

# UNITED IS THE WAY

## TRAINING GUIDE



**UNITED  
WAY**  
Mid-South

VOLUNTEER





**TOMEKA HART WIGGINTON**

President and CEO  
United Way of the Mid-South

As a native Memphian, I've witnessed both the region's beauty and its struggles. The Mid-South is filled with rich culture, strong people, and incredible potential, but we cannot ignore the individuals and families working hard and still struggling to make ends meet. The issue is not distant—it's right here in our neighborhoods, schools, and even our own families.

At United Way, we are building the collaborations needed to make systemic change to help all families thrive.

Together, we can be catalysts for change. We can be the reason families are able to build financial mobility, save for tomorrow, and embrace their future. Our collective impact can reshape the future of the Mid-South.

Thank you for helping us create a community where everyone has the chance to build a brighter future.

Let's get to work and make a Thriving Community Together!

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Tomeka H. Wigginton".

**Tomeka Hart Wigginton**

President & CEO  
United Way of the Mid-South



# UNITED IS THE WAY TO A THRIVING COMMUNITY

WE'RE MORE THAN FUNDRAISERS.  
WE'RE GAMECHANGERS.

We know the tough issues in our community and, with your help, we can solve them. United Way of the Mid-South unites donors, volunteers, companies, nonprofits, and community leaders to help change the lives of those in need.

**We are making Memphis and the Mid-South  
a better place to live and work.**

United Way of the Mid-South is helping people build the life they dream of for themselves and for their families. In the Mid-South, up to 50% of families are living in poverty or working hard, but still struggling to make ends meet. United Way is here to help!

Through direct services to help families and through support for our agency partners, United Way has helped for thousands of our neighbors across the Mid-South.

# WHEN PEOPLE THRIVE, COMMUNITIES THRIVE

## MAKING A COMMUNITY IMPACT

**United Way of the Mid-South is the region's public charitable grant-making foundation.**

Donations to United Way are an investment in the lives of adults and children across our eight-county service area as we respond to local needs and address the issues facing our neighbors who are struggling to make ends meet.

By investing in United Way, you are helping to deliver programs for communities across the Mid-South. United Way of the Mid-South provides direct services to families in need, as well as support for local nonprofits in the form of financial support, partnerships, capacity building, professional development, cross-sector convening, and back-office support to help local agencies do more to help families in their communities. United Way invests in communities to help families thrive.

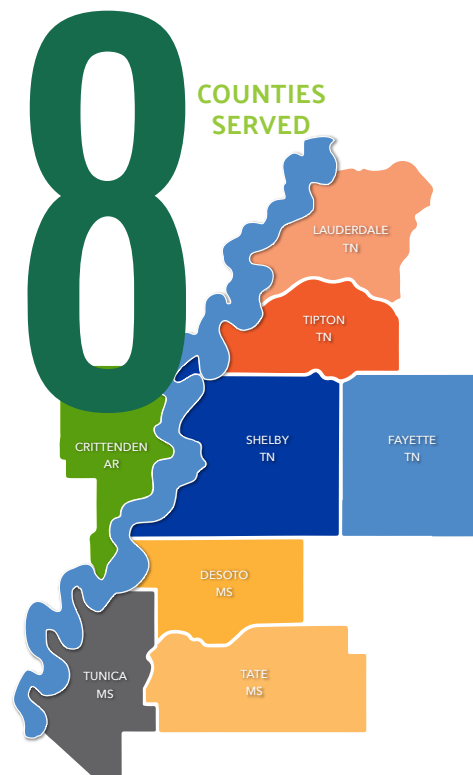
In your role as a volunteer you are a leader in helping United Way deliver on its mission. With your help, our workplace campaigns, fundraisers, and community events provide an easy and fun way to support United Way and invest in the people and communities of the Mid-South.

A contribution to United Way of the Mid-South is an investment in people. Donations can be made through payroll deduction arranged through workplace giving campaigns, or with a direct online one-time contribution, or recurring credit card charge.

