



United Way of New York State

Testimony Submitted By:

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and

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At the Joint Hearing of the
New York State Assembly Committee on Ways & Means
&
New York State Senate Committee on Finance

On the Executive Proposed Human Service Budget

February 7, 2020

Thank you for giving United Way of New York State (UWNYS) the opportunity to submit testimony regarding the 2020-2021 Executive Budget. My name is Brenda Episcopo and I am the President and CEO of United Way of New York State, a membership organization representing 35 local United Ways in communities across New York State; and I am Mary Shaheen, President of 2-1-1 New York.

Each day, United Way helps local communities find solutions to complex problems by working collaboratively to define issues, develop responses and generate resources to implement those responses. Our goal is to strengthen individuals and families by supporting the building blocks for a good quality of life: health, education and financial stability. NY United Ways raise and invest more than \$150M in communities throughout New York State.

In addition to our impact in local communities, we would like to share with you today three statewide initiatives and ask for your support in the 2020-21 budget to maintain, sustain, and build on these effective initiatives.

2-1-1:

A caller, Richard, in the mid-Hudson region contacted 2-1-1 on behalf of his brother, Will, who has a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Depression. Will receives both HEAP and Medicaid benefits. He lives in a house mortgage-free, but in need major repairs. Some free repair assistance from various agencies but more help was needed to make his home a livable space.

Richard asked about what other home rehab programs Will might be eligible for. 211 suggested Will apply for SNAP benefits. Because Richard was concerned about Will losing his mental faculties, 211 suggested getting a power of attorney for him. When Richard asked about possible case management for Will, 211 was also able to refer him to area outpatient facilities. Before ending the call, Richard thanked our 211 Specialist, stating that she “dug into the mine and came up with diamonds.” He appreciated the 211 Specialist’s hard work and dedication to the job.

Thanks to the NYS Legislature’s support for 2-1-1, a call specialist was available to help Richard and Will. Every day 2-1-1 call specialists respond to callers seeking assistance. Sometimes the requests are basic, “Where is the nearest food pantry?”. As often, as illustrated above, callers have multiple and complex challenges and resource needs.

In 2019, 2-1-1 made 1.93 million referrals to callers (and texters) seeking assistance for a broad array of non-emergency health and human services needs. 2-1-1 also recorded 15.8 million visits to the 2-1-1 websites. Despite 2-1-1’s extensive use, by individuals and professionals alike, once again, this year the Governor’s budget proposal for state fiscal year 2020/21 does not support 2-1-1. We are again appealing to the Legislature to restore funding for this vital service.

REQUEST: Include \$1.5 million in the 2020-21 final budget to maintain 2-1-1 operations at their current level of 24/7/365 with information available via telephone, texting and the web.

REQUEST: Provide an additional \$500,000 to expand and enhance 2-1-1 infrastructure and capacity to respond during an emergency or a disaster.

2-1-1 is a statewide free and confidential health and human service referral hotline that is operated by 2-1-1 New York which is affiliated with United Way of New York. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days year and can respond to inquiries in more than 170 languages. Information and referrals are available by phone, text and via the 2-1-1 websites of services. These websites contain details on close to 69,000 programs located in 29,000 agencies and organizations across New York State. This includes public agencies and private organizations in the fields of social services, public health, law enforcement, homeland security and emergency services, legal assistance, corrections, temporary and disability services, and more.

2-1-1 services are provided by eight contact centers that serve ten regions of the state that encompass all 62 counties. There is significant consistency and redundancy built into the system, but the service itself is deeply nuanced and responsive to the needs and preferences of the community it serves. We'd like to share a few examples and stories with you.

In times of disaster

2-1-1 is an important partner during a disaster or emergency assessing caller needs and providing referral to callers as well as reducing the burden on 911 by handling the non-emergency requests for assistance. As a partner to the counties, 2-1-1 is available to coordinate and leverage services in the immediate aftermath of a disaster or emergency and during the recovery phase. 2-1-1 can also collect data on unmet needs that can be utilized to leverage resources into communities.

A recent example occurred just last fall – 2019 Halloween flooding that most significantly affected Oneida, Herkimer and Hamilton Counties. 2-1-1 received more than 600 disaster calls and assisted the counties in collecting damage report forms. The 2-1-1 assistance included:

- 201 self-report damage forms were received;
- 489 damage forms were completed with assistance;
- 430 individuals received a text from 2-1-1 asking them to update their damage information.
- 54 completed a second more detailed survey of repair needs.
- Using data collected by 2-1-1, an estimated 600 follow-up calls were made, to flood impacted homes by a variety of County employees, not-for profit staff and volunteers.

