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ATTORNEY GENERAL



Giving Wisely to Charity

1. Don't let a few bad apples sour you on giving.

Most charitable groups are committed to helping solve society's problems. They fill the gaps where government cannot meet a community's needs. The few mail and telephone solicitations that are scams shouldn't discourage you from donating to charities. Learn the facts first, before you donate.

2. Give wisely.

Some charities and public safety organizations hire professional solicitors who are paid to solicit funds through telemarketing. These solicitors are in the business for profit.

Some keep as much as 90% of your donation.

Others can be aggressive or rude and will give misleading (or outright false) answers to your questions.

3. Search our online database.

Michigan law requires most charities that solicit donations to register with the Department of Attorney General. Registered charity or public safety organization information is available on the [Attorney General's website](https://mi.gov/charitysearch) (mi.gov/charitysearch).

Search using one or more factors, such as name, purpose, or geographic area and obtain a report that provides contact information, the organization's purpose, and financial information. But do not assume that if a particular organization is not registered it is unworthy. Some religious charities, hospitals, and schools are not required to register.

4. Avoid telemarketing trickery.

- Be skeptical of unsolicited calls: you never truly know who is on the other end of the line or what they will do with your information.
- Never give out payment information over the phone. Tell the caller you will research the cause and call them back if you decide to donate.
- Remember solicitors are trained to get a donation. They may not know much about the group they are calling for, and they may not know how your money will be used, and their answers may not be trustworthy.
- Many charities have similar names. Some solicitors will try to exploit your emotions by using sympathetic-sounding names.

- If you want telemarketers to stop calling, tell them to remove your name and number from their calling list. If they refuse or call back, [report it to the Attorney General](https://mi.gov/agcomplaints) (mi.gov/agcomplaints).

5. Public safety organizations

Public safety organizations are not the same as local public services like police or fire departments, which are paid for by tax dollars.

These groups are not charitable, and your donation will not be deductible on your income taxes.

6. Beware of bogus charities

- Bills or invoices are sent to you even though you never pledged money to the organization.
- Evasive, vague, or unresponsive answers to specific questions about the charity and how money is used.
- Words making up a charity's name that closely resemble a better-known charity.
- Allowing no time to reconsider your pledge; they insist on collecting your donation immediately.
- Refusing to answer questions about where your money will go or where to find information about the charity.
- Emotional appeals and high-pressure tactics to get you to make a quick decision or feel guilty about not contributing.

7. Before you make a donation

Demand solicitation materials and financial information in writing from the public safety organization or charity.

Contact the organization directly to verify where and how your money will be used. Do not rely on the solicitor's answers to your questions.

[Visit the Attorney General's website](https://mi.gov/charitysearch) (mi.gov/charitysearch) to confirm the organization's registration and review its finances.

GIVE WISELY

Every year, generous Michiganders give millions to charities that do important and much needed work in our communities, including feeding and clothing the poor, conducting medical research, and promoting education.

As a donor, you must decide among the many charities competing for your donations. Many charities are critical organizations that strengthen our state, some are wasteful, others use telemarketers who keep up to 90% of your donation, and others are outright scams.

Michigan's Department of Attorney General is committed to helping residents make wise donations. To help, it keeps an online database of more than 7,000 charities that solicit in Michigan. The Department publishes an annual professional fundraising report. This information will help you make a choice to help your community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO FILE A COMPLAINT

Michigan Attorney General
Charitable Trust Section
P.O. Box 30214
Lansing, Michigan 48909
517-335-7571
mi.gov/agcomplaints



mi.gov/ag