PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release: United Way 2-1-1 Disaster Preparedness Drill Leverages National and International Partnerships

Connecticut’s United Way 2-1-1 and seven other 2-1-1 partners in the United States and Canada conducted a pilot Disaster Preparedness Exercise on September 5 as part of the 2-1-1 Disaster Support Collective. The goal of the Collective is to leverage the talent, expertise and technology of partners across the nation in order to provide back up support, and high quality service in the event of any emergency.

The exercise enacted a real-time scenario of a major earthquake hitting Southern California and impacting both Los Angeles and San Diego. During the drill, disaster information calls were routed to partner 2-1-1 providers in Los Angeles, San Diego, Connecticut, Houston, New York City, Tampa, Orlando, and Ontario, Canada to test the adequacy of the Collective’s systems and resource information sharing processes, to support overflow call coverage during disasters and to see if data collection systems can be properly coordinated.

"Connecticut’s United Way 2-1-1 is proud to be part of this Collective which leverages existing systems and technology," says Connecticut United Way 2-1-1 Senior Vice President Tanya Barrett. "The efforts of the Collective are voluntary and are being undertaken without any additional funding so they are designed to make use of what is already in place to meet immediate disaster response needs of the eight centers representing some of the most populous urban areas in the country."

The Disaster Preparedness Exercise coincides with September’s National Disaster Preparedness Month. The exercise also measured disaster resource gathering/reporting capabilities of Collective members, including efficiency of the telecommunications routing systems. The Collective will now meet to review the results of the exercise and will make recommendations for future planning efforts to improve the seamless logistics of disaster response.

The 2-1-1 Disaster Collective was established in March 2012 in response to a need to ensure sufficient overflow call support for 2-1-1 disaster-related calls. The Collective was designed to be supported by trained Information & Referral professionals from accredited 2-1-1 agencies with disaster call handling experience and adequate technological infrastructure. The eight 2-1-1 centers that make up the Collective represent highly urbanized areas prone to recurring natural disasters. By working collaboratively, the 2-1-1 Collective ensures adequate system redundancy and sufficient overflow call handling capacity that can be activated quickly and reliably.
The mission of United Way of Connecticut is to help meet the needs of Connecticut and its residents by providing information, education, and connection to services. United Way of Connecticut furthers its mission by providing 24/7 toll-free information and referral 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.

United Way of Connecticut provides services with support from the State of Connecticut and local United Ways.