

Common Questions

about United Way of Central New York

These answers to common questions are designed to make it easier for campaign presenters to comfortably respond, confident that the response is accurate. If you have additional questions, please contact your account manager or the Marketing and Communications Division of United Way.

Q: *How are agencies selected to receive United Way funds and who decides where the contributions go?*

A: Agencies may apply for United Way support from any of our three funds: the Community Program Fund, the Capacity Building Fund or the Community Initiative Fund. Each fund has a different focus and application process. After agencies submit applications, the applications are reviewed by teams of volunteers to determine if the agencies are financially stable, have solid management and properly skilled staff, and have the demonstrated ability to carry out the program that they wish to have funded.

Volunteers from across the community make United Way’s funding decisions. These volunteers make decisions based on objective criteria and use research and data about community needs and conditions when reviewing applications and making decisions.

Q: *Why should I give?*

A: Most people who give to United Way do so because they care about other people and about making our community a better place to live. Many people also recognize that one day they, or their loved ones, may need help and the system of services and supports that they will need must be supported today.

Q: *Why should I give to United Way when I can give directly to charities? Doesn’t this just add more overhead?*

A: United Way funds programs, not agencies. What this distinction means, is that donor dollars are not put into a general agency budget that can be used for any purpose, it is directed specifically to programs that help people. Many donors prefer this approach. Also, for many agencies, there is great benefit in receiving United Way dollars because they serve as the local matching portions of state and federal grants.

United Way is a highly efficient fundraising organization that can raise money less expensively than most agencies. In addition, the flow of money from United Way is consistent allowing agencies to plan and budget effectively.

Q: *United Way does not fund my favorite charity. Why not?*

A: In many cases, the charity in question has never applied for United Way funding. Others may not have been able to pass the rigorous funding review process. Still others may not be eligible because they do not have 501(c)(3) status.

Q: *If I designate my contribution to United Way funded agency, does that agency get my contribution in addition to what United Way gives to them? If not, why not?*

A: No—and yes. Donor Choice gifts are treated as the “first dollars” given to agencies. United Way supplements these gifts with funds from unrestricted gifts to complete the total amount of each agency’s annual allocation. However, if Donor Choice gifts exceed the agency’s annual allocation, the agency will receive the higher amount.

There are two reasons why we do not add designated gifts on top of the allocated amount. First, one of United Way’s most important roles is to provide a stable, reliable source of funding for agencies. Giving designated

gifts on top of the allocation would make the system far less stable. In communities that tried the approach, the agencies used this to lobby donors to designate to them with advertising and direct mail. As a result, smaller agencies that did not have the marketing budgets of larger agencies saw their funding drop dramatically. And all that marketing by agencies had a cost, further decreasing the percentage of dollars that went to services.

Q: *What about United Way finances?*

A: United Way of Central New York is audited annually and finances are reviewed monthly by the Board of Directors. Our financial records are available on our website for anyone to view.

Q: *Do United Way funds remain in our community?*

A: Yes. United Way donors fund programs that serve residents of Onondaga County, except for designated contributions by individual donors to agencies or other United Ways outside our community.

Q: *If I live outside of Onondaga County, can I give to my local community?*

A: Yes. Just write the name of your local United Way in the designation section of your pledge card.

Q: *Don't my taxes take care of the less fortunate?*

A: Yes, but taxes don't do it all. And, there have been significant cuts to human service funding by the government over the past several years. Keep in mind too that United Way-funded programs increase the economic self-sufficiency of families and individuals in our community. The result is fewer people requiring public assistance.

Q: *Will I constantly be bothered to make more donations?*

A: No. Unlike other charities, United Way asks for your pledge once a year. We keep donors informed throughout the year with newsletters about programs that are funded by your gift.

Q: *Why didn't I receive a thank-you card last year?*

A: We send thank-you cards to all donors who give us their mailing address. Some companies do not provide us with donor information.

Q: *Does United Way fund Planned Parenthood?*

A: United Way does not currently fund any Planned Parenthood programs. However, individual donors may designate their gifts to Planned Parenthood.

Q: *Does United Way fund Boy Scouts?*

A: Yes. United Way of Central New York does fund the local chapter of the Boy Scouts. Donors who do not wish to fund the Boy Scouts, or any other agency, can restrict that agency from their gift.