



Consumer Alert - Fraudulent Charities Amid COVID-19

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra issued a consumer alert to warn Californians about fraudulent charities during the ongoing COVID-19 public health emergency.

Attorney General Becerra reminds all Californians to do their research before submitting donations to any charity, especially during a time of crisis.

Donation Tips

- **Check Registration Status:** Charities operating in California and telemarketers soliciting donations in California are required to register with the Attorney General's Registry of Charitable Trusts. They are also required to file annual financial reports. Confirm that the charity is registered and up-to-date with their financial reporting by searching the Attorney General's Registry of Charitable Trusts at oag.ca.gov/charities.
- **Give To Organizations You Trust:** Do your research before giving. Review the charity's purpose and its financial records, available on the Attorney General's [Registry of Charitable Trusts](#), and find out how it spends donations. How much is spent directly on the charitable cause? How much goes to overhead and employee compensation? Research charities in your community and support those charities that make a positive impact.
- **Don't Be Pressured By Telemarketers And Ask Questions Before Donating:** If you receive a call from a telemarketer, ask for the name of the fundraising organization, whether it is registered with the Attorney General's Office, the name of the charity benefitting from the solicitation, how much of your donation will go to charity and how much to the telemarketer, and the direct telephone number of the charity. If the telemarketer tells you the donation is for your local animal shelter, hospital, school, police department, firefighter or other public safety agency, check directly with the benefitting organization to confirm that they authorized the solicitation and will actually benefit from your donation. Don't fall for pressure tactics or threats. Remember you have the right to reject the donation appeal and if you feel pressured or threatened, just hang up.
- **Be Cautious Of "Look-Alike" Websites:** These fraudulent websites may have a slightly different web address (URL) than the website of the charity they are posing as. Similar looking URLs are sometimes purchased to lure in would-be donors. These sites may ask for personal information or install harmful material onto your device.

- **Watch Out For Similar-Sounding Names And Other Deceptive Tactics:** Some organizations use names that closely resemble those of well-established charitable organizations to mislead donors. Be skeptical if someone thanks you for a pledge you never made. Check your records. Remember: current registration status with the Attorney General's Office does not mean the Attorney General endorses or has approved the activities of the organization.
- **Be Wary Of Social Network and Crowdfunding Websites:** If you are planning to donate through a social network solicitation or through a crowdsourcing website, such as GoFundMe, find out what percentage is going to the charity, whether you will be charged a fee, or if a percentage of your donation will be paid to the platform website.
- **Protect Your Identity:** Never give your Social Security number or other personal information in response to a charitable solicitation. Never give out credit card information to an organization unfamiliar to you. Some organizations sell or rent their donor lists to other organizations, including organizations that are not charities. Look at the charity's privacy policy and learn who the charity might share your information with before you provide it.

You can find more information on our [donation tips webpage](#). We urge everyone to be vigilant. Do your research before donating.

If you or others you know are victims of a charity scam, file a complaint on our website at oag.ca.gov/report.

For the latest on coronavirus preparedness, information, and response, please visit the websites of the [California Department of Public Health](#), [Office of Governor Gavin Newsom](#), and [Office of Emergency Services](#). If you are a worker or employer who has been affected by COVID-19, you can find guidance and resources on the [California Labor and Workforce Development Agency's website](#).