



# Did you know?

Some frequently asked questions about United Way

United  
Way



United Way of CNY

## WHAT ROLE DOES UNITED WAY OF CNY (UWCNY) SERVE?

UWCNY does much more than raise dollars; we provide solutions. We identify community issues, work with community groups and develop special initiatives to solve problems. Real-time information comes from our partner agency feedback, our annual Community Trends analysis and data from 211cny.

## VETTING AGENCIES

UWCNY-funded agencies are certified and held accountable for outcomes. Some have called United Way's certification the "Good Housekeeping" seal of approval for nonprofit agencies. We do the homework on agencies for you; this safeguards your donor dollars. Before they can apply for funding, agencies must first demonstrate their fiscal and structural viability.

## FUNDING PROCESS

Funding decisions based on research detailing the greatest needs in our community are made by community volunteers, just like you. These volunteers make recommendations to our Community Impact team; final decisions are approved by the UWCNY Board of Directors. Funding must be used for specific programming that matches the greatest needs. Then we follow up with the agencies to ensure their programs are on track to achieve desired outcomes. Agencies submit updated reports every six months to UWCNY and must meet agreed-upon benchmarks in order to continue to receive funding.

## THE DIFFERENCE

UWCNY strategically invests in effective programs, innovative approaches and collaborative solutions, including multi-agency initiatives. It supports invaluable services necessary to strengthen the community. Programs are funded for a three-year period to ensure stability and continuity. Our current 2017-20 allocation cycle funds 87 local programs through our 33 partner agencies.

## WHY SHOULD I GIVE TO UNITED WAY INSTEAD OF DIRECTLY TO AGENCIES I CHOOSE?

Donors often have personal reasons and specific causes that they want to support, which we applaud. At the same time they would like to help the community as a whole, but do not have the time to research who, where and how to give. That's where UWCNY can help. Investing through United Way is the only way you can give to the whole community. So, while supporting a single health and human service organization is certainly a choice you can make, please also consider giving a portion of your gift as undesignated to benefit the Community Fund. That way, the impact of your gift is maximized as it combines with the giving power of thousands of others. You will then be part of a community force that works together to strengthen our entire community. This is what it means to **LIVE UNITED**.

Another benefit to you is convenience. Your employer may allow you to use payroll deduction to make your pledge. Thus you can spread it out and opt to give more than if you gave a single gift. Payroll deduction allows simple, hassle-free, once-a-year giving. Your company may match your gift. No single agency can meet all community problems; a person looking for help often needs a combination of services. Our partner agencies work together providing essential services through specific programs to produce the best outcomes. Your donated dollar stretches as far as possible.



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## **WHAT IS UNITED WAY'S OVERHEAD RATIO?**

UWCNY is committed to responsible stewardship of your donations. 85 cents of every dollar goes directly to funded programs as reported by Charity Navigator. United Way's overhead ratio (fundraising and administration expense divided by total revenue) is 15%. That is well below the Better Business Bureau standard for nonprofit organizations, which is 35% or less. Just as important, UWCNY's fundraising and collection structure actually reduces the fundraising expenses of our funded agencies. Our funding allows agencies more time to focus on what they do best: serve their clients in need. Their overhead costs are reduced in part because of the fundraising and development work we do on their behalf.

## **DO UNITED WAY FUNDS REMAIN IN OUR COMMUNITY?**

Undesignated gifts to United Way's Community Fund go to local programs that serve residents of Onondaga County. Your donated dollar goes further when it is undesignated and combined with other donor dollars and completes the UWCNY stewardship/vetting process.

## **WHY AREN'T ALL AGENCIES INCLUDED IN UNITED WAY'S COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN?**

Some agencies do not apply to United Way; others may not have met our rigorous standards for admission as United Way member agencies. Still others may have applied but were not funded because the total of program requests exceeded the money raised in the campaign. Volunteers must make tough decisions as they prioritize the allocation of limited dollars.

## **I DON'T KNOW ANYONE WHO HAS RECEIVED UNITED WAY HELP**

Last year, UWCNY's funded programs helped thousands of local citizens. You might think that only the jobless and truly "at-risk" individuals benefit from United Way and its partner programs. The truth is that United Way-funded services help everyone; we all benefit from a healthy community. 1 in 5 people in Onondaga County will benefit from our partner agency programs. However, there are still people who will not be served due to the limited available funds, which is why it is so important to participate. You, a family member, friend or coworker may have already used the services of United Way partner agencies without realizing it.

## **DON'T MY TAXES TAKE CARE OF THE LESS FORTUNATE?**

Taxes don't do it all and there have been significant cuts to human service funding by the government over the past several years. Keep in mind that when United Way-funded programs lead to self-sufficient families and individuals, the result is fewer people requiring public assistance.

## **ARE ALL UNITED WAYS THE SAME?**

There are over 1,800 separate, autonomous United Ways in 40 countries and territories.

## **HOW ARE THE FINANCIAL RECORDS OF UNITED WAY OF CNY MADE AVAILABLE?**

All United Way financial records are handled in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. A volunteer Finance Committee, chaired by the Board Treasurer, oversees financial operations. United Way is audited annually by an independent accounting firm and practices full voluntary disclosure of its IRS 990 and audits, with reports available on our website.