

The Fine Print: BCS Participant Guidelines
Birch Community Services - 17780 NE San Rafael - Portland, OR 97230
(503) 251-5431 - info@birchcommunityservices.org

Welcome to Birch Community Services

We understand that BCS is a new experience for many; it is exciting to make life changes and move forward toward sustainability. During your time with BCS we hope you find relief, encouragement, growth, but most importantly, hope. Please join us as we partner together to move out of debt.

The Sustainable Families Program

Our Financial Literacy Manager

After completing and signing your participation form found in your welcome packet, you will meet with our Financial Literacy Manager, Dino Biaggi. This first meeting will help establish your financial goals and plans for the future. After turning in your completed paperwork, you will eventually have a note on your account that will say you need to make an appointment to see Dino. An office staff member can schedule your appointment in office or via phone. After the first meeting with Dino, you will complete an anniversary update form each year after and meet with Dino again in your anniversary month to discuss where you are at in terms of your goals

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, with the exception of the finance class (unless otherwise noted). All participant families are expected to take a finance class at BCS within their first year on the program. Re\$tart is a financial class that Dino Biaggi created and is offered 4-5 times a year. Upcoming classes are posted in the office, by email, and on the website. You may sign up for all classes online at www.bcsi.org.

Shopping Times and Guidelines

Shopping 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, our social media accounts like Facebook or Instagram, or see the hand-out in the office for holidays BCS is closed.

Pick a Shopping Day

Participants choose a shopping day and commit to coming on that day. The reason why this works well is because we are coordinating with 500+ families and want to make sure each family has fair access to product on a weekly basis. If you don't attend for 30 days and have not notified us you will be removed from the program. **Note:** To keep things orderly and safe, one representative per family is allowed in the distribution area at one time for 45 minutes. Please do not return to the shopping area to shop again after your 45 minutes are done.

- 2X Shoppers: If you qualify and choose to be a 2X Shopper, you must come every 2 weeks regularly. Please see the hand-out entitled, *Procedures for 2X Shoppers* for more information.

Check-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 and Children's Area" below.)

Make-Up Shops

If you are occasionally unable to shop on your chosen day, you may shop on another open day that week. It is not necessary to call us, just come in. If it is a consistent problem, you may change your shopping day.

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**. 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.

Item Limits and Warehouse Etiquette

Please read all limit signs, even if you've seen the limit sign before. Limits can change from week to week. If there is an item that has no limit, take only enough for your family that week. The items in the BCS 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. If you know a family who could benefit from BCS who is not on the program, please read "Referring New Families" below.

If someone is intentionally trying to break the guidelines, please bring it to our attention. After three notifications, your participation rights will be terminated.

Children and Children's Area

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

Monthly Service Fee

How to Pay

Service fees are \$70 each month. All participants are required to pay their \$70 service fee one month ahead of time. This means that in the current month, you must be paid ahead for the following month. In the office, we accept cash, check, or debit cards for monthly service payments. We also accept payment online through PayPal on our website at www.bcsi.org/payments. All debit card transactions will include a \$3.00 transaction fee. If you would like to set up a recurring payment, you may set that up with your bank or online through our PayPal portal. If next month's payment is not received by the last day of the current month, the payment will be considered late. Three late notices are grounds for removal.

Volunteering

How to begin

After one month of participation on the program, participants are required to volunteer 2 hours each month in the warehouse. After 3 warehouse shifts, you can inquire about doing scheduled pick-up outside of the warehouse with the dispatcher, Aquila. 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*.

Referring New Families

How to Refer a Family

We add families by internal referrals or by online application for those outside of the BCS network. After you have participated in the program for **three months** you may refer another family **in need** by filling out the hard copy referral form. 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 prior to coming in. The Review Committee reserves the right to remove a family or individual who does not qualify or no longer qualifies for the program in its sole discretion. It is your responsibility to keep us abreast of any major changes in your family or financial status.

Leaving the Program

How to leave the program

While we are sad to see you go, we look forward to families being able to leave our program because their goals are met. If you no longer need this program, **please inform us in writing or by email**, and **fill out the online survey exit questionnaire**. We use the questionnaire information to improve upon our program to better serve families like you! When we have this information, we will remove you in good standing, with eligibility to return.

Being Removed from the Program

Grounds for dismissal

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

- Three 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
- 3 missed appointments with Dino Biaggi

We do offer an appeal process. If this is your desire, please send your written appeal to Suzanne Birch Suzanne@birchcommunityservices.org