

## United Way 2-1-1 never missed a beat during massive flooding *Worst storms to hit R.I. in 200 years*

When severe storms in Rhode Island caused massive flooding near and around United Way of Rhode Island (UWRI), the tumultuous weather and rising river may have caused the electricity to go off inside the UWRI's building but the telephone lines at **United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island** and ADRC/THE POINT never went off.



The 2-1-1 Information Referral Specialists continued to answer calls and refer Rhode Islanders in need to vital services throughout a seamless transition from the call center at UWRI to a makeshift call center inside National Guard headquarters in Cranston, R.I. The 24/7 helpline, 2-1-1, which is administered by Family Service of R.I., immediately teamed up



with R.I.'s Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA) to help assess the damage from flooding, and refer those affected by the storms to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to register for aid.

During the worst of the flooding, which occurred for about 2.5 days, UWRI and 2-1-1 staff, who work for

Family Service of R.I., fielded more than 5,700 calls. (Usually in one week, the 24/7 helpline receives about 2,200 calls.)

Information Referral Specialists heard heartbreaking tales of basements being flooded, sewers backing up, hot water and heating systems no longer working, and pleas for shelter and food. They connected individuals with cleaning and pumping services and basic needs.

By Day 3, the calls were still arriving at a fast pace. Specialists also were making follow-up calls and encouraging callers to check in every day so 2-1-1 can check on the clean-up progress and connect those in need to additional resources.



### Photos by Stephen Hug, Family Service of R.I

#### 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](http://www.LIVEUNITEDri.org).