**Leadership Giving** - gifts of \$500 or more - drive community impact. Leadership givers are connected with other like-minded philanthropists and enjoy opportunities to deepen their engagement with United Way and the people we serve.

**Tocqueville Society** members contribute \$10,000 or more in total gifts through the United Way of the Mid-South workplace campaign or through direct contributions. Tocqueville Society members are our community's transformational philanthropists. Society members are recognized by United Way and entitled to special benefits and invitations when United Way is notified of the total pledge(s) made.

*(Please note: workplace campaigns managed by third party services do not report total giving to United Way, and may affect recognition of valued donations made. Please contact your Workplace Campaign Development Manager to assure full donation acknowledgement.)*



### **Your gift creates an impact in your county.**

The donations you make to United Way of the Mid-South support programs, partnerships, and agencies across our eight-county service area in: Fayette, Lauderdale, Shelby and Tipton counties in Tennessee; Crittenden county in Arkansas; and DeSoto, Tunica and Tate counties in Mississippi.

NEARLY  
**50%**  
of Mid-South  
households are  
struggling to  
make ends meet.



## WOMEN UNITED

**Women United** is a new fundraising support group for United Way of the Mid-South. Women leaders in community, business, and government across our eight-county service area are stepping up to make an impact in the lives of women and children. Women United (WU) is a dynamic leadership group, uniting diverse women across the region to fight poverty and support families in need. Through giving, volunteering, advocating, and networking, members help drive meaningful change in their communities.

As part of a global network of over 70,000 women in 145 groups across six countries, WU members gain access to exclusive social, educational, and volunteer opportunities. Women United empowers women to reach their full potential and creates opportunities for families to thrive. With a \$1,500 annual contribution, members invest in both local solutions and a broader global mission, proving that when women support each other, they are truly unstoppable.

Women United membership information will be mailed to donors who make a gift of \$1,500 or more each year to United Way of the Mid-South. This is an incredible opportunity to join a dynamic network of women and forge change in the community.

## ALICE

**ALICE** is an acronym for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed, and represents the growing number of families who are working hard and still unable to afford the basics necessities. ALICE may be a relative or friend. You may be ALICE. As cashiers, waiters, child care providers, and other members of our essential workforce, ALICE earns just above the Federal Poverty Level but less than what it costs to make ends meet. These struggling households are forced to make impossible choices each day. While such hardship is pervasive, households of color are disproportionately ALICE.

ALICE also represents the data reshaping the dialogue on financial hardship, and a grassroots movement that is picking up steam across the Mid-South, led by United Way of the Mid-South.



[unitedforalice.org](https://unitedforalice.org)



# FREE TAX PREP

## DEPEND ON PEOPLE YOU CAN TRUST.

Too often at tax filing time, predatory tax-preparers take advantage of those who need help the most, charging high fees or a percentage of refunds.

United Way of the Mid-South offers a **FREE** alternative with IRS-certified and trained tax-preparers. Low- and moderate-income households are eligible for **Free Tax Prep** and can take full advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Child Tax Credit, and other credits and deductions.

Last year, United Way of the Mid-South's Free Tax Prep filed nearly 9,500 returns and generated \$12 million in refunds for Mid-Southerners and saved filers an estimated \$2.5 million in fees. The average return per household was \$1300.

United Way hosts over 20 Free Tax Prep sites at locations across the region. Some locations offer translation or bilingual services, and a mobile site is available to increase accessibility. Information about Free Tax Prep services, site locations, and hours of operation is available by calling 2-1-1 or on our website.

You can volunteer to help make Free Tax Prep possible across the Mid-South. We rely on volunteers to serve as greeters, screeners, and tax preparers. No experience is necessary and the training is free.



