



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.

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. For the time being, all meetings will be held virtually through Zoom. This first meeting will help establish your financial goals and plans for the future. 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

All classes will be held virtually until further notice. 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. You may sign up for upcoming classes online at www.bcsi.org or by following the link in the weekly update email.

Shopping Times and Guidelines

Shopping Hours

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| 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: Memorial Day (May 31, 2021) Labor Day (Sept. 6, 2021), Black Friday (Nov. 26, 2021), Christmas (Dec. 25, 2021), and New Year's Day (Jan. 1, 2022)

Pick a Shopping Day

Participants choose a shopping day and commit to coming on that day. We are coordinating with 600 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 www.signupgenius.com/go/bcs.

If you live 15 or more miles away from Birch and are interested in shopping every other week for the same service fee, please contact us at bcs@bcsi.org to learn more about being a 2X Shopper.

Masks

While in the warehouse or outside and within 6 ft of another person, you must be wearing a mask that covers your nose and mouth in accordance with governor mandate.

Shopping

- 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 volunteer to receive the time you should be finished shopping. Only one shopper per family is allowed on the floor unless it is arranged prior to shopping.
- Shopping time is limited to 45 minutes. As you shop, stay with your cart and follow the arrows on the ground, all while observing 6 ft social distancing. **Please do not revisit areas**; new product is brought out throughout the day, so that everyone has a good selection of things to choose from.
- Please read all limit signs and observe the arrows indicating the limit section, 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 only take what **those in your household** can use—not neighbors, extended family, etc. This includes clothing, boots, and anything else in the warehouse.
- Once you have exited the warehouse, **please do not re-enter** the shopping area.
- 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.

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 sign up for a different day online. 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. Sign up for your make-up shop first and put "make-up shop" in the comments of the signup. Please let the check-in desk volunteer know that you are doing a make-up shop. Once you have completed your make-up shop, you may sign up for another shop in the same week.

Children in the Shopping Area

If needed, children age five years old or younger are allowed in the shopping area in a front pouch, backpack, or strapped into the seat of the shopping cart **at all times**. Please do not bring young children and leave them in the car.

Monthly Service Fee

We have a Pay-Ahead policy. Your \$80 service fee is due by the end of the month for the next month. For example, February's service fee is due by January 31; if it is received February 1 or later, it is late. Three late payments 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 \$20 NSF fee immediately.

At this time, we only accept checks at the warehouse. If you would like to pay with your debit card, you may visit 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 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 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 a referral form. Prior to referring a friend, please make sure they read our website thoroughly. If you and the potential participant qualify, you may request a referral form when you are at BCS or by emailing bcs@bcsi.org.

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!

Being Removed from the Program

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.

A family or individual may also be removed for the following reasons:

- Three late notices
- Unfulfilled commitments, including but not restricted to:
 - Refusal to take or missed financial class
 - Refusal to complete the required volunteering obligation or missed scheduled volunteering shift
 - Refusal to meet or missed appointments with Dino Biaggi, our Financial Literacy Manager
- Stealing or selling BCS product
- Behavior that doesn't reflect BCS' Cultural Values
- 30 days without shopping and no communication

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