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PRESS RELEASE

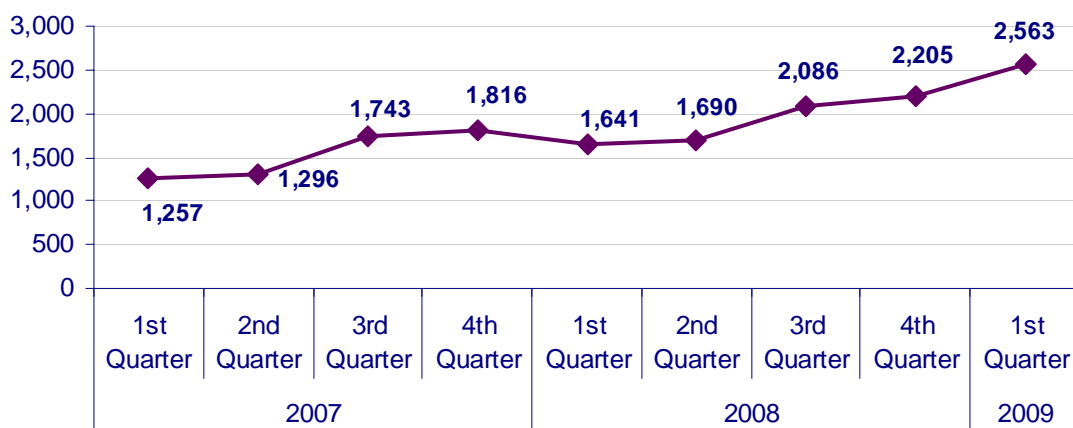
For Immediate Release:

More CT Residents Need Help Paying for Food; 2-1-1 Responds

May 20, 2009

United Way 2-1-1 is experiencing a steady increase in the number of requests for information about SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), the long-time assistance program formerly known as Food Stamps. In the first quarter of 2009, 2-1-1 received over 2,500 requests for information, an increase of 41% over the previous quarter. This increase comes as the economy continues to decline, unemployment continues to increase and changes are made to SNAP benefits. 2-1-1 Call Specialists say many of the calls are from those who are seeking food assistance for the first time due to challenges caused by the economic downturn.

SNAP (Food Stamps) Requests for Service



Source: United Way 2-1-1

The Connecticut Department of Social Services (DSS), which administers SNAP, is also reporting a sharp increase in applications. Typically DSS receives 1,000 new applications per month; but in March, they received 3,000 new applications. Approximately 127,000 households are currently receiving SNAP benefits. Application filings are expected to continue to increase as the income-eligibility limits for SNAP are raised from 130% to 185% of the federal poverty level this summer. This increase means that a family of four can earn up to \$40,793 annually, an increase from the previous eligibility limit of \$28,665. Additionally, as part of the federal stimulus package, SNAP recipients are receiving an average of \$38 more per month.

SNAP benefits provide essential assistance to households that are struggling financially. According to a report from the US Department of Agriculture, only two-thirds of Connecticut's residents who are eligible for SNAP receive the benefit. Agencies, such as United Way 2-1-1, Foodshare and End Hunger Connecticut! continue to make concerted efforts to connect residents with SNAP benefits. As part of its effort to assist residents with information and referrals, callers to 2-1-1 who are seeking various types of assistance are routinely screened for SNAP eligibility as well as for other basic needs services including housing, clothing and utility assistance. Overall, requests for information and referrals related to basic needs make up a third of all requests. In the first quarter of 2009, these basic needs requests increased 21% over the previous quarter.

The 2-1-1 Navigator, United Way of Connecticut's online benefits screening tool, is also available to assist residents and human services providers understand whether they or their clients may qualify for SNAP and for many other state and Federal benefit programs. Visit www.211ct.org to access the 2-1-1 Navigator.

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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.