

Provide [hope] where it's needed most.

Changing lives, right here in Miami. Give Now.



Frequently Asked Questions

As a volunteer for United Way Miami, you can expect questions as they are a natural part of the process of asking people to give. Knowing the facts will help prepare you to address people's questions and concerns.

You may also find the following three-step response helpful when dealing with tough questions:

Acknowledge: Begin your answer by acknowledging the question. Statements like "I understand your concern" or "I appreciate you asking about this topic" will show the individual that you are listening. If a mistake or problem existed, admit it. If appropriate, apologize for it. Don't try to hide it or act like it never happened. Never argue.

Bridge: Move forward. If the question is regarding something that happened, tell the individual what has taken place since the incident or issue occurred. What reforms or actions have been put in place?

Positive: Don't dwell on the problem. Move to the positives. What do you want people to know about? To remember? Conclude the response on a positive note, an important fact that should help alleviate the individual's concerns.

Should you encounter a question that you are not able to answer, that's okay. Simply remind the individual that you are a volunteer and you will find out the appropriate response. Get their name and contact information, and tell them either you or their United Way representative will get back to them promptly with the answer(s) to their question(s).

What does United Way Miami do?

For 100 years, through hurricanes, economic depressions and now a global pandemic, United Way Miami has been an enduring force in changing lives and creating a positive impact in our community. Our community of volunteers and advocates are more committed than ever to working with us to build a stronger Miami. It is through our work in access to quality education, financial stability and health that we effect change – transforming vulnerability into empowerment, poverty into opportunity and despair into hope.

How long has United Way Miami been around?

United Way Miami has convened people from all walks of life to impact change since 1924. We have helped individuals and families in their time of need, and, most importantly, we have continued to build community by helping people care for one another.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Why give to United Way Miami?

Giving to United Way Miami is the most powerful way you can make your community—Miami-Dade—stronger and better. By helping tens of thousands of our families and friends reach their full potential, you're helping to build a more educated, prosperous and healthy Miami-Dade. Your gift translates into real and measurable results that change lives and strengthen Miami-Dade.

The need in our city has always been there: Families are hungry. Individuals are struggling. Many in our community are still affected and financially impacted by reduced work hours and wages, layoffs and furloughs by the effects of the pandemic on the local economy. They still need support, and United Way Miami is that organization that can address the complex needs of our community.

How is United Way Miami different from other nonprofits?

United Way Miami brings together powerful forces within our community to create a more educated, prosperous and healthy Miami. Our unique ability to work across complex issues with hundreds of community partners is unmatched. We bring together government, business, faith groups, nonprofits, labor, policymakers and community members, just like you, to find solutions to some of our biggest challenges. We are not focused on a single issue, but rather on the community as a whole. We help young children get off to a good start in life, we help people in crisis get back on their feet, and we help prevent future problems.

Even as we continue to face economic hardships as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is much work to do. We are always on the front lines, supporting Miami-Dade's most vulnerable. We ensure everyone has access to quality education and the opportunity to lead healthy and financially secure lives. We can—and will—succeed. We will build a stronger Miami now and always.

What is United Way Miami's role in Miami-Dade's emergency response and relief?

Miami-Dade County's Office of Emergency Management relies on United Way Miami for disaster response. We recruit and organize volunteers and manage funds for assistance.

In this role, our United Way plays a key role in helping people and communities recover and rebuild after a crisis. Working with our community partners, we offer a variety of services to ensure that those who will be or have been affected by a disaster get the help they need as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

What is Operation Helping Hands?

United Way Miami, in partnership with the Miami Herald / el Nuevo Herald and media partner Univision 23 Miami, activates Operation Helping Hands, an emergency response initiative to raise funds and recruit volunteers to help with crisis recovery and relief efforts. The purpose of Operation Helping Hands is to provide people in South Florida an efficient and trusted way to respond to disasters in other parts of the world.

United Way plays a key role in helping people and communities recover and rebuild after a crisis. Working with our community partners, we offer a variety of services to ensure that those who will be or have been affected by a disaster get the help they need as quickly and efficiently as possible.

United Way Miami COVID-19 response

United Way Miami, in partnership with the Miami Herald / el Nuevo Herald and media partner Univision 23 Miami, activated Operation Helping Hands, an emergency response initiative to raise funds and recruit volunteers to help with crisis recovery and relief efforts. A collaborative of local partner funders joined this response effort to establish the Miami Pandemic Assistance Program, raising more than \$3.8 million. The Fund supported struggling families with emergency needs including rent/mortgage assistance, food, medication and utilities.

