

**UNITED WAY OF CONNECTICUT**

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# PRESS RELEASE

## **For Immediate Release: State Residents have been Dialing 2-1-1 for 10 Years!**

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United Way 2-1-1 is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as the number to call for all health and human services referrals. On February 11, 1999, Connecticut became the first state to implement a statewide 2-1-1 system. 2-1-1 had previously been known as Infoline, which was established in 1976 with an 800 number. It was thought that 2-1-1 would be an easier number to remember and would thus make information more accessible. In 1999, 2-1-1 received close to 200,000 calls, an increase of 50,000 calls from 1998. 2-1-1 now typically handles over 300,000 calls annually. The most frequently requested services are heat and utility assistance, housing and shelter, mental health care, substance abuse services and financial assistance.

During the past 10 years, United Way 2-1-1 has served as a model for other states that have established similar systems. United Way 2-1-1 also regularly assists other 2-1-1 operations by handling overflow calls or sending call specialists to assist in the aftermath of natural disasters. Call specialists assisted in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and most recently after Hurricane Ike devastated parts of Texas last year.

2-1-1 has developed the state's most comprehensive, continually updated database of human service resources. This provides the foundation for mailing lists, and a searchable database on our web site, [www.211ct.org](http://www.211ct.org). The collection of data on caller requests for services provides a valuable resource by presenting an overview of the problems facing Connecticut residents.

Nationwide, the 2-1-1 phone number serves over 232 million Americans – over 77% of the entire population – through 244 active 2-1-1 systems covering all or part of 47 states, Washington DC and Puerto Rico. An ongoing count of calls received by 2-1-1 systems nationwide has recorded over 13.5 million calls in 2008.

An effort is afoot to make 2-1-1 available nationwide. Former New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, introduced a bill to “facilitate nationwide availability of 2-1-1 telephone service.” Both the Senate and House versions of the bill have been referred to committees for consideration. The bill would provide some federal funding for 2-1-1.

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The mission of the United Way of Connecticut is to help meet the needs of Connecticut residents by providing information, education and connection to services. UWC furthers its mission by providing 24/7 toll-free call center access to health and human services information through 2-1-1; specialized services in child care, child development and disabilities, and HUSKY health insurance; and by collaborating with local United Ways and Connecticut State agencies and elected officials. For more information about United Way of Connecticut, visit [www.ctunitedway.org](http://www.ctunitedway.org).