



BJA Bureau of Justice Assistance Fact Sheet

Nancy E. Gist, Director

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

Boys & Girls Clubs of America (B&GCA) is a network of more than 2,600 clubs serving more than 3 million school-age boys and girls in all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as American youth living on U.S. military bases around the world. B&GCA clubs help youth from all backgrounds develop the qualities needed to become responsible citizens and leaders. The success of B&GCA hinges on positive partnerships between young people and concerned adults, between Boys & Girls Clubs and their supporters, and between the national organization and local clubs. Special concern is shown for youth from disadvantaged circumstances.

From its national headquarters in Atlanta and the five Regional Service Centers in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, and New York, B&GCA provides onsite technical assistance and guidance to communities establishing new Boys & Girls Clubs. B&GCA also provides continuing support for established clubs to help ensure their stability, effectiveness, and growth.

Background

Officially founded in 1906, B&GCA primarily targets communities and areas where children are most disadvantaged. B&GCA efforts have proved successful in providing millions of at-risk boys and girls with opportunities to develop the skills necessary to lead productive and meaningful lives. Although B&GCA was not incorporated until 1906 by the 53 clubs existing at that time, it has served youth since 1865. The network has established an average of 250 new clubs per year during the past 4 years.

In 1987, recognizing that young people in public housing developments are at high risk for alcohol and other

drug use, health problems, pregnancy, crime, violence, delinquency, and failure in school, B&GCA launched a major initiative to establish new clubs in public housing communities nationwide. A subsequent 3-year independent study conducted by Columbia University confirmed that Boys & Girls Clubs in public housing communities have had a significant impact on juvenile crime (reduced 13 percent), drug activity (reduced 22 percent), and the presence of crack cocaine (reduced 25 percent). The study also found that clubs improved the overall quality of life for the children and families who reside in public housing developments.

An independent survey of club alumni, conducted by Louis Harris & Associates, verifies that young people greatly benefit from Boys & Girls Clubs through programs that foster self-confidence, a sense of belonging, and hope for the future. Alumni from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds strongly emphasize the positive impact of clubs on their lives. Fifty-two percent of those polled said that “the club really saved my life.” The comments from respondents showed that alumni meant this literally. They believe they would probably be dead or perhaps in prison if the club experience had not been available to them.

Since 1992, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), U.S. Department of Justice, has provided more than \$150 million through cooperative agreements to B&GCA to support the establishment of new clubs in public housing, Indian Country, and other at-risk communities; to enhance and strengthen the programmatic activities of existing clubs programs; and to provide targeted outreach and recruitment. During that period, B&GCA provided more than 2,000 pass-through grants to local clubs that enabled the establishment of more

than 700 new Boys & Girls Clubs. These grants also allowed funded clubs to reach and serve more than 400,000 additional youth between 1995 and 1998. The 1998 pass-through grants were leveraged at the local level for more than \$46 million.

Key Program Elements

Boys & Girls Clubs help their members build self-esteem, acquire moral values, and pursue productive futures. Clubs achieve these goals by providing the following basic resources to club members:

- ❑ A safe haven away from the negative influences of the street.
- ❑ Guidance, discipline, and values from caring adult leaders.
- ❑ Constructive youth development activities and programs in supervised, supportive environments.
- ❑ Access to comprehensive, coordinated services that meet the complex needs of youth at risk.
- ❑ Educational support, increased awareness of career options, and guidance in setting goals.
- ❑ A comprehensive violence prevention initiative.
- ❑ A vision of a safer, healthier, and more productive life.

Programs and services vary from club to club depending on available community resources and particular community needs and dynamics. Programs often include supplementary education, health information, life skills development, drug abuse prevention, teen pregnancy education and prevention, career development, arts appreciation, character and leadership development, and sports, fitness, and recreation. All clubs are:

- ❑ Designed for school-age boys and girls of all races, religions, and ethnic backgrounds, with no personal recommendations or proof of character required for membership.
- ❑ Building-centered, with more than 2,600 facilities ranging from 1,000 square feet to 50,000 square feet in size, open to all members during normal hours of operation, and designed to satisfy the age-old desire of children to have a “club” of their own. Most clubs are open 5 to 6 days per week, 4 to 5 hours each day.
- ❑ Staffed by full-time professionals and supplemented by part-time workers and volunteers who emphasize positive values in the relationships club

members have with one another and with their adult leaders.

