How to establish your own Operation Warm Community Coat Program
THANK YOU

We here at Operation Warm want to thank you for your interest in partnering with our mission to provide new winter coats for children in need. We strive to give a gift of a new coat to millions of American children with the support of local partners like you.

A new coat is more than just an article of clothing. It inspires strong self-esteem, encourages better school attendance, and contributes to their overall wellness by allowing children to stay active and socialize outdoors in cold months.

This toolkit is a step-by-step guide to help you find children in need, establish a fundraiser, market the program, order and then distribute the coats.

Please consult our online FAQ before contacting us with questions at communityprograms@operationwarm.org or (800)730-9276.

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Fundraiser Checklist

Check off each box upon completion as a way to track your progress.

- [ ] Set your fundraising goal
- [ ] Advertise your program
- [ ] Secure donations
- [ ] Order coats
- [ ] Planning coat giving event
- [ ] Coat giving event day!
- [ ] Publicity and recognition
How to Set Your Fundraising Goal

- This first step consists of 2 parts:
  1) Choosing a group of children to serve and
  2) Calculating estimated funds needed to support those children

Choosing who to serve:
You may serve any organization that is designated as a school, church or a nonprofit that has a 501(c)(3) designation and serves children living in need. Viable options include: schools, shelters, community-based organizations, anti-poverty programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, etc.

If I don’t have an organization in mind, where should I look?
www.ElementarySchools.org is a great resource to find schools with a high percentage of students on a free or reduced lunch program (the best indicator of an underprivileged area). Consulting your school district to confirm these numbers is a great idea. Another option is to search online for a Head Start program near you.

Contact the organization(s) you are considering to support. You may choose to serve all the children who could benefit or focus on a portion, like one grade. When you contact the school or organization, here are several questions you should consider asking:

- How many students are enrolled in the Free/Reduced Lunch program?
- Would you recommend a specific class to sponsor?
- May we plan an event/assembly around the coat distribution? If yes:
  - Are there any guidelines/rules we need to follow when planning the event?
  - Would you welcome media at the event?
  - Do you have concerns about children being photographed during the event?

How much do we need to raise?
This number doesn’t have to be exact, since it only reflects what you hope to raise. Here’s how to calculate what your estimated fundraising goal should be:

\[ \text{Goal} = \text{Number of Coats} \times 20 \]

How can I track my fundraising status?
We can build you a donation web page specifically for your fundraiser (see page 5). Total funds raised are publicly displayed on the page. Additionally, you can request a summary of all donations (check, web, etc.) at any time.
Fundraising Ideas

- Fundraising is different for every organization and each community. It is important to cater your fundraising efforts to your overall goal.

**Restaurants:** Ask for a percentage of the night’s profits (10-30% is normal) or collaborate on a special addition to the menu. Work with the restaurant to determine a percentage of each special addition to be donated to your program.

**Bar/Brewery Events:** Partner with a local brew pub or bar to donate food or drinks to customers. Your group collects a cover charge of $20-$30 and the bar donates a free beer or all-you-can-eat pub food. If the brewery doesn’t serve food, ask if they can work with local food trucks vendors.

**Raffle Prizes:** Ask local businesses to donate items, gift cards, or services. This allows you to sell a lot of raffle tickets (e.g. 1 for $5, 10 for $20, 30 for $50). Check local laws in case raffle registration is required.

**High Dollar Prize:** Tickets to a sporting event, HDTV, hotel stay, getaway. Requires upfront spending but can be very successful (e.g. sell 500 tickets at $25 = $12,500). Simply deduct raffle item cost from total.

**Host a 50/50:** It’s simple. Each raffle ticket costs $20. $10 goes to the cash prize and the other $10 goes to fundraising goal.

**Concerts:** Benefit concerts offer quality entertainment, are available at a reasonable price, and provide supporters a fun night. Partner with local radio station to promote your event and get musicians or comedians to perform.

**T-Shirt Sales:** Sell t-shirts that promote your event and to generate awareness on the child poverty in your area. Consider using sites like [www.3buckthreads.com](http://www.3buckthreads.com) or [www.customink.com](http://www.customink.com).

**Candle Sales:** [www.YankeeCandleFundraising.com](http://www.YankeeCandleFundraising.com) offers 40% of your sales to the organization. Contact them online to get more information.

For more ideas, visit: [www.Rewarding-Fundraising-Ideas.com](http://www.Rewarding-Fundraising-Ideas.com)
Advertise Your Program

➢ You will need to promote your program to achieve your fundraising goal. We’ve drafted up templates of helpful resources to make this easier for you, all of which are available on our website under Get Involved > Community Managed Coat Program.
➢ See Page 8 about public recognition and involving the press.

**Online Fundraiser** – Custom fundraising page to collect online donations for your project ([example here](#))

**Sample Coats** – A sample coat allows you to display the quality and craftsmanship during your fundraising efforts, giving your group a visual reminder of your goal.

**Flyer Designs** -- A letter sized handout that advertises your program and donation website (we will provide the artwork but it is up to you to have the flyers printed)

**Sizing Chart** – This chart shows the measurements of each size to ensure every child you serve gets a coat with the best possible fit.

