



# OPERATION BACKPACK®

*Helping kids in need succeed*

Cincinnati | Cleveland | Columbus | Indianapolis

## Organize a Drive How-To Guidebook



Operation Backpack® is 100% dependent on support from the community. Every year, communities throughout Ohio & Indiana come together to collect backpacks and school supplies. Operation Backpack® simply could not exist without their generosity.

Below are guidelines and schedules to help you conduct a successful drive or support Operation Backpack® in other ways.

Thank you!

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### **What is Operation Backpack®?**

Operation Backpack®, brings together communities and generous hearts to collect brand new backpacks filled with school supplies. The backpacks are shared with homeless and at-risk children throughout the greater Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, and Indianapolis regions.

A filled backpack helps kids start the school year feeling prepared and confident, reminding them how important school is. Most importantly, the backpack is filled with hope giving every child the opportunity to reach their full potential.

### **How Can We Get Involved?**

- Organize a drive and invite colleagues (or the entire building) to purchase and donate school supplies or backpacks, using our supply list as a guide. Download the supply lists at [www.OperationBackpackGO.org](http://www.OperationBackpackGO.org) (click on Organize a Drive).
- Donate directly to campaign. With your support, we can help families and children in need in your community. Donate at [www.OperationBackpackGO.org](http://www.OperationBackpackGO.org).
- Spread the word about Operation Backpack® by inviting anyone who might be interested to support the cause. We welcome individual donors, families, companies, and groups (i.e. churches, temples, civic and networking groups) to help as many children as possible.
- Take photos to document your efforts. Post them on social media using #OperationBackpack, and/or send them to us (with permission from those in the photos) at [OperationBackpack@voago.org](mailto:OperationBackpack@voago.org).

## TIPS TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL DRIVE AT WORK

**Communicate!** Ask for help from your teams as you raise awareness of Operation Backpack®. Think about using company newsletters, church newsletters, email, bulletin boards, and social media. Mention the drive during team meetings too.

You can find printable fliers on our website, at [www.OperationBackpackGO.org](http://www.OperationBackpackGO.org),

**Enlist support from leadership.** Support from above is vital – it helps set the tone for your collection. Share information about Operation Backpack® and how it can be a great team-building opportunity. It's also a visible demonstration of corporate responsibility. Ask for their help to encourage your fellow employees/members to participate. You can also ask them to make a gift on behalf of the company/organization – perhaps they may even want to become an official sponsor.

**Encourage participation.** Here are engagement activities our other corporate partners have used:

- 50/50 raffles and bake sales to raise funds.
- Offer employees the option of 'dress-down summer Fridays' for a specific period of time (start the first week that you kick-off your workplace drive) if they pledge \$5/week until the drive ends.
- Have a weekly trivia question about Operation Backpack® and correct answers are eligible for a drawing.
- Encourage friendly competition on who can collect the most backpacks, forming teams from various departments, floors, or workgroups.
- Enlist the support of your summer associates and interns asking them to promote the cause.
- Have your own "mini sort" – where the company/group purchases supplies and backpacks (complying with our supply lists) and during lunch one day, employees help fill the backpacks. Offer a "family day." Invite teams and families to shop for supplies and backpacks, then bring in and sort the supplies into backpacks, being sure to label them. The children (or adults) can make cards to accompany the backpacks, wishing the children receiving them a great school year.

### Next Steps?

- Let us know if you plan on organizing a drive at work, adopting a product, becoming a sponsor, or if you have a completely new idea to help the cause.
- Decide when you will begin. You can start your drive before the actual Operation Backpack® campaign dates, but we ask that all donations be submitted by your regional deadline.
- Set up collection boxes and posters instructing your colleagues on how to help. You can download printable fliers on our website, [www.OperationBackpackGO.org](http://www.OperationBackpackGO.org) (click on Organize a Drive).
- Make sure anyone located near a collection bin, or others who may be asked about the drive, have basic information about the drive and who to contact for questions.
- If you are donating filled backpacks, make sure you let everyone know they must use the supply lists provided. Once you are done collecting donations, complete the group reporting form, from [www.OperationBackpackGO.org](http://www.OperationBackpackGO.org) (click on Organize a Drive).

