Holiday Gift Giving Program

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

What is the Holiday Gift Giving Program?

The Annual Holiday Gift Giving Program provides assistance to eligible Bristol youth and families during the holiday season. In 2025, the program supported over 511 youth up to 18 years of age from over 192 families in Bristol with the help of 40 local sponsors and hundreds of individual donations. The City of Bristol Department of Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Services (BPRYCS) partners with individuals, families, organizations, businesses, and community members to sponsor, donate, and support local youth in need of support this holiday season. Eligible participants receive new toys and wrapping supplies.

Who receives the donations?

- Donations collected during the Holiday Gift Giving Program are distributed to income eligible FAMILIES LIVING DIRECTLY IN BRISTOL, who complete and meet the requirements noted in the Assistance Application.

How can I contribute?

There are a number of ways community members may contribute to the Holiday Gift Giving Program:

- **Sponsor a Child or Family**
  - Individuals and groups are invited to sponsor local youth and families in need of assistance. Sponsors are provided a profile on participating youth that includes age, gender, clothing size, and special interests for shopping guidance.
- **Donate a New or Unwrapped Toy**
  - **Collection Drop Boxes around Bristol**
    - Drop off a new and unwrapped toy at any one of the ongoing collection sites located amongst Bristol's local businesses.
  - **Attend the "Stuff-A-Cruiser" Toy Drive in partnership with the Bristol Police Department**
    - Saturday, November 14, 2026 | 10 AM to 2 PM | Bristol Walmart (1400 Farmington Avenue)
    - The City of Bristol Police Department (BPD) will be stationed outside of Walmart for “Stuff-A-Cruiser” with the goal of filling Police cruisers with new and unwrapped toys to benefit the program.
- **Donate $$ or Gift Cards**

  Don’t know what to donate but you want to give back to the local community? Donate via cash, check, or gift card and allow the BPRYCS staff to do the shopping for you!
  - **Gift Cards**
    - Teens and tweens LOVE gift cards! Gift Cards are a great way to donate to local youth/teens as it allows them to make their own shopping decisions, empowers them to be independent and offers great flexibility. Think local business, eateries, or their favorite place to hang out!
    - Examples: Starbucks, Chipotle, Pure Foods, SpareTime Entertainment, Walmart, Roblox, 5 Below
  - **Cash/Check donations**
    - Cash/check donations in any amount are also accepted and can be designated to the Holiday Giving Program to supplement donations and serve more youth. Please be sure to indicate your designation of the gift with your mailed donation.
    - Checks can be made payable to: Bristol Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Services.
    - What address should I use when mailing gift cards or cash donations?

      Bristol Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Services
      ATTN: Holiday Program
      51 High Street
      Bristol, CT 06010

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Are there any gift restrictions?

- We ask that all gifts are new and unwrapped please!

Can I deliver presents directly to the children I sponsor?

- Unfortunately, in an effort to preserve participant privacy, we do not allow donors and/or sponsors to deliver directly to program recipients.

How do I apply for assistance through the Holiday Gift Giving Program?

- To receive assistance through the Holiday Gift Giving Program you must complete the Assistance Application. Applications are available at the BPRYCS Main Office (51 High St.) or online at www.BristolRec.com. As part of the application, you will be asked to provide income verification, proof of address, and a Birth Certificate for participating children. Completed applications should be returned to the BPRYCS Main Office (51 High St.). BPRYCS will then contact other local agencies providing support this holiday season to avoid duplication - we appreciate your understanding.
- **What if I can't find the Birth Certificate for my child?**
  - You can provide a Baptismal Certificate or School Verification or other document which identifies child's birth date and you as their parent or guardian. This could be a letter from the school or from church or from the health system.
- **What can be used as income verification?**
  - Applicants may provide pay stubs from wages and or a statement of benefits received from unemployment, social security, child support, DSS, or verification from a referring agency.
- **What can be used as proof of address?**
  - The easiest way to provide proof of address is with a piece of postmarked mail. However, applicants may provide proof of address via Property Tax Receipt, Utility Bills, Lease Agreement or mortgage statement, Insurance Card, Voter Registration Card, Education Enrollment Papers, Bank or credit card statement, or insurance policy or bill.

How is the BPRYCS Holiday Gift Giving Program different from other holiday assistance programs?

- The BPRYCS Holiday Gift Giving Program solely serves youth and families living in Bristol! While we love the greater community, our efforts are focused on our neighbors and those closest who need our help. It is also the only local program serving Bristol youth ages 13 to 18 during the holidays! Bristol's teens deserves holiday cheer and to be included.

How long does the program run for?

- The Holiday Gift Giving Program launches on October 12th, 2026 and runs through December 18, 2026.
  - **November**
    - 10/12 - Program Launch
      - Assistance Applications Open (4-week window to apply)
      - Collection Drop Boxes Available around Bristol
      - BPRYCS - Community Call to Action
    - 11/02 - Donation Drop Boxes Dropped Off
    - 11/14 - "Stuff-A-Cruiser" with the Bristol Police Dept.
      - 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM
      - Bristol Walmart (1400 Farmington Ave.)
  - **December**
    - 11/30- Referral Deadline and Assistance Applications Close
    - 12/10- Donation Drop Boxes Collected
      - All Donations Dropped Off at BPRYCS in Preparation for Final Distribution
    - 12/14- 12/17 - Participant Pickup & Recipient Distribution
    - 12/17- Recipient Distribution Ends and all Donations Picked Up

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