[uwmidsouth.org/free-tax-prep](http://uwmidsouth.org/free-tax-prep)



## NEED HELP? DIAL 2-1-1 powered by United Way of the Mid-South

The Library Information Center at the Memphis Public Library, in conjunction with United Way of the Mid-South, powers **2-1-1**, the regional community information and referral resource. 2-1-1 maintains a large, comprehensive database of health and human services organizations, government agencies and volunteer groups that are available to the public across the Mid-South.

Memphis Public Libraries is expanding its Linc-211 services to include licensed social workers to serve the community better. Two full-time social workers and outreach specialists will be based at five Memphis Public Library Branches around the city. Customers who need assistance can also access services at any Memphis Library location by calling 211 and setting up an appointment at their local library branch.

Social Workers and outreach specialists will be at Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library, Whitehaven, East Shelby, Hollywood, and Raleigh from 10 AM to 6 PM Monday thru Friday. The service is free to anyone who needs assistance.

### Sample concerns when 2-1-1 has free and immediate information for help:

- You are worried about the gas shutoff notice you just received.
- You have been caring for your wife, who has Alzheimer's. You are exhausted and need assistance and respite.
- Your employee is frequently missing work; she needs affordable, reliable child care.
- You need counseling for your 12 year-old son who is not going to school regularly.
- You have questions about eligibility for Food Stamps.
- Your client needs information about available transportation for the disabled.
- You are a guidance counselor searching for a parenting course for a teen father.



# DRIVING THE DREAM®

## DRIVING THE DREAM®

### HELPING MID-SOUTHERNERS THRIVE

United Way of the Mid-South has built **Driving The Dream®**, a network of over 100 agencies and community partners, to help individuals and families connect to all the resources they need to meet their immediate and long-term goals. Driving The Dream® helps families in poverty and working families struggling to make ends meet, move toward financial security and a brighter future.

Financial hardship extends well beyond those living below the federal poverty level. According to the 2026 State of ALICE in Tennessee Report, 17% of Shelby County households suffer poverty, and 29% are **ALICE** (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). Combined, 46% of Shelby County households live below the ALICE Threshold, meaning they cannot consistently afford basic household necessities, such as housing, food, transportation, health care, and technology, despite many being employed. These workers, often in sectors like distribution, hospitality, and healthcare, struggle to keep their own households from financial ruin, while keeping our community running.

Driving The Dream® is the power behind the community's network of services, connecting people, agencies, public assistance, and neighborhood organizations. Help with housing, utility assistance, job training, child care, and more is available by calling 211.

[dtd.uwmidsouth.org](http://dtd.uwmidsouth.org)

211



## BENEFIT KITCHEN

gateway to government benefits  
— childcare · nutrition · healthcare —

text **BENEFITS**  
to **211211**

**BENEFIT KITCHEN**

CONNECTING TENNESSEANS  
WITH THE PUBLIC BENEFITS  
YOU QUALIFY FOR.

**Benefit Kitchen** is offered by United Way as a way to quickly connect you with Tennessee's public benefits that you qualify for, including:

- Food Stamps / SNAP
- Head Start
- TennCare
- Child Tax Credit
- School Meals, and much more!

This easy text service is free, confidential, and can save you money, time, and effort. Text **BENEFITS** to **211-211** and, after a few short questions, you will immediately receive notice of tax credits and benefits you're eligible for, along with links to apply for each benefit. Find the benefits you deserve for FREE.





## SINGLECARE® DISCOUNT PRESCRIPTION CARDS

YOUR HEALTH IS OUR PRIORITY!

**SingleCare®** is a FREE prescription savings service that provides consistently low prices. SingleCare card can be used even by people with health insurance plan prescription drug coverage. Savings are automatic by simply presenting the card at the pharmacy of choice. SingleCare® has helped Mid-Southerners save millions of dollars on prescriptions. Cards are available through United Way of the Mid-South or at <https://www.singlecare.com/>

**No monthly fees. No cost. No catch.**



[singlecare.com](https://www.singlecare.com/)



## STUFF THE BUS AND CORPORATE ENGAGEMENT

**Stuff the Bus**, United Way's signature engagement initiative, is a community-wide supply drive that invites companies and individuals to donate much-needed school supplies. These donations will help Mid-South students and teachers start the school year off right, equipped with the tools they need to succeed.

