

Charity Navigator is a national organization that reviews and rates large not-for-profit corporations and rates how effectively they use donor contributions. Even though they do not review Lifeline, they do provide some applicable tips for donors to consider. The following paraphrases their “Top 10 Best Practices of Savvy Donors.”

1. Be Proactive In Your Giving

Smart givers generally don't give reactively in a knee-jerk reaction. They take the time to identify which causes are most important to them and their families. And they don't just support generic charities, but instead target their giving.

Lifeline is a faith-based organization that has served at-risk youth and families for over 40 years. Over 8,000 youth and adults are expected to receive services in 2009.

2. Hang Up The Phone

Informed donors recognize that fundraisers, those primarily used in telemarketing campaigns, keep 25 to 95 cents of every dollar they collect. These donors never give out their personal information over the phone. Investigate the charity and send the contribution directly to the charity.

Lifeline does not use outside fundraising or telemarketing campaigns.

3. Be Careful Of Sound-Alike Names

Uninformed donors are easily confused by charities that have strikingly similar names to others. Take the time to uncover the difference. Make sure your gift is going where you intended.

Several northeast Indiana organizations and businesses use “Lifeline” in their name. Use our full name “Lifeline Youth & Family Services, Inc.”

4. Confirm 501(c)(3) Status

If for no other reason than they want to take the tax deduction, smart givers only support groups granted tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code.

Lifeline was granted Section 501(c)(3) tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service in May 1968 and has continued to maintain this status without interruption.

5. Check The Charity's Commitment To Donor's Rights

Does the charity have a donor privacy whereby the organization promises to never sell or trade the donor's contact information.

Lifeline promises to never sell or trade donor contact information.

6. Obtain Copies Of Its Financial Records

Is the charity willing to share financial information? Smart donors ask to see recent Form 990 reports sent to the Internal Revenue Service. Savvy donors

seek out charities that are able to grow their revenues, that continue to invest in their programs, and that have some money saved for a rainy day.

Annually, Lifeline undergoes an audit conducted by an independent CPA firm and files Form 990 with the Internal Revenue Service.

7. Review Executive Compensation

Sophisticated donors realize that charities need to pay their top leaders a competitive salary in order to retain the kind of talent needed to run a multi-million dollar organization and produce results. They know it is better to contribute to a charity with a well-paid CEO that is meeting its goal than to support a charity with an underpaid CEO that fails to deliver on its promises.

Based on the 2009 CEO compensation study conducted by Charity Navigator, Lifeline's CEO is compensated at or below average for the size of the organization and his length of employment.

8. Investigate Its Programmatic Results

Learn about its accomplishments, goals, and challenges. Walk away from any charity that is unable or unwilling to provide this information.

Donors should take comfort knowing that Lifeline operates using "best practices" as evidenced by its national accreditation. Lifeline also reports outcomes through various governmental contractual arrangements.

9. Concentrate Your Giving

If you've really taken the time to identify a well-run charity that is engaged in a cause that you are passionate about, you should then feel confident in giving it a donation. Spreading your money among multiple organizations not only results in you mail box filling up with more appeals, it also diminishes the possibility of any of those groups bringing about substantive change as each charity is wasting a large percentage of your gift on fundraising and overhead expenses.

Contact us at any time. Lifeline welcomes the chance to earn your trust and support.

10. Share Your Intentions And Make A Long-Term Commitment

Smart donors support their favorite charities for the long haul. They see themselves as a partner in the charity's efforts to bring about change. Tell the charity of your giving plans so that the organization knows it can rely on the donation and they do not have to waste resources by sending numerous solicitations.