

**Family Participant Guidelines**  
**Birch Community Services ~ 17780 NE San Rafael ~ Portland, OR 97230**  
**Warehouse (503) 251-5431**  
**Email: [info@birchcommunityservices.org](mailto:info@birchcommunityservices.org)**

**OUR MISSION**

To provide a community where people can be responsible and accountable for meeting their basic needs, and to equip them with tools to overcome financial difficulty.

Birch Community Services, being unable to serve all of the needy families and individuals referred to it, reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to determine those individuals and families it will serve. Accordingly, a family or individual's participation is subject to being terminated at any time for any reason. We do not serve families who are receiving SNAP or TANF.

**HOW TO PARTICIPATE**

A family in need may be referred to the BCS program by a current or past participant in good standing, or someone we know and trust. The referring person is vouching for the character and validity of the family's situation.

**PAY MONTHLY DUES**

Each family pays a service fee of \$70.00 per month. Service fees are due by the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the month and will be late if not **received on or before the last day of the month**. Payment methods are cash, check or money orders only. A drop box is available at the front desk for **checks only**, or you can mail your payment. Don't mail cash.

Late notices are issued if the service fee is not received by the last day of the month. **After two late notices the fee must be paid by the 10th of the month**. After three notices participation rights may be terminated. Contact us if there are special circumstances regarding a late payment.

**SIGN A FINANCIAL & GOAL STATEMENT**

Each family has a signed participation form and goal statement on file. A representative of each family completes a Participation Update Form once a year to specify goals accomplished. The information entered on the forms will be used to determine the need for taking BCS's finance class and participating in the mentor program. Therefore each family may be required to take the finance class and/or receive a financial mentor.

**SHOPPING IN THE WAREHOUSE**  
**(No shopping on Tuesdays and Thursdays)**

**WAREHOUSE HOURS**

Monday & Wednesday 12:45 to 6:00 p.m. (Last shopper accepted at 6:00 p.m.)

Friday 12:45 to 4:30 p.m. (Last shopper accepted at 4:30 p.m.)

*Holiday Closures: Check the website or see the hand-out in the office for holidays BCS is closed.*

**COMMIT TO A SHOPPING DAY**

Participants choose a shopping day and commit to coming on that day. If you don't attend for 30 days and have not notified us you will be removed from the program. The reasoning is simple:

- Our participants are limited and there is a waiting list. If you are listed as a participant and do not come regularly, you are taking away another family's opportunity.
- Families who do not come regularly might not pay fees regularly.
- We distribute items based on the number of families that will come on an open day. If you do not come consistently, product that could go to families may go to waste.
- 2X Shoppers: Please see the hand-out entitled, *Procedures for 2X Shoppers*.

### MAKE-UP SHOPS

If you are occasionally unable to shop on your chosen day (doctor's appointments, school functions, etc.) you may shop on another open day that week. Friday can be made up on Monday. It is not necessary to call us, just come in. If it is a consistent problem, you may change your shopping day, just let us know.

If you miss a week because of *vacation, illness, etc.*, you may do one additional shop **the following week only, but NOT two shops on the same day** (*unless you are a 2X shopper – see 2X shopper guidelines*). For example, you may come in on Monday and Friday of the following week. Please let the front desk know you are doing a 'make-up' shop when you check in. Remember, consistency is the key here – consistent, weekly shopping keeps food in your fridge, and helps us keep a balance of distribution. If you have questions, please contact the front desk at 503.251.5431.

### WRITE THANK YOU NOTES

A grateful heart is a critical part of our program. You convey your appreciation to our wonderful providers by writing one or two thank you notes a month. Leave them at the front desk; we mail them for you. They are always thrilled to hear from you about how they affect your lives!

### HELP AFTER ONE MONTH

After one month of participation, you begin helping two hours per month. After three years this increases to four hours a month. We ask that you work at least a **full two hour shift** every time. A variety of help is needed; there is a place for you! For more information see the Helper/Volunteer Guidelines.

### PARKING

Parking can be an issue on some days. We will not be responsible for damage to autos or theft of articles while drivers are in the warehouse.

### CHECKING IN

When you arrive at the warehouse:

- Write your name on a piece of paper at the front desk and hand it to the check-in person for a time to be finished in the warehouse. Shopping time is limited to 45 minutes.
- Check children who need supervision into the children's waiting area. (See "CHILDREN" below.)

### SHOPPING PROCEDURES

One representative per family is allowed in the distribution area at one time.

