

# WISE GIVING GUIDE

Oregon Department of Justice Charitable Activities Section



971-673-1880



[doj.state.or.us](http://doj.state.or.us)



[charitable.activities@doj.state.or.us](mailto:charitable.activities@doj.state.or.us)



Dear Friends:

Charities play a vital role in our society. These institutions provide educational, religious, and civic resources that help maintain healthy communities.

The vast majority of charities do excellent work. However, there are some that take advantage of donors' good intentions. This brochure contains information to help Oregonians donate confidently to worthy and well-run organizations.

I encourage you to share this resource with your family and friends and to learn as much as you can about a charity before making a donation. By doing some research, following our tips, and exercising a little caution, you can help to ensure your donations will have a strong and lasting impact.

Thank you,

Ellen F. Rosenblum, Attorney General

## Ten Tips for Savvy Donors to Charity

- 1 Only give to registered charities.** In order to solicit donations in Oregon, most charitable organizations must be registered with the Department of Justice. Before you give, check our database at [doj.state.or.us](http://doj.state.or.us) to confirm that the charity is registered.
- 2 Make sure your gift is tax deductible.** Only donations made to qualified charitable organizations are tax-deductible. Visit [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov) to verify that a charity has 501(c)(3) status. Keep good records and make sure the charity provides you with a receipt for your donation. You should also find out what percentage a charity actually spends on fulfilling its mission. An Oregon law disqualifies charities from certain tax benefits if they do not spend at least 30 percent of donations on their charitable mission.
- 3 Research before you donate.** Learn more about the charity's mission and the programs or services it provides. Websites like [charitynavigator.org](http://charitynavigator.org), [guidestar.org](http://guidestar.org), and [give.org](http://give.org) are an excellent source of information.
- 4 Say "no" to pressure.** Be suspicious of solicitors who urge you to donate on the spot. Hang up the phone or shut the front door if you feel pressured. Reputable charities will provide written materials and give you time to decide.
- 5 Never wire money, buy gift cards, or give cash donations.** Contribute by check or credit card, and always make checks payable to the charity, not to the individual collecting your donation.



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- 6 Watch out for imposters.** Bogus charities often use names or logos that look like well-known organizations. They do this to intentionally confuse donors. Call the charity to confirm that they really exist and are aware of the particular fundraising efforts on their behalf.
- 7 Reduce the number of solicitations you receive.** Include a note with your donation asking that the charity not rent, sell, or exchange your name with anyone else. If you receive an unwanted phone call from a charity, file a complaint with the Department of Justice.
- 8 Do not fall for scams.** Watch out for solicitations that look like an invoice or mail from an unfamiliar organization that thank you for your previous support and ask you to give more. It's probably a scam.
- 9 Be proactive.** Seek out organizations that you believe in. Also remember that many organizations need volunteers, as well as financial support.
- 10 Report fraud.** If you think you have been a victim of a charitable scam, call the Oregon Department of Justice at 971-673-1880 or visit [OregonAttorneyGeneral.gov](http://OregonAttorneyGeneral.gov) to file a complaint online.

### The Oregon Department of Justice Can Help



Contact the Charitable Activities Section online at [doj.state.or.us](http://doj.state.or.us), by phone at 971-673-1880, or by email at [charitable.activities@doj.state.or.us](mailto:charitable.activities@doj.state.or.us) to:

- Learn more about specific charities.
- Request written materials about charitable giving.
- File a complaint about a charity or fundraiser.
- Search an online database of charities registered in Oregon.
- Obtain copies of charities' financial reports.

