

# PRESS RELEASE

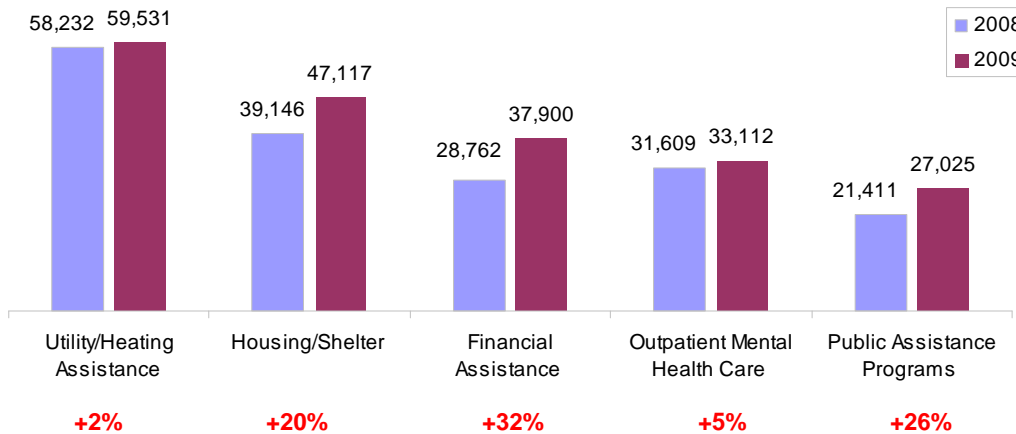
## United Way 2-1-1 Handles Close to Half a Million Requests for Information in 2009

During these challenging economic times, it is critical that people know where to turn for help. In Connecticut, for over 30 years, residents have been able to find that help through United Way 2-1-1, a centralized information and referral service funded by the State of Connecticut and Connecticut United Ways and administered by the United Way of Connecticut. A call to United Way 2-1-1 gets people connected to the health and human services assistance they need. Now more than ever, this is proving to be a critical resource for state residents who are struggling to make ends meet.

All told, in 2009, 2-1-1, handled over 360,000 calls offering close to half a million requests for service, an increase of 8 percent and 6 percent respectively over the previous year. The website received over 525,000 visits, an increase of 46 percent over the same time period.

More and more, callers seek help with basic needs such as paying for utilities, finding housing, financial assistance, food resources and public assistance programs. In 2009, referrals for basic needs services rose, in some cases dramatically, and accounted for 41 percent of all referrals. The largest increases in referrals were for housing, financial assistance, and public assistance programs. Referrals for utility assistance topped the list but saw a lesser increase (Figure 1).

**Figure 1 – United Way 2-1-1 Top 5 Requests for Service Connecticut – 2008, 2009**



Source: United Way 2-1-1

Who tends to call 2-1-1? While 2-1-1 receives calls from people of all ages and income levels, in 2009, there was a striking increase in the number of callers who were homeless or unemployed. Calls from those who were homeless increased 27% over the previous year (15,200 in 2009 vs. 11,950 in 2008). Calls from those who were unemployed doubled to 20,000 in 2009. In addition, 26 percent of callers to 2-1-1 in 2009 were first time callers, likely indicating both an increase in visibility of 2-1-1 and an increase in the need for connection to services, including among middle income families.

In 2009, 2-1-1 received over 20,000 requests for information for food resources, similar to 2008. However, referrals for SNAP/Food Stamp benefits almost doubled in 2009; over 14,000 referrals were made for SNAP/Food Stamp assistance compared to 7,600 in 2008. Over 40 percent of callers to 2-1-1 seeking information on SNAP/Food Stamp benefits were first time callers to 2-1-1. Close to a quarter of the callers for this benefit are unemployed.

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The mission of United Way of Connecticut is to help meet the needs of Connecticut residents by providing information, education, and connection to services. United Way of Connecticut furthers its mission by providing 24/7 toll-free call center access to health and human services information through United Way 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) or call Maria Dynia at 860-571-7215.