. Casey Foundation reports that approximately 108,000 (or 12% of) Oklahoma children will experience parental incarceration during their childhood. Even more troublesome, the research suggests that having a parent incarcerated is a strong indicator for future incarceration for the child.

Traumatic childhood experiences like parental incarceration, parental separation and emotional neglect are linked to significant obstacles later in life like depression, suicide attempts and even negative health outcomes.

At Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma, we are boldly at war with the effects of adverse childhood experiences every day. And, we are winning!

Science shows that a stable, nurturing relationship with a caring adult can prevent or reverse the damaging effects of adverse childhood experiences.

Last year, 42% of our Littles in Oklahoma currently or previously had a parent incarcerated. That's 424 kids with whom we are linking arm-in-arm to win the war for their potential. Further, 87% of our Littles were living without both parents in the home. That's 875 of our kids with whom we are winning!

In total last year, 2018, 1,009 Bigs and Littles fostered friendships to clear the path to a child's biggest possible future. We matched 75 more Bigs and Littles than our previous year. We are winning!

But, we want to do more. We must do more.

My vision for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Oklahoma is extraordinary growth. Help us provide a life-changing friendship to the 257 children currently ready to be matched on our waiting list. That's 257 Oklahoma kids who have raised their hand asking for a Big. **They are ready. Are you?**

With gratitude,

Melissa Ramirez, CEO

