

## **Donor Designation Eligible Agency - Frequently Asked Questions**

***What is donor choice?*** Donor choice refers to the range of options donors have when making a contribution to United Way including making a gift to the community fund and/or making a gift to an agency.

***What is a Donor Designation Eligible Agency?*** It is a not-for-profit health or human service agency that has been certified by United Way to receive donor directed gifts through the United Way campaign.

***How do you define health or human services?*** There are many types of services included under this broad category; and rather than list all that fit, it does not include organizations that address: religion, library services, environmental services, animal services and federated fundraising. An organization primarily organized to deliver a service determined not to be health or human service may offer a health or human service program; however delivery of such a program does *not* qualify the agency for participation.

***Are arts organizations and/or museums allowed to participate in the donor designation program?*** Yes. Our rules have recently changed, in the past we did not allow arts organizations or museums to apply to become donor designated agencies. These agencies can now apply, as long as they offer education programs for school age youth. We ask that on the registration form, these agencies note that they are an arts organization/museum offering educational programming for school age youth or students. Designations will be directed in support of the educational programming for school age youth and listed on United Way materials as AGENCY NAME: youth education programs.

***What do you mean by providing a direct health or human service?*** Direct health or human service is one that is provided by an agency to an individual or family in need. Indirect services like those provided by booster clubs, friends of the library and other organizations that support the activities and mission of another agency are considered indirect and are not eligible. Eligible agencies must be providing an eligible service at the time of application.

***What about volunteer fire, ambulance and war veteran organizations?*** IRS regulations allowing for charitable contributions to volunteer fire, ambulance and war veteran organizations are accepted by United Way. Volunteer fire, ambulance and war veteran organizations must comply with applicable IRS regulations, operate for public purposes, and use funds for charitable purposes only. These organizations must provide a copy of their Certificate of Incorporation (as amended) or enabling statute to verify nonprofit status and a copy of the organization's by-laws in lieu of the IRS determination letter.

***Why do some organizations on your list appear to not meet current guidelines?*** Participation requirements are periodically updated. Organizations previously approved as donor designation eligible under former eligibility requirements are "grandfathered."

***What does 501(c)(3) mean?*** 501(c)(3) refers to the part of the Internal Revenue Code describing certain tax-exempt organizations. The 501(c)(3) designation denotes a charitable organization that is eligible to receive tax deductible contributions.

***How does my organization become a 501(c)(3)?*** Information about 501(c)(3) status can be found at the Internal Revenue Service website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

***What is an IRS Determination Letter?*** It is a letter from the Internal Revenue Service that recognizes an organization's tax-exempt status and indicates under which section of the Internal Revenue Code the agency is qualified. The determination letter is the only official document and proof that an organization is recognized as a tax-exempt organization.

***What are the federal filing requirements?*** According to the IRS, tax-exempt organizations must file an annual information return. Annual forms include the 990, 990-EZ and the 990-N. Information about these forms can be found at the Internal Revenue Service website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

***What is the Charities Bureau of NYS?*** The Attorney General's Charities Bureau is the NYS department responsible for ensuring that charities operating in New York State solicit and use funds in accordance with regulations established to protect donors and agency clients.

***How do I know if my organization must register with the Charities Bureau or is exempt from registering?*** Information on registering with the Charities Bureau can all be found at the attorney general's website. <http://www.oag.state.ny.us/charities/forms/char410i.pdf>

***What is the CHAR 500?*** The CHAR 500 is the Annual Filing for Charitable Organizations required for charitable organizations registered with the NYS Charities Bureau. For information on this filing visit the attorney general's website. <http://www.oag.state.ny.us/charities/forms/current/char500i.pdf>

***What is the payment authorization form?*** The payment authorization form provides information that United Way needs in order to electronically direct deposit payments of donations directed to a specific agency through the United Way campaign. Selecting this option reduces the overall costs for United Way payment processing and allows the agency to access funds sooner.

***How do I get help with completing the donor designation eligible agency application?*** Applying agencies are responsible for completing the application. Agency staff, volunteers, agency attorneys or accountants may be helpful resources. The application requires only the most basic items necessary of not-for-profits operating legally in the State of New York and is meant to be simple to complete.

***How does my organization get paid for designations received through the campaign?*** Designation payments for each year's campaign are paid monthly on the first of the month starting September 1 through March 1. If designations are \$1,000 or less, then a lump sum payment is made September 1st.

***Will I know who donated to my organization?*** A listing of fall campaign donors who wish to be acknowledged will be sent to agencies in March and a listing of spring donors will be sent in early August.

***A donor told me that he/she designated a gift to our organization but his/her name is not on the donor list; why not?*** Your donor may have requested to be anonymous and therefore does not appear on the listing.

***A donor who lives out of the area told me that he/she designated his/her gift to our organization but his/her name is not on our donor list; why not?*** Donors may designate to our area, but they do not always pass through our United Way. Many times these designations are paid directly to the agencies from another United Way.

***What is pledge loss?*** It is a reserve for pledges that will not be collected. The reserve amount is based on historical loss including an average of the past three years actual pledge loss.

***Can my organization use the United Way logo in our materials?*** Yes. See the communication guidelines for additional information.

***Who do I contact at United Way with questions about designations?*** Questions about donors who designated or listings sent to you for acknowledgement purposes should be directed to Colleen Venturino (242-6527).