

Tips on Charitable Giving



NEW YORK STATE OFFICE

of the

ATTORNEY
GENERAL

Charities Bureau

120 Broadway
New York, NY 10271
(212) 416-8400

www.ag.ny.gov

10 TIPS FOR CHARITABLE GIVING

1. **Confirm That the Charity is Registered With the Attorney General's Office.** Search the Attorney General's Charities Bureau Registry at www.charitiesnys.com to see if the charity is properly registered and has filed its financial reports with the Attorney General.
2. **Know Where Your Money Will Go.** Find out from the charity what it will do with your money. Review the charity's financial reports for information about how it spends donations. If you have been contacted by a telemarketer, review *Pennies for Charity*, the New York Attorney General's annual report of telemarketing campaigns in New York, to see how much is spent on fundraising costs and how much has been kept by the charity. *Pennies for Charity* is available at www.charitiesnys.com.
3. **Don't Be Pressured by Telemarketers.** If you receive a telephone call asking you to contribute to a charity, you have the right to hang up. Often the caller is a professional fundraiser who is being paid to call you. If you choose not to end the call, ask how much of your donation will go to charity and how much the telemarketer is being paid. Many telemarketers receive most of the money they raise. Be wary of claims such as "all proceeds will go to charity." Telemarketers are required to respond truthfully to your questions. Don't fall for pressure tactics such as repeated phone calls, or threats. These are signs that the organization may not be legitimate.
4. **Ask for Written Materials.** Always ask for information in writing – be wary if an organization will not provide information about charitable programs and finances upon request. Any legitimate organization will be happy to send you information.
5. **Be Wary of Deceptive Tactics and Emotional Appeals.** Watch out for charities with names that resemble those of prominent or established organizations. Some charities use names similar to well known charities in order to confuse donors. Be wary of emotional appeals that talk about problems but are vague on how donations will be spent. Also be careful about charities that are created immediately following a natural disaster or other current event.
6. **Check With Your Local Law Enforcement Groups.** When giving to a law enforcement support group, first contact your local police or other law enforcement agency to check on the identity and legitimacy of the group asking for the contribution. Be wary of a solicitor who uses coercive or abusive tactics or who promises that your contribution will entitle you to better police protection or special privileges. This is illegal.
7. **Never Give Cash.** Give your contribution by check made payable to the charity.
8. **Watch Out for Fake Invoices.** If you receive a document resembling an invoice or "overdue" statement for a pledged contribution, read the information carefully and confirm that you've actually made the pledge to the organization. This could be a scam.
9. **Don't Disclose Personal Information.** Never give your social security number or other personal information in response to a charitable solicitation. Never give out credit card information over the phone or to an organization you are not familiar with.
10. **You Have the Right to Say "No."** Remember you always have the right to say no to any charitable request.