



# Charitable Giving – A Practical Approach

[www.ocfa.org](http://www.ocfa.org)

The OCFA would like to remind Orange County residents and business owners to beware of unsubstantiated solicitation efforts. The most efficient means of giving is to donate directly to an organization you know of. The following guidelines are provided to assist you in determining if the organization soliciting your support is legitimate.

## Ask Questions

- Request the full name of the organization/association that is soliciting funds.
- Question their purpose for fundraising and determine who specifically will benefit.
- The solicitor must also provide, if you request, the percentage that goes to the cause or charitable event they are representing.
- If the telephone solicitor used abusive or rude language or makes numerous telephone calls after being rejected, request and file a “653-M” report from your local law enforcement agency.
- Request proper identification if a solicitor comes to the door to collect money.
- Request copies of brochures/flyers describing the fundraiser or event being sponsored (if magazine space is being sold – ask for a copy of the magazine).
- If an event is being sponsored at an amusement park, convention center or local establishment and you are in doubt, contact the establishment.
- Contact your local fire department or law enforcement agency to verify the program described.

## Watch Out For Scams

- Watch out for similar sounding names. Scam artists often try to take advantage of names that sound or look like those of respected, legitimate charities.
- Solicitation for contributions should not be disguised as bills, invoices or statements; it is illegal.
- If you receive a matching check appeal, you are under no obligation to contribute.

## OCFA Fire Inspectors

- All OCFA fire inspectors will be in an official uniform when inspecting a business.
- Each fire inspector will have a photo identification badge with them.
- If in doubt, ask for a business card from the fire inspector or fire crew.
- OCFA personnel drive vehicles that are clearly marked OCFA.
- The only compensation that would be asked of a business would be permitting fees or violation fines.
- Payment would not be demanded on site nor would a fire inspector accept cash.

# Give Wisely

Faced with rising operation costs and an increasing demand for their services, charities may ask you to give larger contributions. Make sure you are informed about a charitable organization before you write your check.

- Do not give cash.
- When sending a check, make it out to the organization, not the person collecting or soliciting the donation.
- Keep records of your donation (receipts, cancelled checks, bank statements, etc.).
- Find out how much of your donation will actually go to the charity.
- Refuse high-pressure appeals. Legitimate charities won't rush you to donate.
- Ask for written information. A legitimate charity will be willing to send you information before you donate.
- Ask for information on the organization's mission, how your donation will be used and proof that your contribution is tax deductible.
- Call the charity. This will allow you to make sure the solicitor is authorized and legitimate.
- Trust your instincts! If it sounds shady or just “doesn't feel right,” politely decline the appeal for money.
- Be wary of a group that offers to pick up your monetary donation. A legitimate charity will have an official address where you can mail your check.
- Be wary if an organization thanks you for a pledge you don't remember making and offers to send someone to pick up your donation.
- Consider alternative forms of giving including charitable gift annuities, gifts in-kind, and endowments.



## For More Information

**Orange County Fire Authority**  
(714) 573-6200  
[www.ocfa.org](http://www.ocfa.org)

**Better Business Bureau**  
[www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)

**Office of the Attorney General**  
<http://caag.state.ca.us/charities>

**Give.Org BBB Wise Giving Alliance**  
<http://www.give.org/>

**Orange County Sheriff's Department**  
[www.ocsd.org](http://www.ocsd.org)

**Charity Navigator**  
[www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm](http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm)