

NEWS RELEASE

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2-1-1 calls reveal greatest need

Latest inquiries focus on utilities, rent, healthcare, foreclosure,

Providence, RI (Nov. 24, 2008) – *United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island*, an around-the-clock health and human services hotline staffed by information-referral professionals, reported today the majority of the nearly 11,500 calls in October and the first half of November have been about financial issues such as foreclosures, utilities, rent and healthcare.

Of the 11,429 calls to 2-1-1 in the past six weeks, 4,481 asked about utilities, 4,134 sought information on rental assistance; 2,978 had questions regarding healthcare services; and 531 inquired about foreclosure. 2-1-1 operators reported that several of the callers asked about more than one social service.

Most of the calls were from the following communities: Providence (7,430), Pawtucket (462), Warwick (324), Cranston (293), Woonsocket (162), Westerly (68), Newport (126), West Warwick (228), Central Falls (229), and East Providence (227). As far as inquiries on the web site, www.211ri.org, the majority of hits were from Warwick (345), then Newport (229), Cranston (228), Barrington (194), and Cumberland (189).

In the Providence area, most of the calls focused on utilities, (2,913), rent (2,687) healthcare (1,936) and foreclosure (345).

“The nature of the calls tells us that individuals are in fear of losing their homes because they cannot afford to pay their bills,” said Cristina Amedeo, Director of *United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island*. “This is a notable difference from a year go when callers were concerned about shelter and housing. Currently, fathers and mothers call us, and they say they are worried about not having a place to live or money for food, heating and electricity.”

This data is significant because 2-1-1 continues to be one of the best barometers of what is occurring to families all over Rhode Island. The data reveals the top few pressing issues in our state and what is utmost in people's minds. Rhode Island is one of the states most affected by the foreclosure issue and mortgage crisis, and the evidence is being supplied via the latest 2-1-1 calls, and the most recent visits to www.211ri.org.

"We're seeing the impact that the general economy, the housing crisis, and state and federal budget cuts is having on Rhode Islanders," said Anthony Maione, President and CEO of United Way of RI. "It's particularly difficult for those who work very hard just to get by."

United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island's first year of operation, which began in June 2007, saw more than 100,000 residents call with questions. In addition, the number of visits to www.211ri.org has consistently increased.

2-1-1's staff members are constantly updating the database. They have access to 3,900 agencies and organizations. 2-1-1 informational-referral experts meet regularly with agencies and organizations to learn more about how they can help people who need assistance.

Dialing 2-1-1 or logging onto www.211ri.org is the fastest and easiest way to get health and human services information. It offers 24/7 assistance to resources in your community – whether you need help for yourself, a family member or a friend. Callers to 2-1-1 speak confidentially to a trained professional who can refer them to the agencies and organizations best equipped to help them. The service is confidential, free, and in three languages, English, Spanish and Portuguese. There's access to tele-Interpretation services.

United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island is backed by a yearly commitment from United Way, and is supported by a grant from the Hasbro Children's Fund as well as additional funds from the state.

About United Way of Rhode Island

United Way of Rhode Island has been working to improve the quality of life in Rhode Island communities for over 80 years. UWRI's mission is to mobilize the caring power of the community to improve the lives of people in need and address the issues Rhode Islanders care most about. United Way's goal is to create long-lasting changes that prevent problems from happening in the first place. We believe that all Rhode Islanders deserve the opportunity to have a better life, as when any one of us succeeds, we all succeed. At United Way, we refer to this as advancing the common good. For more information, visit www.liveunitedri.org.