The further value of 2-1-1's ability to collect, organize and maintain resources was demonstrated by the multiple sources that chose to send their gathered data to 2-1-1 so that master lists could be created, including the intake forms completed at NYS Disaster Assistance Service Centers.

Responding to callers in crisis

In November, on Long Island, a Spanish-speaking caller Franco called 211 and began the conversation crying on the phone. The 211 Specialist immediately connected to the interpreter line. Franco stated that he had just got off the phone with the National Suicide Hotline and was referred to 211. Franco told the 211 Specialist that he thinks about suicide often, but he does not have a plan to currently hurt himself. The lethality test was completed with Franco which found that he was "currently not an immediate danger to self or others." The 211 Specialist was empathetic and compassionate toward Franco and his concerns and warm transferred him to the Long Island Crisis Center. The 211 Specialist spoke with a Crisis Center worker and explained Franco's situation and the need for an interpreter. Franco was connected to the Crisis Center and a Spanish-speaking interpreter. The 211 Specialist disconnected only after he could hear all parties talking and was no longer needed.

Last year 2-1-1 made more than 20,000 referrals to callers seeking assistance with mental health & addiction. These referrals were for substance abuse & addictions, crisis intervention & suicide and mental health services & facilities, to both local and New York State resources.

An additional resource in the fight against opioid addiction:

2-1-1 continues to enhance its capacity to respond and certain areas of the state have launched a text pilot platform (by texting "opioid" to 898-211) that can be used by people seeking drug treatment, their loved ones, or the general public to get immediate help via cell phone. Developed by the Heart of Florida 2-1-1, this platform allows texting automation with integrated referral data and guides for individuals who opt-in to the program after completing a series of questions to assess what information would be best for them. It also encourages individuals to have a live encounter with a 2-1-1 specialists should they wish.

2-1-1 LIFE LINE (211 Finger Lakes Region)
 Published by Deborah Turner (7) - July 22 · 🌐

Opioid Overdose facts & training dates

OPIOID OVERDOSE INFO
 PLUS! UPCOMING NARCAN TRAININGS IN YOUR AREA

HOW DO I RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF AN OPIOID OVERDOSE?

- No response to Stimul
- Shallow, labored or no breathing
- Cannot be woken up
- Slurring or gurgling
- Blue/gray lips
- Floppy arms or legs

WHAT DO I DO IF I SEE AN OVERDOSE?

- Check for danger
- Call an ambulance and stay on the line
- Put the person in recovery position
- If you have access to Narcan, administer it
- Provide CPR
- If there has been no response within 3-5 minutes, and if available, administer another dose of Narcan
- Stay with the person until the ambulance arrives

MARITAN LAW
 You may face the price of responding to a 911 medical emergency for themselves or for the user. These fees should NEVER stop you from calling 911 immediately. It may be a matter of minutes before the 911 Good Samaritan Law can be addressed. This law provides significant legal protection and prosecution for medical emergencies, including possession, distribution, and use of paraphernalia. This protection applies to individuals who provide assistance in good faith, and is not limited to Class A-1 drug felonies, as long as the substances are not controlled substances.

ABOUT NARCAN
 Narcan is a medication that blocks the effects of the brain and resets the brain within 2-3 minutes. It is an easy to use nasal spray that provides 60-90 minutes of protection. Once the Narcan person can go into recovery.

SAVE A LIFE, CALL 2-1-1
 Anyone can get help to save upcoming lives.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG MISUSE/ABUSE
 Hidden and others from using your medication by securing it in a place not accessible to others.

STORY
 Tell us the type and amount of medications you currently have and check off if missing.

DISPOSAL
 Find a community drop box site or disposal event. For drop box locations at a community drop box site or disposal event. For drop box locations at a community drop box site or disposal event. For drop box locations at a community drop box site or disposal event. For drop box locations at a community drop box site or disposal event.

UPCOMING NARCAN TRAININGS
 SIGN UP, CALL CASA-TRINITY, INC. AT (585) 991-5012


GENESEO, NY 4812 Minerva Ct. Geneseo, NY 14454 (585) 991-5012	TRAINING AVAILABLE ELMIR 150 Lake Elmira, NY (607) 733-2200	OWEGO 22 North Orange, NY (607) 225-2200
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TRAININGS TAKE ABOUT 45 MINUTES.
 RECEIVE A CO-PAY CARD TO GET NARCAN FREE AT MOST PHARMACIES. NO REBUNDANCE! WE WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH A FREE SUPPLY.