In addition to the Miami Pandemic Response Fund, United Way Miami organized virtual volunteering opportunities, food drives, distributed meals and supplies, and launched the Small Business Assistance Program to help small businesses that may not have been eligible for other assistance with micro-grants coupled with technical assistance.

What is United Way Miami's position on diversity, equity and inclusion?

United Way Miami respects and celebrates the strength diversity adds to our community and our organization. We recognize structural racism and other forms of oppression have contributed to persistent disparities, which United Way seeks to dismantle. For 100 years, our United Way has sought to create a stronger community for all by bringing together diverse groups through steadfast efforts to identify issues, define solutions and engage community members, especially those whose voices have traditionally been marginalized, to advance social change.

We work with individuals, other nonprofits, corporate partners, labor groups, government and other partners to co-create solutions that ensure everyone has the resources, support, opportunities and networks they need to thrive. From our role as conveners and awareness builders—to our strategic investments and public policy advocacy—we commit to leveraging all of our assets to create a more equitable community. For more information, please visit unitedwaymiami.org/DEI.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

What is United Way's community plan?

Your gift to the United Way Community Plan is the most powerful tool you can use to bring lasting change to your friends and neighbors. It's a strategic roadmap that best addresses community needs in the areas of access to quality education, financial stability and health—the building blocks for a good quality of life. By contributing to the Community Plan, you are empowering United Way Miami, on your behalf, to:

- invest in quality programs
- advocate for policies that improve lives
- partner with organizations and individuals to create the most effective solutions

For every \$1 you give to the Community Plan, United Way Miami maximizes the impact of your donation ensuring vetted programs and verified results. That's money that goes directly to support nearly 100 innovative programs and initiatives that help children, youth, families, seniors and many others reach their full potential.

Who oversees the operations of United Way Miami?

United Way Miami is governed by a 51-member volunteer board of directors made up of respected community and business leaders, and committed philanthropists. Penny Shaffer, retired Market President of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, is the chair of the board. The board sets policy and strategic direction and is responsible for the overall governance and stewardship of the organization. Professional staff manages day-to-day activities and is led by president and CEO, Symeria T. Hudson. A seasoned executive who has both local and international nonprofit and corporate experience, Hudson will lead the organization to its next phase of growth and evolution as it supports three pillars that lead to better lives: education, financial stability and health.

How can I be confident that my donation is well managed?

We take our role as stewards of your money very seriously. We engage community volunteers to oversee our management and financial systems to ensure that we are operating at the highest levels of professionalism and excellence:

- United Way Miami is audited annually by an independent accounting firm and carefully reviewed by volunteers who serve on the United Way finance and administration committee and United Way executive committee and board.
- United Way voluntarily agreed to comply with the requirements of Sarbanes-Oxley legislation (FYI: the American Competitiveness and Corporate Accountability Act of 2002, commonly known as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, was passed in response to several corporate scandals and was intended to rebuild public trust in the corporate sector).
- Three independent volunteer groups, the finance and administration committee, the executive committee, and the board of directors, conduct a monthly review of our financial statements and annual review of our audited financial statements. Our IRS 990 form is available online for any interested individuals to review.
- Our United Way was awarded **Charity Navigators 4-star rating**—its highest—which speaks to the financial, health and governance of our organization.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Who decides which programs United Way Miami invests in?

Knowledgeable, trained volunteers and experts from our community carefully screen and select the programs to be funded. Their recommendations are reviewed and approved by our board.

After selection, these programs are rigorously monitored to ensure they produce the intended results. As part of this oversight, staff and volunteers visit the programs, review financial documents, analyze program reports and evaluate outcomes on a regular basis.

I never use agency services and I don't know anyone else who does. Why should I give?

Everyone deserves opportunities to have a good life: a quality education that leads to a stable job, enough income to support a family through retirement and good health. We all win when a child succeeds in school, when a family becomes financially stable and when people enjoy good health. When the community benefits, we all benefit.

I already give to other charities. Why should I give to United Way Miami, too?