**Fundraising Letter** – A detailed letter outlining your organization’s goals to be shared with potential donors

**E-mails** – An alternative to the fundraising letter, this email template makes for an easier way to reach more people for free, plus the follow-up email to send before your event makes for a helpful reminder

**Press Release** – this template can be easily filled out and sent to a local newspaper

**Facebook** or **Twitter** post templates
Secure Donations

- TIP - It is a great idea to post your custom donation page URL anywhere you can! We recommend using social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)

How can donors contribute?
Contributions can be made on your organization’s Operation Warm fundraising webpage or by mailing us a check. It’s a great idea to post your Operation Warm fundraising page anywhere you can in order to maximize its effectiveness.

Can donors mail a check?
Checks should be made out to Operation Warm with your organization’s name in the Memo in order to properly credit your fundraiser. Checks should be mailed to our bank lockbox: Operation Warm, Inc., P.O. Box 822431, Philadelphia PA 19182.

How to Order Coats
Please place your order [online here](https://www.operationwarm.org/)

How do I get the coat sizes?
Work with the organization you are serving to determine the coats that will best serve their needs. Give us a call if you need more guidance.

What colors and sizes are available?
You can view the sizes and colors [here](https://www.operationwarm.org/)

When should I order coats?
- Coats should be ordered 2-3 weeks before your planned distribution event date.
- Do not finalize your event date before you get an order verification from us.
- Coats are available as of August 1st, and they ship on a first-come, first-served basis.

- Place your order as early as possible due to stock depletion later in the season.

How do I submit funds?
Funds must be received by check or online before shipment can occur.

How are the coats shipped?
- Each box contains 6 coats of the same size and gender with varying colors. The minimum order is 5 boxes (30 coats)
- Please allow at least 10 business days for shipping. Please do not schedule a coat giveaway event until after you receive a shipment confirmation from us.
Can we return or exchange coats?
Due to the associated costs, we cannot take returns or exchanges. We recommend reaching out to another school or organization to distribute any leftover coats to children in need.

Planning Your Coat Giving Event

The greatest reward of all – the happiness and warmth children will feel when receiving a brand new winter coat! A well-organized event allows you to spend quality time with each child, making it more memorable. It is important to work with the group you are serving to plan this event after you have ordered the coats. Focus on making the event special for the kids!

**WHEN** should I hold the event?
Mid-October (depending on your area’s climate) is the optimal time since that is usually when it starts getting chilly outside. Remember, the goal is to keep the children warm and alleviate the financial burden of purchasing a coat.

**WHERE** should I hold the event?
We recommend holding the distribution event at the school or organization site. Secure space ahead of time. Gyms, cafeterias, or other spacious areas are ideal.

**WHAT TIME** should I hold the event?
We highly recommend holding the distribution event during school hours, as the majority of students take the bus to and from school.

**HOW** should I avoid singling children out?
Focus on celebrating the children you are serving. The school or group you’re working with has likely been in similar situations and should be able to consult on the best plan of action. A cornerstone of our mission is instilling confidence and self-esteem. It is never our intention to single children out.
Coat Giving Event Day!

**Setup** - Organize the coats by size and label them (in stacks) with the appropriate size and gender.

**Name & Coat Size** - An easy distribution method is to give each child a name tag or wrist band which labels their name and size.

**Distribution** - Give out the coats in intervals of no more than 30 children at a time to avoid clutter. Ask that children be brought in by teacher and by grade in single file. One by one, a volunteer can take a child by their hand and walk them to the appropriate table.

**Made Just for You** – Allow children time to look at the different styles and colors so they can pick out their favorite. *This is a special moment for them!* Help children into their new coat and make sure it fits properly. Most importantly, take the time to write the child’s name on the special interior tag.

**Cleanup** – Plan for the disposal or recycling of the cardboard the coats come in.

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**Publicity and Recognition**

- Publicity is a necessity in the world of volunteer work. If you can view publicity as a way to reach out in need and people who can help you in your efforts to do good, then you will have discovered a treasure that provides an unending supply of resources.
- Reach out to a local newspaper, radio or TV station several weeks in advance so they can adequately prepare to send a team to cover your event.

**PHOTOS:** Like all great memories, taking pictures of children receiving coats is the best way to document your program! You can use them in a variety of ways – even share them with Operation Warm so we can tell your story! Your camera phone will work fine, but professional cameras and photographers will help bring your pictures to life!
VIDEOS: The reactions of the children are priceless! Catching some quick videos in real-time on your phone is great, but if you have the resources, hiring a videographer allows you to capture all of the smiles in the room in high quality format.

*If you do take pictures or capture video, check with the school or group to get permission; they may require a signed Photo Release Form from each parent. If so, email us for one.

Talking Points with the Press

- Over 15 million children are living in poverty just in the United States alone
- Operation Warm is dedicated to providing new winter coats to children in need and has given a gift of a new coat to more than 2 million children.
- When children receive a NEW coat, they feel valued and a sense of pride in ownership. It’s more special than receiving a used or hand-me-down coat.
- Studies have shown education is the #1 to break the cycle of poverty. School attendance declines in the winter. Receiving a NEW winter coat helps empower children to attend school regularly and participate in outdoor play on cold winter days. Regular attendance is important so kids have access to nutritious meals and a well-rounded education.

Thank you for sharing and supporting Operation Warm’s mission!