Please help keep the warehouse clean! If a box is empty, toss it with the other empties. If you spill something, clean it up. The helpers are participant families just like you.

### LOADING

To load your goods in your car when you are finished:

- Roll the cart out to your car.
- Return the cart inside the warehouse.

### DISTRIBUTION LIMITS

*Special Note: The items in the BCSI warehouse are for **participant families only**. Please take what **your family** can use, not neighbors, extended family, etc. This includes clothing, boots, 'Needs' and 'Haves' board, and anything else in the warehouse. (Keep in mind that other families can be referred to our program if they have need of it.)*

### What we do to distribute the blessing equally to all participants

- Post item limits based on the number of participant families and the quantity of the item received.
- Stock shelves throughout the entire open time. (You don't need to be first for the best!)
- Reserve special items received in limited supply as helpers' 'thank you' items.

What you can do to distribute the blessing equally to all participants

- Read limit signs.
- With unlimited items, take only what **your own family** can use.
- Produce may be in limited supply, so take enough for one meal if provisions are short.
- Ask when you see an abundance of something; it's likely that you may take some to share with others.

If we feel that someone is intentionally trying to break the guidelines, or sneak something by us, we will bring it to their attention. After three notifications, your participation rights will be terminated.

CHILDREN

Sign children in, give them a name tag, and mark the time you leave the Kids' area. Only one child under five years old is allowed in the distribution area and must be in a Snugli or backpack or strapped into the child seat of the shopping cart. The children's waiting room is available if this is not possible. To maintain a peaceful atmosphere for waiting participants and front desk workers, we ask that **kids are quiet and well behaved**. There is an overseer in the waiting room to ensure that children stay in the children's area, but **we accept no responsibility for your children**. For details about the Children's Center please refer to the hand-out, *Children's Center Rules and Regulations*.

**SUSTAINABLE FAMILIES PROGRAM**

EDUCATION

Participants age 13 and up may attend any of the classes offered at and through BCS (unless otherwise stated). The three streams of education are life skills, work skills, and financial management. Attendance of classes is not required for families (unless otherwise noted), with the exception of the finance class (unless otherwise noted). Upcoming classes are posted in the office, by email, and on the website.

**WAYS BIRCH COMMUNITY SERVICES PARTICIPANTS BLESS EACH OTHER**

THE "NEEDS AND HAVES" BOARD

If you have an item you don't use, or if you need something, feel free to indicate it on the board and DATE it (and remove it when it is gone or the need filled.) Please, nothing for sale. This is your chance to bless and be blessed. *These items are for participant families only.*

CLOTHING EXCHANGE DEPARTMENT

Participants age 13 and up can shop in this area located upstairs. We welcome items and clothing that are clean and of good quality. There are some items we don't accept; see the guidelines for this at the front desk. *The clothing exchange department is for participant families only.*

REFERRING NEW FAMILIES

We add families by referral. There is a referral form for this purpose. After you have participated in the program for **four months** you may refer another family **in need**. We feel it would be beneficial to bring the person you are referring into the warehouse for a "walk through" and make sure they visit our website. You may submit one referral every month. A referral does not guarantee addition to the program; the level of need is determined by the Review Committee (under the supervision of the Board of Directors) in its sole discretion. The Review Committee reserves the right to replace a family or individual whose need is not as great as another's. It is your responsibility to keep us abreast of any changes in your family or need status.

PRAYER

Every open day the helpers gather and share requests and pray. We also encourage participants to pray silently for families around them while they shop. Let us know what's happening in your life and how we can be praying for you. Maybe we can help!

### **LEAVING THE PROGRAM?**

While we are sad to see you go, we look forward to families being able to leave our program because they have been blessed and goals are met. If you no longer need this program, **please inform us in writing or by email**, and **fill out and return** the one page exit questionnaire. Let us know when and why you are leaving. When we have this written information we will remove you in good standing, eligible to return.

### **GROUNDNS FOR DISMISSAL**

The Review Committee reserves the right to remove a family or individual for the following reasons:

- Three or more late notices.
- Unfulfilled commitments, including 1) refusal to take a financial training class or 2) refusal to complete the required volunteering obligation.
- Stealing.
- Selling BCS product.
- Noncompliant behavior.

We do offer an appeal process. If this is your desire, please send your written appeal to Suzanne Birch [Suzanne@birchcommunityservices.org](mailto:Suzanne@birchcommunityservices.org)