While most nonprofits focus on a single issue, United Way Miami takes a broader approach. We find the needs in our community and address them by working with nearly 100 programs and initiatives to promote the access to quality education, financial stability and health of every person in our community. We help young children get off to a good start in life, we help people in crisis get back on their feet, we help families pave a path to financial security and we help prevent future problems. In addition, when you give to United Way, your dollar goes further, because for every \$1 you give, United Way more than doubles its impact through matching dollars, volunteers and in-kind gifts. United Way Miami maximizes the impact of your donation ensuring vetted programs and verified results.

My spouse gives at work. Why should I give?

If your spouse supports United Way Miami, that is wonderful! Your gift is just as important because it helps close the gap of unmet service needs in Miami-Dade County. Additionally, couples with combined gifts of \$1,000 or more are recognized, as being part of our Leadership and Endowment Circle.

Is my United Way Miami contribution tax deductible?

Yes. Your United Way Miami contribution might be tax deductible. To receive a tax deduction, you will need to provide the proper documentation when filing your income tax returns. The IRS requires a receipt for each tax-deductible payment of \$250 or more.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

If someone needs help, who should they contact?

The best way to get help is to dial 2-1-1 The Helpline, a program of Jewish Community Services and a United Way partner, which operates our community's only 24-hour free information/crisis/referral/phone counseling hotline.

Please encourage your friends and colleagues to call 2-1-1 or (305) 358-HELP (4357) when they need assistance. Trained phone counselors who speak English, Spanish and Creole are ready to listen and to guide callers to the right services within our community.

9-8-8 is the single number to call for access to crisis counseling and suicide prevention services.

How can I get involved?

Be an advocate and champion for your community. Whether you're speaking out or posting on social media to improve access to quality education, financial security and health, reaching out to members of Congress or wearing a United Way shirt to show your support, you can help create a more educated, prosperous and healthy Miami-Dade.

Giving your time through volunteerism is another important way you can help your community. For more information on how to become an advocate or a volunteer, visit volunteermiami.org.

Are United Ways related?

There are approximately 1,800 community-based United Ways across the world, and each is separately incorporated and independently governed by local volunteers.

United Way Worldwide, the national service and training center for local United Ways, has no governing power over local United Ways. However, all United Ways are required to follow a set of membership requirements to ensure accountability and transparency. In addition, United Way Worldwide has a set of Standards of Excellence to help local United Ways enhance their effectiveness by implementing best practices. United Way Miami pays one percent of its annual campaign revenue to United Way Worldwide in membership fees.

I'm a member of the ALICE population, why should I give?

Currently, the combined ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) and poverty household number has increased to nearly half a million households. These are working households that are struggling and in or one emergency away from falling into poverty.

The new combined ALICE/poverty percentage of households in Miami-Dade County is 51%. With the increase in population, the combined ALICE/poverty household number has increased to nearly half a million (488,180) households in our county.

To address the needs of this vast underserved community, it takes all of us doing our part—however big or small—to build a community in which all our children can learn and thrive, all families can be financially secure, and all people have good health. Working together, we can achieve far more than any of us on our own.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

Does United Way Miami fund the Boy Scouts of America, South Florida Council?

In 2003, United Way ended its funding relationship with Boy Scouts of America (BSA), South Florida Council, because the national office of the BSA prohibited its South Florida council from implementing an agreed upon sensitivity training that would equip its adult leaders with the skills and knowledge to respond appropriately to a boy who might be questioning his sexuality. At the time, BSA did not allow gay youth or adult leaders to participate.

In 2014, BSA changed its policy to allow gay youth to participate, and in July 2015, the organization removed the national restriction on gay adult leaders and employees. However, BSA allows local troops to use religious beliefs as criteria for selecting adult leaders whose beliefs are consistent with their own.

BSA, South Florida Council, continues to be eligible to receive designated dollars, as are all 501(c)(3) health and human service agencies in Florida.

Does United Way Miami fund Planned Parenthood?

All United Ways are independent and autonomous organizations and make local funding decisions with the input of local leaders and community stakeholders.

Out of 1,129 local United Ways in the United States, only a small number (less than 3 percent) provide direct support to Planned Parenthood to support its health programs. None support abortion services.

Planned Parenthood offers a wide range of women's health services and the majority of its funding goes towards preventive health care, birth control, prenatal care, sex education, STD treatment, cancer screenings and other services.

United Way Miami provides no direct support Planned Parenthood. However, Planned Parenthood is eligible to receive donor-designated dollars, as are all 501(c)(3) health and human service agencies. There are contributors who choose to direct their United Way donation to Planned Parenthood, and we honor and respect their right to designate their giving.