The drive runs throughout July, concluding with a culminating community-wide drop-off day. United Way will supply companies and organizations interested in participating with a collection receptacle to invite employees, family, and friends to donate. Individuals may drop off during the month of July at one of our participating locations throughout the Mid-South.

This is a wonderful opportunity for companies, churches, and organizations to support their local schools, help families defray the cost of school supplies, and give students the tools to succeed!

United Way of the Mid-South hosts other community events and is available to connect local companies with meaningful volunteer engagement opportunities.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

There are questions we often encounter about United Way of the Mid-South, our mission in the community, our grant-making, and how we raise money. Questions provide an opportunity to provide additional information and build trust. People are willing to support a fundraising campaign, volunteer for an event, or advocate for United Way among friends and colleagues if they have been provided transparent and compelling answers to their questions.

## WHAT DOES UNITED WAY DO?

United Way of the Mid-South is helping individuals and families thrive by providing critical services, supporting capacity-building for local nonprofit agencies, facilitating financial support for community services, and networking programs and services together to improve people's lives. We're creating lasting, community-level changes to help local individuals and families enjoy a better quality of life. Our strategies include leading cross-sector collaborations, advocacy for public policy changes, and funding direct services and programs provided by human service partner agencies.

## WHERE DOES UNITED WAY FOCUS?

United Way of the Mid-South is focused on supporting families and the nonprofit support system, as they build a brighter future for themselves and their children. With nearly 50% of Mid-Southerners struggling to make ends meet, United Way programs and partners address emergency assistance, housing, child care, healthcare, and more. We work with local nonprofits, the public sector, corporate and private funders, and caring individuals to create a thriving community.

## WHY IS UNITED WAY THE BEST WAY TO MAKE THE BIGGEST DIFFERENCE?

United Way has the scope, expertise and influence to bring together hundreds of human service agencies, government entities, corporations, private foundations, and dedicated volunteers around a common vision of creating maximum impact in our community. We are trusted by our partners and the community because we ensure effectiveness, transparency, efficiency and accountability in our work.

## WHY SHOULD I GIVE TO UNITED WAY?

Your gift makes an impact on your community's most significant challenges. It supports vital services and programs available to people in the Mid-South. To ensure that donations are well-spent for the most critical needs in our community. With a focused approach and a reputation for excellence, we deliver collective impact that is larger, broader, more holistic and sustainable.

## HOW DOES UNITED WAY DEMONSTRATE ITS ACCOUNTABILITY?

United Way of the Mid-South is the public charitable foundation in the Mid-South. United Way is publicly accountable and transparent with annual public filings. United Way's latest IRS Form 990 and annual independent audits can be found on the organization's website. Additionally, United Way is assessed and scored for accountability by independent entities, such as Charity Navigator and LiveGive Mid-South, where the ratings and scores are publicly available. The integral involvement of knowledgeable volunteers who live and work in the Mid-South and our Board of Directors provide continuous public oversight and accountability for United Way.

## WHAT ARE UNITED WAY'S OVERHEAD COSTS?

United Way of the Mid-South's operating overhead is 18%. Even though it clearly takes people to raise millions of dollars to support scores of individual nonprofit agencies, and to operate the backbone functions of United Way's grant-making and networking, this still means that 82¢ of every dollar raised is invested in the community. This level of overhead is rated very highly by entities like GuideStar and Charity Navigator.

## CAN I GET HELP FROM A UNITED WAY AGENCY? CAN ANYONE?

Yes. The vital services, funded by United Way and provided by United Way agencies, are available to everyone. In some cases, specific services - not funded by contributions to United Way - at certain agencies may be limited based on government or other eligibility requirements.

