

## Frequently Asked Questions and Answers About United Way of the Coastal Bend

**What is United Way?** United Way is a locally incorporated, nonprofit organization that is the single largest non-governmental funder of health and human services in our community. United Way dollars support more than 40 health and human service programs addressing community problems in the Coastal Bend.

**Is United Way a local or national organization?**

While we are affiliated with a national service and training organization, United Way of the Coastal Bend is a local, autonomous organization governed by a volunteer Board of Governors. While each United Way must meet basic organizational standards, each is separate and independent from other United Ways in the country.

**How does United Way decide who gets my money? How do I know my money is really going to make a difference?**

Volunteers decide. Every United Way funded program must meet high standards of quality and efficiency. At the end of each annual campaign volunteers from all walks of life study the needs of the community and determine where your gift, and theirs, can do the most good. They review budgets, conduct on-site visits to the agencies and monitor programs to assure high quality. As donors to United Way of the Coastal Bend themselves, they too want to be convinced that their donation changes lives. You can help. Call (361) 882-2529 or (800) 421-4636 and volunteer to serve on an allocations panel.

**What kind of standards are United Way agencies held to?**

Each agency funded by United Way of the Coastal Bend must:

- Be recognized by the IRS as a 510 (c)3 organization
- Be governed by a volunteer board
- Provide programs that address an identified need in our community
- Be audited annually by a CPA firm
- Annually present their budget, program and projected results to a panel of community volunteers
- Operate at a reasonable cost

**What is the Community Investment Fund?** United Way's Community Investment Fund focuses on priority needs in the Coastal Bend. When a donor gives to the Community Investment Fund, trained volunteers invest the gift in a network of community programs and services that work together to provide a continuum of care for those in need. Giving to United Way of the Coastal Bend through the Community Investment Fund is the most efficient, effective way to support a collection of programs that solve local problems and serve human needs.

**Can I designate my donation to a specific United Way agency?** Yes. United Way recognizes that some donors would like to direct their gift to a specific agency listed in the United Way brochure. This is provided as a customer service. Funds directed in this manner are sent to each agency separate from their United Way allocation.

**I always receive solicitations from other charities and organizations, so why should I give to United Way?** United Way invests your donation in more well-managed programs that change lives and strengthen families than any other organization in the community. Giving to United Way enables you to support a broad range of human service programs with one contribution. If you are giving through work, the convenience of payroll deduction allows you to spread your payments over the course of an entire year.

**What is the advantage of a payroll deduction gift versus a one-time contribution?** The payroll deduction benefit that United Way offers allows for convenient giving on an installment basis in any amount. Often larger gifts are possible because giving is incremental rather than all at once. For a nonprofit, payroll deduction provides a steady cash flow, allowing it to plan its service delivery.

**I never use United Way services, so why should I give?** You never know when you, a member of your family or a neighbor may need a United Way service. Job loss, illness, loss of a loved one, family problems and the problems associated with growing up and growing old know no boundaries. Your gift helps ensure that United Way services are available when they are needed. Anyone who has been involved in Scouting, protected by a lifeguard or experienced a disaster has been served by a United Way program.

**How is United Way accountable?** Every United Way funded program must meet high standards of quality and efficiency. Experienced community volunteers oversee the dollar allocations to all programs. They review budgets, conduct on-site visits to the agencies and monitor programs to assure high quality. The United Way stewardship process recruits accounting professionals to review each funded agency's audit report and use of funds.

Additionally, United Way's own operating budget and distribution of funds to agencies are audited by an independent accounting firm and are carefully scrutinized by a panel of local community volunteers and United Way's Board of Directors.

**Is giving to United Way voluntary?** Yes! Giving to United Way is a personal decision and should be strictly voluntary. United Way prefers that donors give from the heart and that coercion is unacceptable when donating. Education about how United Way programs are making a difference in our community is the best way to encourage contributions.

**What if my spouse already gives to United Way?** Each and every contribution is important and makes a difference. Each person's gift can help United Way meet the community's many needs. We all have a stake in the region's well-being.

**Why do agencies still have fund-raisers when they are funded by United Way?** United Way of the Coastal Bend funds programs provided by nonprofit health and human service agencies. United Way usually funds a portion necessary for these programs. Agencies must continue to raise funds from various other sources to support their ongoing activities.

**Why should I give to United Way if I already give to my church or favorite charitable organization?** United Way does not want to take contributions away from other organizations. However, churches and other charities do not meet all of the needs addressed by United Way. Because no organization does more with your contribution, many people choose to include United Way in their overall charitable giving plan.

**Isn't United Way just another charity?** Most charities have a single cause for which they seek funding. United Way supports a wide variety of causes. We not only help people with the problems you are most concerned about, but also assess community needs and work with businesses and community groups to improve existing services and create new ones.

**Have more questions?** Please feel free to contact us at 361-882-2529 to discuss any additional questions.



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