

# Wisconsin Boys & Girls Clubs: Pledge action against racial inequity

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**Madison, WI** — At their state executive committee meeting this morning, Chief Executive Officers from across Wisconsin voted to [support a list of actions steps](#), stating “It is time to do the work of dismantling systemic racism.” Wisconsin clubs serve more youth per person than any other state in the country, with 154 locations across 58 cities. Over 144,000 youth use their sites every year, and seven out of every ten club kids from across the state come are a racial or ethnic minority.

“Clubs have been offering safe spaces for kids for over 160 years, but we cannot enable them to reach their full potential when they are witnessing communities being torn apart over whose lives matter,” said State Director Andy Gussert. “We need our youth to know: *You matter, your dreams matter, and your life matters.*”

“This is a pivotal moment in our history. Everyone has the opportunity to choose how they participate, but no one has the choice of whether or not they are a participant,” said Karen DeSanto, CEO of Boys & Girls Clubs of West-Central Wisconsin. “Statements against racism are hollow when void of action.”

“We need real results beyond canned clichés, hashtags and social media memes,” said Kathy Thornton-Bias, CEO of the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Milwaukee. “We best serve our youth tomorrow through meaningful and sustained actions today.”

“We must plan, strategize, organize and mobilize around policies to change to address racial disparities,” said Michael Johnson, Dane County Boys & Girls Clubs. “We need to work with our mayors, county officials and law enforcement to review use of force policies and report out on real reforms.”

“We will look deeply and challenge ourselves, our team members and our Boards to

recognize and understand the built-in advantages of being White in our society,” said Greg Lemke-Rochon, CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Fox Valley. “Our work will not be easy, but we are committed ensuring all our young people have an equitable chance to reach their full potential.”

Clubs serve more Wisconsin youth than any other organization outside of our public school system. They also serve two million meals and snacks to youth every year at no cost. Two of every three youth are on reduced school lunch programs, and two of every five are from a single parent household. You can find the Club CEO pledge to **[Take Action in Response to Racial Inequality](https://www.bgcwisconsin.org/new-page-2)** at <https://www.bgcwisconsin.org/new-page-2> and post it on your website or run it as an editorial.