- ❑ Geared to help boys and girls make appropriate and satisfying choices in their physical, educational, personal, social, emotional, vocational, and spiritual lives.
- ❑ Committed to quality through evaluation, planning, and management.

Boys & Girls Club staff are available to members in the event of emergencies that may require special attention when needed, even during nonclub hours.

Boys and girls “join” their local Boys & Girls Club by completing a simple membership application and paying an annual membership fee that ranges from \$1 to \$5—always low enough so that any youngster can afford to join.

Club Activities

In addition to extensive onsite consultations and regional training events, B&GCA develops, prepares, and distributes detailed program models and guides to local clubs. Now numbering more than 30, these programs include:

- ❑ **Character and Leadership Development**—TEENSupreme® Keystone Clubs, Youth of the Year, and Torch Clubs.
- ❑ **Education and Career Development**—POWER HOUR, The Ultimate Journey, Goals for Growth, Career Explorers Club, JOB READY!, and CLUBService.
- ❑ **Health and Life Skills**—SMART Moves, SMART Girls, Act SMART, and KIDS IN CONTROL Safety Awareness Program.
- ❑ **The Arts**—Fine Arts Exhibit and National Photography Contest.
- ❑ **Sports, Fitness, and Recreations**—NIKE Games, NIKE P.L.A.Y. Daily Challenges, NIKE SWOOSH Clubs, NIKE Sports Leadership Camps, and Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI).
- ❑ **Delinquency and Gang Prevention**—Gang Prevention/Intervention through Targeted Outreach.

Milestones

In 1999, it is estimated that Boys & Girls Clubs served 3.2 million youth nationwide in more than 2,600 clubs, 388 of which were in public housing areas. Club outreach

efforts have been extended to military families and Indian Country (75), with services offered in school buildings, shopping malls, homeless shelters, and youth detention centers, as well as on college campuses and U.S. military bases. Partnerships have been established with concerned corporations, private foundations, government agencies (such as BJA, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Labor, and the U.S. Army), other nonprofit organizations, and caring individuals, including club alumni.

B&GCA is prepared, upon request, to assist local groups that would like to establish a Boys & Girls Club in their community by surveying the needs of local neighborhood youth. Survey results are measured against B&GCA criteria to determine the local need for a Boys & Girls Club. This service is provided at no cost through the appropriate B&GCA Regional Service Center.

For Further Information

For further information about the Boys & Girls Clubs of America, please contact the B&GCA Regional Service Center nearest you.

Northeast Regional Service Center

3 West 35th Street, Ninth Floor
New York, NY 10001-2204
212-351-5480 or 212-351-5472

New England Office

478 Torrey Street, Suite 3
Brockton, MA 02401-4696
508-588-2353 or 508-588-2411

Southeast Regional Service Center

(located within the National Headquarters)
1230 West Peachtree Street NW.
Atlanta, GA 30309-3447
404-892-3317

Midwest Regional Service Center

1535 Burgundy Parkway
Streamwood, IL 60107-1811
630-830-9200

Southwest Regional Service Center

2107 North Collins Boulevard
Richardson, TX 75080-2638
972-690-1393

Pacific Regional Service Center

4201 Long Beach Boulevard, Suite 101
Long Beach, CA 90807
562-981-8855

For information about BJA programs, contact:

Bureau of Justice Assistance Clearinghouse

P.O. Box 6000
Rockville, MD 20849-6000
1-800-688-4252
World Wide Web: www.ncjrs.org

Clearinghouse staff are available Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. eastern time. Ask to be placed on the BJA mailing list.

U.S. Department of Justice Response Center

1-800-421-6770 or 202-307-1480

Response Center staff are available Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. eastern time.

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