## DO UNITED WAY SUPPORTED AGENCIES CHARGE FEES FOR THEIR SERVICES?

Undesignated funds, those donated directly to support United Way's operations, fuel support to local nonprofits, the direct service programs offered by United Way, and the collective impact function that drives community change. United Way doesn't charge a service fee for funds designated to other organizations, even though United Way staff are responsible for receiving, accounting for and disbursing those funds.

## DO YOU HAVE A SERVICE FEE FOR THOSE DONATIONS DESIGNATED TO AGENCIES?

No. Undesignated funds fuel United Way's grant-making to scores of agencies we support for the greatest good. However, United Way doesn't charge a service fee for funds designated to other organizations, even though United Way staff are responsible for receiving, accounting for and disbursing those funds.

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## WHY NOT JUST GIVE DIRECTLY TO THE AGENCIES?

There are several reasons why United Way is one of the best ways to give to charity:

- United Way's community-based oversight assures donors that the nonprofits you support through United Way adhere to sound fiscal policies, provide needed services, and achieve measurable results.
- Giving through United Way reduces costly and time-consuming fundraising efforts for agencies, allowing them to spend more time helping people in need.
- Giving through United Way supports a network of agencies working together to combat poverty, creating a coordinated network of support that delivers measurable results.
- Giving together—in a United Way—with thousands of other donors creates a far greater community impact, improving the lives of Mid-Southerners.
- Many companies offer payroll deduction to divide donors' gifts into smaller donations, allowing donors to give much more over time to support scores of effective nonprofits across the Mid-South.

**Together, we can do more good than any one of us can do alone.**

## HOW ARE UNITED WAY AGENCIES ACCOUNTABLE TO UNITED WAY DONORS?

Every United Way agency meets these high standards to assure you of quality and efficiency:

- Recognized by the IRS as a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization.
- Governed by a volunteer board of directors.
- Provides for a human care need and measures those results.
- Audited regularly by an independent CPA firm.
- Submits annual financial statements.
- Operates at a reasonable cost.

## DO THE AGENCIES GET GOVERNMENT FUNDING?

Many agencies receive government support, primarily through grants. In fact, United Way funding is often used by agencies to generate matching government funds with agency resources. However, shrinking government dollars available to agencies can threaten their financial stability, which means that privately funded sources like United Way are more important than ever.

## IF I GIVE TO MY CHURCH, WHY DO I NEED TO GIVE TO UNITED WAY?

Most people who give to charitable organizations also give to their church, synagogue, mosque, temple or place of worship. Studies have shown that people who participate in faith-based worship on a regular basis also give more to charities and are more likely to volunteer. By giving to United Way, you are supporting community impact that touches thousands of people - including many Mid-Southerners of faith - in a variety of ways.

## I KNOW SOMEONE WHO ASKED FOR HELP AND DIDN'T GET IT - WHAT'S GOING ON?

United Way helps ensure that programs throughout the community have the resources they need to serve people and address challenges. Needs always exceed the dollars available to meet them; unfortunately, some people don't get the help they may desperately need. United Way agencies served people in the Mid-South hundreds of thousands of times last year. If more people give, waiting lists can be reduced and programs can be expanded to serve more people with agency resources. However, shrinking government dollars available to agencies can threaten their financial stability, which means that privately funded sources like United Way are more important than ever.

## DOES THE MONEY STAY LOCAL?

Yes. All donations to United Way of the Mid-South support services provided in the eight-county region. Contributions support direct services, such as Free Tax Prep, as well as the agency support and capacity building of partner nonprofits.

## HOW CAN PEOPLE PARTICIPATE?

When people thrive, communities thrive. Anyone can support United Way of the Mid-South with a monetary donation, volunteer service, or partnership.

United Way of the Mid-South received a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator. This designation means that we have shown our donors and constituents that we are accountable, transparent and financially healthy.





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