

Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT DOES UNITED WAY DO?

United Way provides leadership, funding and volunteers to nearly 700 programs at nonprofit organizations across Chicagoland. We focus on issues related to income stability, health and education. Because United Way is in a unique position to partner with hundreds of organizations, funders, government and community leaders, we not only provide needed resources to support families, but actually help to identify the critical issues and develop innovative solutions. United Way pulls together the resources it takes—money, expertise and voices—to have a meaningful impact on improving lives in communities. When you LIVE UNITED by giving, advocating or volunteering, you help United Way create meaningful, lasting change throughout metropolitan Chicago.

WHY SHOULD I GIVE TO UNITED WAY?

As the largest non-government funder of health and human services, United Way does what no single organization alone can do to address the key issues people face around Income, Education and Health. United Way can have an impact on entire communities because we are able to aggregate the necessary resources to make a real, measurable impact beyond the sphere of most individual organizations. There are a many worthwhile charitable organizations out there—most supported in part by United Way—but only United Way is structured to help people and organizations work *together* to make change.

WHERE DOES MY MONEY GO?

United Way respects your dollar. We understand that you are donating because you care. You care about how your money is spent, you want to know it makes a difference, and you want it spent wisely. Your donation supports a network of nearly 700 programs and targeted initiatives that help families stay financially stable enough to pay their bills, get a good job, and access financial support when they need it. Your investment works to ensure that every child enters school prepared to learn, stays in school and graduates ready for college and a career. And your contribution helps people obtain adequate, quality health care services and the preventive care they need to live healthy lives.

United Way is also ensuring that we making the most efficient use of resources. We work in partnership with The Chicago Community Trust and CACE (Chicago Alliance for Collaborative Effort, a consortium of the region's largest human service providers) to develop cost-saving measures for partner agencies, such as creating a back-office collaborative that will save our area's largest health and human service agencies 2–4% in operating costs. Additionally, United Way secures pro-bono help from Chicago corporations for our agencies with the greatest budget or operational challenges.

WHICH CHARITIES DO YOU FUND?

For a complete list of the organizations currently funded by United Way, please visit LIVEUNITEDchicago.org.

MAY I DESIGNATE MY GIFT TO ANY ORGANIZATION?

Yes, as long as it is registered with the State of Illinois and recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) health and human service organization.

WHY IS UNITED WAY THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY?

Today’s community issues are complex and cannot be solved by one agency or organization alone. By providing a way for local businesses, human service experts, community groups and volunteers to come together, United Way is able to find solutions to Chicagoland’s key community issues. United Way is the leading non-government funder of health and human services in metropolitan Chicago. We have been a vital part of the community for more than 75 years and have relationships with corporations, community leaders, government and other community stakeholders. Our focused funding model clearly addresses the greatest needs and measures results, ensuring that our resources are creating meaningful change.

HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHERE THE FUNDING GOES?

United Way focuses on what people need to become independent—Income, Education and Health. We have also earmarked \$750,000 for regional crisis recovery programs—needed now more than ever—that are distributed when and where these dollars are most needed.

Since results don’t happen overnight, we fund in three year cycles for each category. Nonprofit agencies apply for United Way funding, and applications undergo a rigorous review process that requires them to demonstrate success on specific outcomes. Community volunteers are engaged in the decision-making process, spending many hours of careful deliberation in their local areas. Each group decides how to align resources to best address the community’s needs, evaluating programs and initiatives that can make the greatest impact in improving people’s lives. If you would like to become involved as a volunteer for the United Way funding process, please call us at 312.906.2496.

HOW IS UNITED WAY HELPING PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY OUR CURRENT ECONOMY?

In these extraordinary times, United Way helps people in crisis in many ways. This year, we are investing more than \$43 million into the health and human services sector to help address our region’s most pressing needs. United Way is the designated lead in the region to direct nearly \$7 million in federal funding for emergency food and shelter programs. We are also working with local government and other funders to strategically plan for using the Federal Stimulus package funds where they are most needed. If you know of someone in crises, you can refer them to our Crisis Recovery line, 312.906.2484, to receive direct assistance.

WHAT ARE UNITED WAY’S OVERHEAD/ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS?

Every charity has a fundraising cost associated with it (called an overhead rate). The United Way of Metropolitan Chicago overhead rate is 14%, a rate that is lower than or comparable to other nonprofit organizations.

As a point of reference, here are the overhead rates of some other nonprofits*:

• UNITED WAY OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO	14%
• AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY	21%
• AMERICAN RED CROSS	21%
• EASTER SEALS.....	19%
• SPECIAL OLYMPICS	19%
• SUSAN G. KOMEN BREAST CANCER FOUNDATION	14%
• DOCTORS WITHOUT BORDERS	12%

* Source: www.GuideStar.org

United Way is able to maintain its low overhead for a variety of reasons: 1) 98% of our work is done by volunteers, 2) the generosity of our corporate donors includes pro-bono services and Loaned Executives to work with us, and 3) staff is sensitive and committed to keeping costs low to maximize resources focused on community impact. Our low overhead allows us to invest more donor dollars into the communities, programs and initiatives that need it most.