

The Fine Print: BCS Participant Guidelines

Birch Community Services - 17780 NE San Rafael - Portland, OR 97230 (503) 251-5431
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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.

Please note that we do not serve families who are receiving SNAP or TANF.

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. An office staff member will assist you in making an appointment with Dino. After a year on the program, you will complete an anniversary update form and meet with Dino again in your anniversary month to discuss your current financial situation and 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, the curriculum created by Dino Biaggi, is offered 5-6 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

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| Monday & Friday | 11:00am to 5:00pm (Last shopper accepted at 5:00pm) |
| Wednesday | 11:00am to 6:00pm (Last shopper accepted at 6:00pm) |

Holiday Closures: Check the website, the holiday schedule in your welcome packet, 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 570+ families and want to make sure each family has fair access to product on a weekly basis. Please sign up for shopping prior to arriving at the warehouse by going to <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/bcs>. 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. On the day you shop, you may shop 2 times. You will complete one 45-minute shop, put your things away, then come back in for a second 45-minute shop. You also have the option of bringing a second adult to push a second shopping cart and completing both shops at the same time (within 45 minutes) OR asking for a 2X shopper sign to take twice the limit for that shop only. For more information, please ask a front office staff member for a copy of our 2X Shopper Procedure Handout.

Check-in

When you arrive at the warehouse:

- Write your name on a piece of paper at the check-in desk and show it to the check-in person to receive the time you should be finished shopping. Shopping time is limited to 45 minutes. Once your time is over, **please do not re-enter** the shopping area. Only one shopper per family is allowed on the floor unless it's arranged prior to shopping.
- 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. You may not sell anything you receive from BCS. Selling items received from BCS will cause your family to be removed from the program immediately.

If you notice someone intentionally trying to break the guidelines, please bring it to our attention. If a participant continues to be non-compliant, their participation rights can 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 in a front pouch, backpack, or strapped into the seat of the shopping cart at all times. 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

Service fees are \$80 each month. All participants are required to pay their \$80 service fee one month ahead of time. This means that in the current month, you must be paid ahead for the following month. 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 with bill pay 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 may be grounds for removal. In the case of an NSF check, you will be required to pay the service fee again, as well as the \$15 NSF fee immediately. If you have any questions about payments, please email payments@bcsi.org.

Volunteering

The month following your initial month of participation on the program, participants are required to volunteer 2 hours (4 hours after 3 years) in the warehouse. Please sign up for a volunteer shift by going to <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/bcsv>. Each shift is a minimum of 2 hours; you cannot split up these hours. We ask that volunteers rotate their shifts. Once every 3 months participants are **required** to complete a warehouse closing cleanup shift. Please note that we do not allow pocket knives at BCS. After 3 warehouse shifts, you can inquire about doing a scheduled pick-up outside of the warehouse with the dispatcher (dispatch@bcsi.org). A variety of help is needed; there is a place for you! For more information see the *Volunteer Guidelines*.

Referring New Families

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 and are in good standing (up to date on volunteer time, have 2 or less late notices, and have done a cleanup shift in the last 3 months) you may refer another family in need by filling out the hard copy referral form found in the front office. Prior to referring a friend, please make sure they read our website thoroughly. If you and the potential participant qualify, please check in with a front office staff member before taking them on a tour or shop. 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

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

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

- Three late notices
- Unfulfilled commitments, including but not restricted to 1) refusal to take a financial class or 2) refusal to complete the required volunteering obligation
- Stealing or selling BCS product
- Noncompliant behavior
- Missed appointments with Dino Biaggi, our Financial Literacy Manager
- We do offer an appeal process. If this is your desire, please send your written appeal to Suzanne Birch Suzanne@birchcommunityservices.org

Compliance to the guidelines demonstrates your commitment to success at BCS. Noncompliance indicates this program is not the best fit for your family at this time.