



# BJA Bureau of Justice Assistance Fact Sheet

Nancy E. Gist, Director

## Boys & Girls (B&G) Clubs of America

Boys & Girls (B&G) Clubs of America is a nationwide network of 1,700 affiliated Boys & Girls Clubs serving 2.2 million school-age boys and girls. B&G Clubs help children from all backgrounds develop the qualities needed to become responsible citizens and leaders. The B&G Club mission hinges on positive partnerships between young people and concerned adults, between B&G 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 five Regional Service Centers in New York, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, and Atlanta, B&G Clubs of America provides onsite technical assistance and guidance to local communities in establishing new B&G Clubs. The network also provides continuing support for established clubs to help ensure their stability, effectiveness, and growth.

### Background

Officially founded in 1906, B&G Clubs of America has club facilities and programs in each of the 50 States, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Primarily located in communities and areas where children are the most disadvantaged, B&G Clubs have provided at-risk girls and boys with a full and fair opportunity to lead productive, meaningful lives. Although B&G Clubs of America was not incorporated until 1906 by the 53 clubs existing at that time, it has served youngsters since 1865. The network has provided technical support and organizational assistance to communities, establishing new clubs at the rate of 125 per year for the past 7 years.

In 1987, recognizing that young people in public housing are at high risk for alcohol and other drug use, health problems, pregnancy, crime, violence, delinquency, and failure in school, B&G Clubs of America 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 B&G Clubs in public housing have 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 the clubs improved the overall quality of life for the children and families who reside in public housing.

Through cooperative agreement grants in 1992, 1993, and 1994, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) of the U.S. Department of Justice provided \$7.2 million to B&G Clubs of America to support the establishment of new clubs in public housing and other at-risk communities and to enhance and strengthen existing club programs through violence prevention and reduction, educational and health programs, and youth leadership development. During this time, BJA funding resulted in the establishment of 31 new B&G Clubs, 27 of which are in public housing; training and technical assistance to 98 B&G Clubs to develop and implement violence prevention strategies; improved and strengthened health and education initiatives in 21 B&G Clubs; and a national youth leadership conference for 1,300 teenaged club members. BJA funding during this 3-year period enabled B&G Clubs of America to reach and serve 46,700 girls and boys.

### Key Program Elements

B&G Clubs help their members build self-esteem, acquire honest values, and pursue productive futures. The 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 modeling 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 goal-setting skills.
- ❑ A comprehensive violence prevention initiative.
- ❑ A future vision of life beyond public housing.

Depending on the community resources available and the particular community needs and dynamics, programs and services vary among individual clubs. Programs often include supplementary education, health and fitness, drug abuse prevention, teen pregnancy education and prevention, career exploration, arts and crafts, leadership development, community service, and environmental awareness. Although specific programs and services may vary, B&G Clubs have the following features in common. All clubs are:

- ❑ Designed for school-age girls and boys of all races, religions, and ethnic backgrounds, with no personal recommendations or proof of character required for membership.
- ❑ Building centered, with 1,700 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 B&G Clubs are open 5 to 6 days per week, 4 or 5 hours a day.
- ❑ Staffed with full-time youth-work professionals, supplemented by part-time workers and volunteers, who emphasize positive values in the relationships club members have both with each other and with their adult leaders.
- ❑ Geared to help girls and boys make appropriate and satisfying choices in their physical, educational, personal, social, emotional, vocational, and spiritual lives.
- ❑ Committed to quality through evaluation, planning, and management.

When needed, even during non-club hours, B&G Club staff are available to members in the event of emergencies that may require special attention.

Boys and girls “join” their local B&G 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&G Clubs of America develops, prepares, and distributes detailed program models and guides to local clubs. Now numbering more than 25, these programs include:

- ❑ **Alcohol, drug, and pregnancy prevention**—SMART Moves and SMART Kids.
- ❑ **Career exploration**—Broader Horizons, Job Search Club, One With One, and Goals for Growth.
- ❑ **Citizenship and leadership**—Youth of the Year, Keystone Clubs, and Torch Clubs.
- ❑ **Cultural enrichment**—National Photography Contest, Fine Arts Exhibit Program, and Epstein Scholarship Program.
- ❑ **Delinquency and gang prevention**—Delinquency Prevention Through Targeted Outreach and Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach.
- ❑ **Education**—Power Hour!, Bo Knows Challenge, and Michael Jordan Essay Challenge.
- ❑ **Environmental education**—The Ultimate Journey.
- ❑ **Health, sports, and fitness**—The Body Works, Jump Rope Challenge, Basketball Spot Shot Challenge, Workout Challenge, Sir Thomas J. Lipton Sportsmanship Award, and Sectional Tournaments.

## Milestones

In 1994, B&G Clubs of America reached a landmark by serving 2.2 million youths nationwide in 1,672 clubs, 270 of which are in public housing areas. Club outreach efforts have been extended to military families and Indian reservations, with services being offered in school buildings and shopping malls. Partnerships have been established with concerned corporations; private foundations; government agencies, such as BJA, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and caring individuals, including club alumni.

## For Further Information

**Boys & Girls Clubs of America**  
1230 West Peachtree Street NW.  
Atlanta, GA 30309-3447  
1-404-815-5751

**Bureau of Justice Assistance Clearinghouse**  
1-800-688-4252