



Know Before You Give is a public education campaign by a coalition of social service agencies, residents and downtown businesses designed to curb panhandling and encourage donations to social services that can provide help for those in need. By giving donations directly to a social service agency, you can help do so much more than by handing your money to a person who is panhandling. Plus our social service network and community are strengthened. Reducing panhandling improves the perception of public safety and the vibrancy of our community.



Did You Know

You can give responsibly by giving to a social service agency and not giving directly to a person who panhandles.

Giving responsibly means donating money to an organization that will use your dollar more effectively than giving directly to an individual. These organizations are able to address specific needs rather than encouraging the behavior of panhandling. Deep down we all want to be able to offer help to those in need. The question is, “How can I give in a way that will truly help?”



Did You Know

On average, a person in need can find multiple free meals every day. Many times people who panhandle express their need for food. While your initial response may be to give the person some change to buy them a hot meal, there are many wonderful resources located in the downtown area specifically for people who are hungry. Knowbeforeyougive.org has a list of meals providers.



Did You Know

In the downtown area, there are only 400 shelter beds per night. A lack of transitional and permanent supportive housing increases the demand on shelter beds.

There are an estimated 3,500 to 4,000 people who are experiencing homelessness right now in Austin, yet there are only 400 emergency beds. Your donation to social service agencies can help with more shelter beds, and longer-term housing options so that those in need have a safe place to sleep at night. When a person is asking you for money for a hotel for the night, think about how many beds that single donation to a social service agency could create.



Did You Know

Your interactions with people who panhandle can truly make a difference. When a person who is panhandling approaches you, acknowledge them, but politely say “no” or “sorry.” Aggressive panhandling is illegal. If you feel threatened, call 911. Be compassionate. Whether it’s food, shelter, clothing or any number of needs, there is a social service agency that can assist those in need. We are all part of a community, and you can help your neighbors. Learn more about your social service agencies and know how your donation can provide assistance at knowbeforeyougive.org



Did You Know

We can curb aggressive panhandling by addressing its root causes. By addressing the root causes of individuals in need, we can create awareness of ongoing problems as well as prevention of these problems in the future. Social service agencies are able to understand and track the root causes – such as mental illness, disabilities, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, poverty and major life transitions – leading individuals to seek help. Social service agencies provide both immediate care as well as ongoing programs that deal with prevention and people who are undergoing major life transitions. By donating to social service agencies, Austin residents can reach more people today and help to expand care, programs and housing for our city’s neediest people. Giving directly to an individual bypasses their ability to reach, track and address these root causes as well as basic needs. By supporting social service agencies, we can help more people get off the streets.



Did You Know

Our community's safety and security are at risk.

The downtown area is a flourishing neighborhood where tens of thousands of people live, work and play every day. We need to provide safe and secure conditions for our visitors, our employees, our residents and those who are in desperate need of help in order for Austin to continue to thrive. We want to think of Austin as a walkable city with clean streets and a friendly community. Panhandling can invoke feelings of intimidation, both during the day and night to visitors, workers and residents. The clients of the social service agencies who are truly seeking help need to feel that they are doing so in a safe environment. We never want those in need to feel unable to request the help they need. The definition of community includes the safety and benefit of the greater good. We can all benefit from donating directly to social service agencies.



Did You Know

Our Partners

ARCH/Front Steps

Caritas of Austin

Salvation Army

Downtown Cluster of Congregations and Social Services

Downtown Austin Alliance

Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association

Texas Association of Realtors

Old Pecan Street Association

Building Owners and Managers Association

Austin Hotel & Lodging Association

Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau

Sixth Street Austin Association