

In these hard economic times, the average consumer is bombarded from all sides with pleas for charitable contributions. The Office of the Attorney General encourages individual



giving to charities, because most charities provide valuable services that add to the quality of life for many and make a better world for all of us. Unfortunately, there are charities that are dishonest about the nature and

quality of the services they provide. When you contribute to a charity, you should make sure that the money is used in the same careful, efficient manner as the dollars you spend on your personal purchases and investments. Consider the following before deciding to contribute to any particular charity:

Before Giving

Pennsylvania law requires that most charities register with the Department of State, Bureau of Charitable Organizations. You may call the Bureau of Charitable Organizations toll free, at 1-800-732-0999. In addition you can get information on various charities from any of the following organizations:

GuideStar

427 Scotland St.
Williamsburg, VA 23185
757-229-4631
www.guidestar.org

Philanthropic Advisory Service

Council of Better Business Bureaus
4200 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 800
Arlington, VA 22203-1838
703-276-0100
www.bbb.org

National Charities Information Bureau

19 Union Square West, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10003-3395
212-929-6300
www.give.org

American Institute of Philanthropy

4905 Del Ray Avenue, Suite 300
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-913-5200

Know Your Charity

Before you make a donation, ask for written information, including the charity's name, address, and telephone number. A legitimate charity or fund-raiser will give you materials outlining the charity's mission, how your donation will be used, and proof that your contribution is tax-deductible.

Call the charity. Find out if the organization is aware of the solicitation and has authorized the use of its name. If not, you may be dealing with a fraudulent solicitor. Some disreputable charities will use a name, symbol, or logo associated with a respected charity in order to take advantage of that charity's reputation. Never donate to a charity unless you have information about it.

Find Out How The Charity Will Spend Your Hard-earned Dollars

Before you donate, find out about the charity's finances and programs. Find out how much of your donation goes to helping people and program services as opposed to fundraising and administrative expenses.



Financial information may be obtained by calling the Pennsylvania Department of State, Bureau of Charitable Organizations toll-free within the state, at 800-732-0999, or by writing:

Bureau of Charitable Organizations

Department of State
124 Pine Street, Suite 300
PO Box 8723
Harrisburg, PA 17105

Telephone Solicitations

Because telephone solicitations are typically conducted by paid professional fund-raisers on behalf of the charity, ask the caller if he is paid or a volunteer, and how much the charity receives from each dollar donated.

Door-to-Door Solicitations

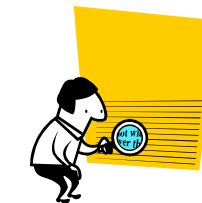
Demand identification – an honest solicitor will not hesitate to show you credentials. Do not feel pressured to contribute on the spot. If you decide to donate, mail a check directly to the charity.

Unordered Merchandise

You have no obligation to pay for, nor are you required to return merchandise – greeting cards, address labels, tickets, etc. – that you never asked for and that may be included in an appeal. Federal law states that you can keep such unrequested items without making a contribution.

Beware of Sweepstakes

"Guaranteed prizes" often have a value of ten cents or less and probably will not cover the cost of your postage. Read the small print because it will usually reveal that your chance of winning is 1 in 100,000 or greater. Sweepstakes generally do not provide much benefit to the charity or to you, so think carefully before you participate.



Professional Solicitors

Prior to orally requesting a contribution, or at the time of any written request, professional solicitors are required to clearly and conspicuously disclose their name as on file with the Bureau of Charitable Organizations, that the solicitation is made by a professional solicitor who is being paid for his/her services, the individual's legal name, the legal name of the charity, and a description of how your contribution will be utilized. If a telephone solicitor is hesitant to reveal any of this information, **you should beware!**

Know Your Charity's Goals



Make sure you agree with the purpose of the charity. You may wish to support a "research" oriented charity, not a "patient service" charity or one that only provides "public education." Give to a charity

that best fits your goals.

Before You Volunteer

Don't agree to solicit for a charity without obtaining information about the charity from the Bureau of Charitable Organizations. Remember, your friends and neighbors will feel pressure to contribute if they are asked by someone they trust. Make

sure you earn their trust by thoroughly checking on the charity.

Solicitations for Benefit Shows



If tickets to a benefit show are being sold with the promise of under-

privileged children attending for free, ask how many children will attend the event, how they are chosen, whether free transportation will be provided, and if an accompanying adult is also admitted for free. Many "benefit show" sponsors fail to adequately provide for the children or the adult responsible for their care, and often "over-book" events (for example, selling 1,000 tickets for an event that will seat 200 persons).

Do Not Be Pressured Into Giving

Take time to think about your donation. High pressure tactics and sob stories often are the signs of unscrupulous operators.

Method Of Payment

If you decide to contribute, pay by check. Make the check out to the charity, not to a company or the individual collecting the donations. **Never** pay cash or use your credit card number in response to a request by a stranger.

Be skeptical if someone thanks you for a pledge you don't remember making. If you have any doubt whether you've made a pledge or previously contributed, check your records. Be on the alert for invoices claiming you've made a pledge when you know you haven't. Some unscrupulous solicitors use this approach to get your money.



CHARITABLE GIVING

How to Make Your Charitable Dollars Count



*County of Bucks
Department of
Consumer Protection/
Weights and Measures*

50 North Main Street, 2nd Floor
Doylestown, PA 18901

215-348-7442
1-800-942-2669

www.buckscounty.org

Provided as a public service by the
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Attorney General
and
The Bucks County Commissioners