CASA TRINITY
 VISIT WWW.CASA-TRINITY.ORG TO LEARN MORE!
 FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER! @CASATRINITY

Fighting hunger:

2-1-1 LIFE LINE (211 Finger Lakes Region)
Published by Deborah Turner [?] - June 18 -



**KIDS 18 & UNDER
EAT FREE!**

Stop in for a meal at:

Arnett Library
310 Arnett Blvd
Mon. - Fri.
6/26/19-8/30/19
Lunch: 2:30-3:00pm

For more information and locations
dial 2-1-1 or visit SummerMealsRoc.org

These organizations are equal opportunity employers.

19th Ward Community Association
June 18 -

Across New York State, 2-1-1 is the place to turn to when needing help buying food, finding a food pantry or soup kitchen, holiday meals or feeding children, making just under 32,000 food-related referrals in 2019 alone. The Summer Meals Program relies on 2-1-1 to provide accurate information on the locations and hours of summer meals programs for children.

On an individual level, consider:

Tom, a Capital Region resident, is a senior, homebound, disabled veteran. He was unable to reach the food stamp office despite repeated calls on numerous occasions. After speaking with Tom, the 211 Specialist determined that he needed somebody to come to his home to help him fill out the food stamps application. The 211 Call Specialist connected him to Adult Protective Services (APS). The APS representative will contact the food stamp office and go to Tom's home to assess the situation and help him complete the application.

ALICE: Asset, Limited, Income Constrained, Employed®



We all know ALICE®. ALICE is your childcare worker, your parent on Social Security, the cashier at your supermarket, the gas station attendant, the salesperson at your big box store, your waitress, a home health aide, an office clerk. ALICE cannot always pay the bills, has little or nothing in savings, and is forced to make tough choices such as deciding between quality childcare or paying the rent. One unexpected car repair or medical bill can push these financially strapped families over the edge.

Since 2016, every two years, UWNYS releases a report that examines the number of households across the State whose incomes place them above the poverty level, but who still struggle to make ends meet - a population that the report refers to as "ALICE" (Asset, Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). The most recent report was released in September 2018 and an update is due out this summer.

The 2018 report showed that over the last few years, the economy had rebounded. At the same time, the state made investments to assist those living in poverty. However, there is still a large number of New York households, **3.2 million (out of 7,216,340 households), or 45% of the all households**, that cannot afford the basic needs and lack sufficient income and resources to pay for housing, food, childcare, transportation, and health care. The report continues to show that ALICE lives in every part of the state, from our biggest cities to our most rural areas.

REQUEST: Strengthen the New York State EITC by decoupling it from the federal income tax credit, which will:

- ✓ **Allow young childless adults ages 18-24 to claim the state credit so they receive workforce support at a critical juncture in their working lives;**
- ✓ **Benefit filers with ITINs by creating filing eligibility and establishing parity with the Empire State child credit, and;**
 - ✓ **Reduce poverty, prevent economic backsliding, and**
- ✓ **provide greater community economic stability by allowing New York State to model our EITC on the \$15 minimum wage.**

REQUEST: Strengthen and expand the ESCC by:

- ✓ **Expanding it to cover young children under age four on the same terms as families with older children, and increase the maximum to \$1,000 so that our young children are provided extra resources when they need them most;**
- ✓ **Fully phasing-in the credit at \$1 of income to cover those families and children living in deep poverty; and**
 - ✓ **Expanding the existing credit to up to \$500 for children 4-17.**

ALICE and childcare: Through our decades of work in local communities, to most recently our work with ESPRI (further discussed below) and ALICE, we know how the critical importance of access to adequate and affordable childcare for working families. For most, access to childcare may be the difference between maintaining a job or becoming reliant on public assistance.

We strongly support the maintenance of childcare subsidies in the Governor's budget and are encouraged by dialogue with the Empire State Development Corporation to look for ways to expand childcare to families through economic development initiatives.

Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI)

Governor Cuomo created the Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI) to develop local task forces in sixteen communities across the state with high poverty rates. In nine (9) of these sixteen (16) communities, the local United Way has been leading the local ESPRI effort. After three-years of convening stakeholders, engaging individuals with lived experiences, engaging in community-wide needs/asset analyses and priority setting, and providing intensive support to individuals, ESPRI can document the effectiveness of intensive, one-on-one, and systemic attention to the issue. The complete elimination of funding for ESPRI, however, does not allow these communities to confirm the sustainability of these interventions. The Governor's budget does not include additional funds to support ESPRI, leaving in question a fragile economies program, asset building activities for low income families, job and career readiness strategies, extensive case management and an extended day childcare center. We call on the Legislature to correct this oversight.

REQUEST: Include \$3.2 million for the United Way-led ESPRI initiatives so that they can continue the progress they've made in their communities to develop pathways out of poverty.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit testimony. United Way of New York State looks forward to continuing to work with the state to ensure that all New Yorkers can achieve their full potential.