## FAQs

## How Do I Describe Operation Backpack® to My Team?

Operation Backpack® is a back-to-school drive that collects and distributes new backpacks full of school supplies to thousands of homeless and at-risk children throughout the greater Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, and Indianapolis regions.

Giving a child in-need a filled backpack helps them start the school year feeling prepared and confident, reminding them how important school is. Most importantly, the backpack is filled with hope, giving every child the opportunity to reach their full potential.

By hosting/participating, you're showing your commitment to help the most vulnerable children in your community. When you donate a filled backpack, you're giving more children the opportunity to reach their full potential.

## Who Benefits from Operation Backpack®?

The backpacks and school supplies collected are used in a number of ways. All of the families and children in Volunteers of America Ohio & Indiana programs are provided a backpack and school supplies. We also work with partner agencies and school districts in the greater Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus and Indianapolis regions to ensure as many children as possible get the tools they need to start the school year.

Last year we were able to give backpacks to over 4,000 children across Ohio & Indiana – and there are still many more children in-need who can benefit from your help.

## What is Unique About Operation Backpack®?

- Operation Backpack® puts the backpacks in the children's hands *before* they go to school, so on day one, they look and feel more like their classmates and less like a "shelter or homeless kid."
- Nothing is used or junky. These children almost never have new things – clothing is second hand, toys and books are scarce, food is what parents can afford on a strictly limited budget. The supplies are new, and the backpacks are good quality, and vary in color and design so they cannot be identified as "shelter backpacks".
- Before we distribute backpacks to other organizations and schools, we first give backpacks to children living in shelters, or who are part of a program aimed at preventing homelessness.

## **Sample Social Media Posts**

### **Facebook:**

Join me and Volunteers of America Ohio & Indiana and help homeless and at-risk kids go back to school with confidence #OperationBackpack <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf>

Be a part of Operation Backpack® and help homeless and at-risk children in Ohio & Indiana go back to school prepared to reach their full potential. #Operation Backpack <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf>

Children in-need won't have the necessary supplies when starting school, putting them at a disadvantage. You can help every kid thrive in school and be ready to reach their full potential: <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf>

The first day of school can be tough for any kid, but it's even worse for one who is homeless. You can help make the first day, an exciting day: <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf>

### **Twitter:**

Proud to join @VOAOHIN to prepare #homeless and #atrisk kids heading back to school <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf> #OperationBackpack

Help @VOAOHIN give #backpacks & school supplies to #homeless and #atrisk kids <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf>

You can help a child in-need in your #community <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf> #OperationBackpack #VOAOHIN

Give confidence to a #homeless child for their 1st day of school #OperationBackpack <http://bit.ly/1WMVvbf>

**Sample Copy (Modify the below sample text to use in your newsletter, email blasts, etc.)**

## **Give Confidence to Homeless and At-Risk Children in Ohio & Indiana and Join Operation Backpack®!**

One of the most devastating consequences of homelessness and extreme poverty is the impact it has on a child's education. Thousands of children in our communities will return to school without the school supplies they need, looking and feeling different from their classmates.

But you can help change that.

Operation Backpack® is a way to help our most vulnerable children with new backpacks brimming with school supplies, just in time for the first day of school. You can help every child start school full of confidence, looking and feeling like their classmates and ready to reach their full potential.

Last year, (*NAME OF COMPANY*) participated in Operation Backpack® and together we collected and donated [#] backpacks [*or boxes of supplies or funds*]. This year, let's make it [#]!

For more information, or to donate funds, (*CALL INTERNAL CONTACT*) or look for collection boxes (*LOCATION*).

To learn more about Volunteers of America Ohio & Indiana Operation Backpack® visit [www.OperationBackpackGO.org](http://www.OperationBackpackGO.org).