



Local cell phone stores are the number one place to find and collect high-value used cell phones. When cell phone users extend their contract or get a new phone, stores typically transfer the data from the old phone to the new one, leaving the user with an old phone they don't really have any use for. These are typically the highest value phones because they are newer. Also, most cell phone stores (particularly those that are run locally) don't have an option for recycling and are happy to support a good cause.



National Institute of Senior Centers



1. Find the best cell phone stores

To find wireless provider stores look in your local yellow pages under the listing 'Cellular.' Try to nail down at least two to three stores in your area. The more stores you can get, the more money you can raise for your senior center. Look for wireless cell phone providers which have more than one service to choose from, i.e.: Verizon, Cingular, AT&T, T-mobile, etc. These stores are usually small locally owned chains who do not currently collect cell phones. They're your best bet!

2. Talk to the store manager in person

Tell the store manager: "Our local senior center is raising money for [your cause], and one of the ways we are raising money is by collecting old cell phones. I was wondering if you could help us out by telling your employees to ask customers for their old phone, and just put the phones in a box behind the counter. I'll come by on the last day of every month and pick up the phones."

If they say 'no':

- No, we already collect for another charity.
Answer: "We're not a charity, we are your senior center in your local neighborhood that needs help. Let's keep the money that can be raised right here in the neighborhood."
- No, our corporate office does not allow us to recycle or give away collected phones.
Answer: "We're not a charity, we are your senior center in your local neighborhood who need help. Let's keep the money that can be raised right here in the neighborhood."
- No, we don't ask our customers to turn in phones.
Answer: "That's perfect, would you please start telling your employees to ask customers who come in for new activations and upgrades if they would like recycle there phone for our local senior center? The money goes directly to _____."
- No, we keep the phones around for spare parts.
Answer: "Would you mind helping out your local senior center for the next few months with the phones that you're not using for parts?"

3. Provide a process and timeline

The process for collecting cell phones is incredibly easy, so make it as easy as possible for the store manager to say 'yes'. All they have to do is:

- Have employees ask every customer who is upgrading if they would be willing to donate their phone to support their local senior center. Provide printed posters for the store windows and most printed posters for employees to use to communicate the program to customers.
- Tell them to use any sturdy cardboard box they have lying around to collect the phones. It's usually best to put the box behind the countertop within easy reach of employees.
- Set up a day each month when you'll stop by to pick up the collected phones. Bring your own cardboard box to transport the phones, so the store can keep their box behind the counter and continue collecting high-value cell phones.

4. Offer support tools

That's the best part - you really don't need anything to collect high-value cell phones from your local store. However, one way of easily communicating the program to store managers and employees is to bring printed copies of a poster. Offer a color-printed poster to hang in the store window and more color copies for employees to use to communicate the program to customers.

5. Follow up to collect your phones

Call or visit the store manager one week after your first visit to touch base and make sure that they have started the collection program. Then identify one day each month when you will come by to pick up phones. Make sure to bring extra copies of your poster in case they have run out.