

Boys & Girls Clubs Open COVID-19 Relief Fund

Written by Boys & Girls Clubs, Andrew Gussert
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Focus Shifts to Distributing Food, Providing Child Care for Health Care Professionals

MADISON, WI - Wisconsin Boys & Girls Clubs are starting a statewide COVID-19 Relief Fund today at www.bgcwisconsin.org to purchase food, acquire supplies, pay staff, and address needs directly related to the coronavirus pandemic. Clubs serve 144,800 youth across 154 sites in 58 Wisconsin cities, more than any organization outside of our public school system. They also serve two million meals and snacks to youth every year at no cost. In some locations, this may now come to an end.

"Safety is the number one priority for clubs across Wisconsin, and local sites are handling this pandemic differently," said Karen DeSanto, State Alliance President. "Some are remaining open, some are scaling down, and many are now providing virtual programming online. Unfortunately, some sites are facing the hard decision to shut down."

In some areas including Appleton, Oshkosh and Berlin, local clubs are stepping up to provide additional child care for medical staff and first responders. In other clubs, from Milwaukee to Baraboo to Door County, staff are distributing food to families outside of normal membership. Clubs are not required to shut down during the pandemic because they serve vital needs, but many are now facing unprecedented financial hardship.

"Our clubs are dependent upon private contributions," said Andy Gussert, State Alliance Director. "We've had to cancel a half a dozen fundraising events across the state this month, and will postpone more in April. This leaves a financial gap of over a million dollars across our

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clubs."

Wisconsin clubs serves more youth per person than any other state in the country. Seven out of every ten kids are from a racial or ethnic minority, two of every five are from a single parent household, and two of every three are on reduced school lunch programs. "These are the kids who most need our help most during the pandemic," said Gussert.

Contributions will be shared directly with local sites across the state, dollar for dollar, with no overhead charges taken out. Donations can be made at <https://www.bgcwisconsin.org/> and are administered by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Dane County.

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The mission of the Boys & Girls Clubs is to ensure all young people, especially those who need us most, can reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens. Every dollar invested in Boys & Girls Clubs returns \$12.40 in earnings and cost-savings to their communities.