



**COMMUNITY ACTION COALITION  
FOR SOUTH CENTRAL WISCONSIN, INC.**

# **Clothing Drive**

## **Information Resource Packet**

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**Community Action Coalition for South Central Wisconsin, Inc.  
Clothing Center  
1717 N. Stoughton Rd.  
Madison, WI 53704-2605  
(608) 246-4730 ext. 229; [www.cacscw.org](http://www.cacscw.org)**

# Facts about poverty in Dane County:

- In Dane County, approximately 5,000 families with children under the age of 18 have incomes below the federal poverty level. This means for example that a family of three is living on less than \$18,530/year (\$1,544/month).
- Almost 12,000 children (49% of students) in the Madison Metropolitan School District were eligible for free or reduced lunch during the 2010-11 school year.
- A 2010 survey conducted by CAC at seven Dane County agencies serving low-income families indicated that 56% of respondents with children could not afford adequate school clothing.

## CAC's Clothing Center

Started by a group of volunteers, CAC's Clothing Center has provided individuals and families in need in Dane County with free, clean and seasonally appropriate clothing for close to 20 years. The Clothing Center serves approximately 4,000 individuals in 2,000 families each year; of these individuals, 40% are younger than 18. The Clothing Center is unique in that it offers low-income residents the most accessible source of free clothing in Dane County. A family in need may walk into CAC's doors and be shopping in the Clothing Center in as little as ten minutes. No referral is necessary, Clothing Center shoppers do not have to be enrolled in any other program at CAC or any other agency and every item donated is provided directly for free to someone in need. CAC never sells donated Clothing Center items.

The Clothing Center relies heavily on **VOLUNTEER POWER!** Each year, hundreds of volunteers help out sorting, hanging and organizing clothing, as well as assisting participants. CAC also operates *Koats for Kids* annual winter clothing drive, which provides approximately 7,000 people in Dane County with warm winter coats, hats, mittens, gloves and snowsuits. For this event, CAC works with more than 100 additional volunteers, Klinke Cleaners and WISCTV-3.

CAC Clothing Center would not be prepared to meet the needs of Dane County's low-income residents without the time, effort and support of many volunteers and donors in the community. Your involvement helps support CAC's mission "to develop the economic and social capacities of individuals, families and communities to reduce poverty in Dane, Jefferson and Waukesha Counties" and is major part of why CAC programs have been so successful for 45 years. Thank your group for your interest in joining the fight against poverty in Dane County!

# What Works: Ideas for a Successful Clothing Drive

We want you to have the most successful clothing drive possible! This packet contains information you may need to plan and host your drive. If you have any questions along the way, please contact CAC's Clothing Center at (608) 246-4730 ext. 229. Here are some steps to planning your next clothing drive:

**1. Early planning will help make your drive a success.** Form teams to work on publicity, clothing collection, clothing delivery and/or a kick-off event. The more people you've got working on your clothing drive, the more creativity and enthusiasm you will have.

**2. Learn more about need in our community.** We would like you to have an understanding of how poverty affects people in Dane County, and how your clothing drive will help. This packet contains some information about CAC's Clothing Center in the Madison and information about people affected by poverty in Dane County. Please contact us for suggestions regarding our current seasonal clothing needs.



Sorting Donated Clothes

**3. Set aside a place for collecting clothes.** Cardboard boxes or plastic bins work well for collecting clothing. These bins should be strong enough to handle what you are collecting and should be kept in a dry, well-ventilated place.

**4. Publicize your drive.** Publicity is the key to a successful drive. People need to know about your drive in order to contribute. Tell everyone at your company, school or organization. There are helpful points included below.

**5. Prepare for delivery.** When your drive is complete, please call (608) 246-4730 ext. 229 to arrange your delivery to CAC Clothing Center at a time that works best for everyone. Items left outside of CAC's facility may be damaged by poor weather and could potentially go missing.

## Publicity That Works

Any communications about your drive should include the following information: 1) the group sponsoring the event and CAC as the beneficiary; 2) when and where the drive will be taking place; 3) what types of clothing will be collected; 4) why your group has chosen to sponsor the drive; 5) at least one contact name and phone number for your group; and 6) any additional donation instructions. If asked, we will gladly supply you with a CAC logo for promotional use.

**Advertise your drive.** Put collection bins by entryways or large gathering areas to remind people to donate clothes. Place posters with large, colorful letters and pictures near collection

areas to attract attention. Include the organizers' contact information, dates, goals and locations of collection bins on any communications about your drive. Send mass emails to members of your organization promoting the drive. Write a short article appropriate for multiple newsletters. Consider creating a Facebook event, Twitter posts and a web page to announce your event.

**How best to work with the media.** If you want to publicize your drive to the wider community, create a one-page press release with information about your clothing drive for distribution to local newspapers, radio and TV outlets. Most newsprint media outlets provide free listings of community events and TV news media may choose to feature your drive. The more unusual and visual the drive is, the more likely it is to attract their attention.

## What Clothing Is Preferred

Clothing items should be clean and gently used, if not new. Clothing should be appropriate to the season and free of odors associated with storage (not musty or smelling of moth balls). Clothing appropriate for all ages is accepted, but the need for clothes for children and teens is especially high. There is always a significant need for undergarments and socks for all ages, and CAC is especially grateful when donors are able to provide new items in these categories. Clothing Center participants wear these clothes to work and school, so the clothing items are most useful if they are relatively current or classic styles. The Clothing Center also accepts accessories (purses, belts, ties, hats, etc.), shoes, backpacks, luggage, hair accessories, unused travel-sized toiletries and books. Children's books are especially appreciated.

There are several types of items that the Clothing Center cannot distribute to families. These include used bedding, curtains, home and holiday décor, stuffed animals, strollers, cribs, baby seats and electronics. Items such as these are often donated with the best of intentions before CAC has the chance to let the donor know we cannot accept them. Please be mindful of the list of items we do accept, and call (608) 246-4730 ext. 229 if you have questions about this.

## Other Ways to Help

Your group could hold a drive for items that are much needed by families served by CAC's Family Development Division. These include personal hygiene products, new bedding, baby diapers or new, unopened containers of household cleaning supplies.

**Hosting a fundraiser for CAC is another great way to support our work fighting poverty. Be creative!**

- Carwash
- Children's Art Auction
- Ice Cream Social
- Penny Drive
- Bake Sale
- Leaf Raking
- Garage Sale
- Holiday Gift Wrapping
- Host a Dinner
- Lawn Mowing
- Host a Tournament