

## **Washington Attorney General Dings Dialogue Direct for Deceptive Donation Tactics**

### **Local News**

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SEATTLE - If you're running a for-profit company that passes itself off as a "humanitarian" charity while operating outside of clear, legal boundaries, you might not want to solicit staff members of the Washington State Attorney General's Office. That's exactly what happened, according to attorneys at the AG's Consumer Protection Division, who today filed a complaint against Dialogue Direct, Inc. (DDI), a New York-based company that offers face-to-face solicitors for hire. According to the complaint, DDI is not legally registered to solicit charitable contributions in Washington state. The AG's Office also accuses DDI of failing to make legally required disclosures to potential contributors and giving the strong impression that its paid solicitors are volunteers or employees of a registered charitable organization working on behalf of children.

"The state has pretty clear rules for anyone who wants to raise money for charity: tell people who you work for, where your operation is based, and who they can call to make sure you're on the up-and-up," said Assistant Attorney General Shannon Smith. "Dialogue Direct is breaking those rules and misleading those who might think they're supporting a worthy cause." Smith added that the AG's office has received complaints about the out-of-state company and that staff members from the AG's Office have been approached by DDI solicitors. Those employees noticed that the supposed charitable fundraisers were not clearly providing the Secretary of State's Office contact information as required by laws governing solicitors. After several written requests from the Secretary of State's Office, DDI submitted their registration materials on Tuesday, July 21. The Attorney General's Office has asked King County Superior Court to declare that DDI violated the state's Consumer Protection Act, which prohibits unfair and deceptive practices, and violated the state's Charitable Solicitations Act. It's also asking for a permanent injunction preventing DDI from engaging in unlawful conduct, and for civil penalties of up to \$2,000 per violation. The Attorney General's Office acts in concert with the Secretary of State's Office to crack down on fraudulent charitable solicitors and to inform the public about questionable organizations that pose as charities. In May, the two offices teamed up to tackle "[badge charities](#)" that improperly suggest they aid police, firefighters and veterans. In June, the AG's Office issued a [consumer alert](#) about Pierce County businesses claiming to help the homeless while failing to register as actual charities or being able to show that funds collected are used for charitable purposes. In addition to listing officially registered charitable solicitors, the Secretary of State's Office publishes an annual report on commercial fundraisers that reveals the percentage of donations they return to their charity clients. It is available online at [www.secstate.wa.gov/charities](http://www.secstate.wa.gov/charities).