Appropriations Committee Budget Hearing – Human Services
February 18, 2009

Testimony Presented by United Way of Connecticut

My name is Richard Porth. I serve as the CEO of United Way of Connecticut. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about United Way of Connecticut's role in the delivery of human services in Connecticut.

United Way of Connecticut (UWC) helps meet the needs of Connecticut residents by providing information, education, and connection to health and human services. We have been partners with the State of Connecticut for many years; and we are proud of our service together with the state government to tens of thousands of Connecticut residents through 2-1-1 information and referral services, 2-1-1 Child Care services, HUSKY Infoline, Child Development Infoline, and Care 4 Kids. All of these services are provided in partnership with the State government and primarily funded by the Department of Social Services. UWC also receives funding from the Department of Public Health, the Department of Developmental Services, the Department of Children and Families, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and the Children's Trust Fund.

Today I want to focus on 2-1-1, which is Connecticut's link for state residents to find the health and human services they need to weather difficult times and to make a better life. 2-1-1 is free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to all state residents regardless of income, language, or age. 2-1-1 uses a regularly updated computerized database with information on approximately 5,000 public and non-profit health and human service providers, 48,000 different services, and over 4,400 licensed child care providers. During the last fiscal year, 2-1-1 handled more than 443,000 service requests and recorded more than 798,000 searches in our online databases. We refer people to a range of human services from utilities and housing and food to financial assistance and more. We also record those requests in the aggregate to provide reports to inform government and nonprofit leaders on the level of need for various types of human services.

In recent years, 2-1-1 has continued to meet the growing need among Connecticut residents while receiving level state support, because we understand the budget pressures that state leaders must deal with, especially during these tough economic times. As a result, 2-1-1 has absorbed a 12 percent reduction in core staff capacity over the past five years. We have worked to maintain our frontline call specialist staff over this time by reducing other staff and by delaying investment in information technology and telecommunications infrastructure. But a cut in funding at this time will certainly impact our ability to respond to the growing need (including many first time callers, often middle income) during these difficult economic times.

State support for 2-1-1 ensures that more people will have an opportunity to access a range of health and human services for which the state provides millions of dollars of funding. It is a modest investment in the state's human services delivery infrastructure during these tough times when thousands of Connecticut residents need such help, many for the first time. Maintaining state support also allows UWC to continue as a strong partner for state government, responding nimbly and professionally to state requests for help on specific projects which need quick follow through.

We do not seek additional funding during a time when state leaders must address a large projected budget deficit. We ask only that the state maintain support for 2-1-1 at the FY08 level to avoid debilitating frontline staff reductions in a vital system which is already over-burdened.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

Attachment: UWC 2-1-1 Information Sheet

United Way of Connecticut 2-1-1 United Way

MISSION

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.

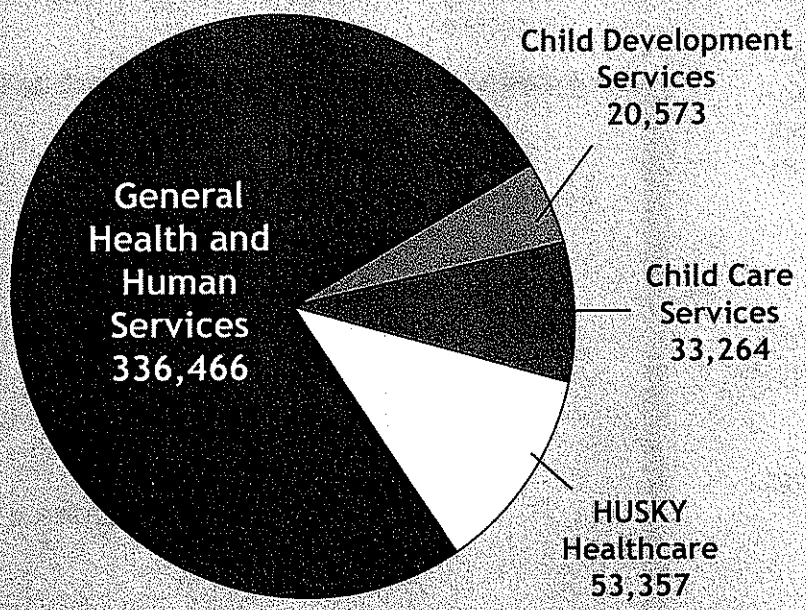
STATEWIDE CALL CENTER STATISTICS

Between July 1, 2007 and June 30, 2008, 2-1-1 handled more than 443,000 calls and saw more than 798,000 searches in our online databases. The number of referrals we provided was even greater, given that one caller may have multiple needs requiring multiple referrals. See the chart below for the number of calls 2-1-1 fielded this past fiscal year, and the table to the right for a listing of the top referrals provided.

Top 10 Referrals

	FY08	FY07
Utilities/Heat	42,528	35,231
Housing/Shelter	39,723	38,360
Information Services	36,714	36,427
Outpatient Mental Health Care	33,604	34,046
Substance Abuse Services	27,955	31,790
Financial Assistance	27,903	23,797
Legal Services	25,616	27,346
Public Assistance Programs	21,707	20,418
Food	17,662	14,656
Health Supportive Services	17,287	14,731

Number of Calls Received in FY08



Case Examples:

An East Hartford woman called because her utilities had been shut off and her 12-year-old granddaughter with asthma depends on an oxygen tank.

A mom from Stamford called with concerns about her 2 year old child's speech development.

A young mother from Waterbury was looking for a food pantry in the area so she could feed herself and her two children.

Parent calls for her child on HUSKY who needs an oral surgeon and transportation.

Contact Information: 1344 Silas Deane Highway | Rocky Hill, CT 06067 | 860.571.7500 | www.ctunitedway.org

HOW WE CAN HELP

2-1-1 United Way

Simply by dialing 2-1-1, a toll-free number throughout Connecticut, callers can reach knowledgeable, multilingual staff with questions on health and human services information, specialized services in child care, child development and disabilities and HUSKY health insurance. All 2-1-1 services are confidential.

2-1-1 HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

- Provides information and referrals to health and social service programs in your community and across Connecticut.
- Provides crisis intervention counseling to those in need.
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- Utilizes a computerized database of approximately 6,000 health and human service providers offering approximately 52,000 services and 4,433 licensed child care facilities.

2-1-1 CHILD CARE

- Assists parents and child care providers in locating appropriate resources and referrals.
- Educates parents/providers on quality indicators of early childhood programs.
- Maintains a database of all licensed and license exempt programs in Connecticut.

HUSKY INFOLINE

- Provides information on the HUSKY (Healthcare for Uninsured Kids and Youth and some parents too) program and assists families in obtaining HUSKY coverage.
- Assists families enrolled in the HUSKY program in obtaining healthcare services.

Visit us on the web at www.ctunitedway.org

CHILD DEVELOPMENT INFOLINE

- Serves as the access point for the Connecticut Birth to Three System, the Help Me Grow program, Early Childhood Special Education Services, and Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs program.
- Provides information, education and support on early intervention services, developmental concerns, managing challenging behaviors, parent education/ family support, special education, disability and health related issues.

CARE 4 KIDS

- Offers financial assistance to help low/ moderate income working parents pay for child care.

COMMUNITY RESULTS CENTER

- Provides research and analysis to inform local planning, measure community change, and increase citizen decision-making capacity to improve communities.
- Expertise in data collection, research, evaluation, and policy analysis
- Responsible for the overall marketing and outreach of 2-1-1.

2-1-1 is supported by the State of Connecticut and Connecticut United Ways.