



Tips for Handling Panhandlers

Be aware, alert, confident, and prepared to act. You are entitled to your space, and do not have to be intimidated or harassed.



Do not give money to panhandlers!

Do not give panhandlers money; there are better ways to assist the homeless. Do not be fooled; food, shelter, and assistance are available to those in need. Panhandling for drugs or alcohol is very common. Walk purposefully and with confidence. Give the appearance that you are aware of your surroundings and what is going on around you. Acknowledge a panhandler with a nod, and answer the request for money by saying “no”. Then walk away. Do not be angry or feel guilty.

While in a vehicle, do not roll down your window or engage in conversation with those standing on the side of the road panhandling. Think about your liability if a panhandler gets struck by a vehicle while coming to you for money.

Some of the Ploys panhandlers’ use:

My wife is sick (or pregnant) and I need money for...
I’m out of gas, can you spare some change...
I need money for an important phone call...

Imagination is their only limitation

Note: If you wish to give money, have it out and ready to give. Do not go into wallets, pockets or purses in front of panhandlers.

It is not illegal to solicit people for money (Aggressive Panhandling is a violation of law), but anyone who feels threatened, annoyed, or intimidated should call the police as soon as possible. Give a description of the panhandler, location it occurred, time of occurrence and direction of travel when the panhandler left. Be willing to assist the police with prosecution if necessary.

Emergencies: 9-1-1 Non-emergencies: 645-4545. For further information call the Columbus, Ohio Division of Police, Strategic Response Bureau 645-4610