

# How to Know if a Charity or Organization is a Scam: A Guide from The Sanctuary Network

Donating to a charity is a meaningful way to make a difference in the world, but unfortunately, not all organizations operate with honesty and integrity. Scam charities prey on people's goodwill, using emotional appeals to siphon funds that never reach those in need. As part of our mission at The Sanctuary Network to ensure the safety and well-being of orphans and vulnerable children, we want to help you identify the signs of fraudulent organizations.

Here's a guide to ensure your donations and support go to legitimate, impactful causes:

## 1. Research the Organization

Before donating, take time to research the charity or organization. Look for the following:

- **Website and Contact Information:**  
A legitimate organization will have a professional website with clear contact details, including an address, phone number, and email.
- **Mission and Programs:**  
The organization should clearly state its mission, goals, and the specific programs it supports.
- **EIN or Registration Number:**  
For U.S.-based charities, look for an Employer Identification Number (EIN), which indicates tax-exempt status. For example, The Sanctuary Network's EIN is 99-0827854.

## 2. Verify Registration and Accreditation

- **IRS Tax-Exempt Status:**  
Use the IRS Tax Exempt Organization Search Tool to verify if a charity is registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.
- **Charity Watchdog Sites:**  
Websites like Charity Navigator, GuideStar, or BBB Wise Giving Alliance provide ratings and detailed information about nonprofit organizations.

- **Local Registration:**  
For international organizations, check with the country's relevant charity regulatory body to ensure proper registration.

### 3. Examine Financial Transparency

Legitimate charities are transparent about how they use funds. Look for:

- **Annual Reports:**  
These should detail income, expenses, and how donations are allocated.
- **Administrative Costs:**  
Beware of organizations that spend an unusually high percentage of funds on administrative or fundraising expenses instead of programs.
- **Clear Donation Process:**  
Reputable charities provide clear and secure donation methods, avoiding vague or suspicious payment requests.

### 4. Watch for Red Flags

Be cautious if you notice any of the following:

- **Pressure to Donate Immediately:**  
Scammers often use urgency to prevent you from asking questions or doing research.
- **Unsolicited Contact:**  
Be wary of unsolicited emails, phone calls, or social media messages asking for donations.
- **Vague or Overly Emotional Appeals:**  
Scammers often provide little detail about how donations will be used and rely on guilt-inducing stories.
- **No Proof of Impact:**  
A legitimate charity will showcase its impact through testimonials, reports, or updates on completed projects.

## 5. Ask Questions

If in doubt, don't hesitate to reach out to the organization directly. Ask:

- How will my donation be used?
- Can you provide proof of your impact?
- Are you affiliated with other reputable organizations?

Legitimate organizations, like The Sanctuary Network, are more than happy to answer questions and provide evidence of their work.

## 6. Check Reviews and Testimonials

Look for reviews and testimonials from people who have interacted with the organization. Social media platforms, Google reviews, and charity forums can provide valuable insights.

## 7. Trust Your Instincts

If something feels off, it's better to err on the side of caution. Scammers often rely on people ignoring their gut instincts.

### How The Sanctuary Network Protects Donors

At The Sanctuary Network, we ensure transparency and accountability in all our programs. As a 501(c)(3) organization, we are committed to creating a framework of quality care worldwide for orphans and vulnerable children. Our Affiliate Program ensures that only trusted, registered organizations join our network.

By following these steps, you can confidently support charities that make a real difference. For more information about our programs or to verify an organization through our Affiliate Network, visit [www.sanctuarynet.org](http://www.sanctuarynet.org).

Together, we can create a safer, more impactful world for those in need.