



2012 United Way Policy Agenda

FROM: Richard Porth, President And CEO, United Way of Connecticut
SUBJECT: 2012 United Way Policy Agenda

United Way recognizes that it is our civic obligation to use our experience and knowledge to help inform policy makers' decisions regarding policy and funding of human services programs.

United Way helps to craft practical, long-term solutions and seeks to remain non-ideological and non-partisan in its advocacy.

United Ways across Connecticut have been partnering for decades with government, nonprofits and community leaders to invest in work that supports the achievement of the full potential of state residents and to contribute to Connecticut's long-term vitality.

United Ways have worked hard to engage people, and to encourage them to GIVE, ADVOCATE, and VOLUNTEER to achieve real community impact. This Connecticut United Way Policy Agenda is offered in that spirit.

We offer this United Way policy agenda, which draws on United Way's expertise and commitment in four key areas:

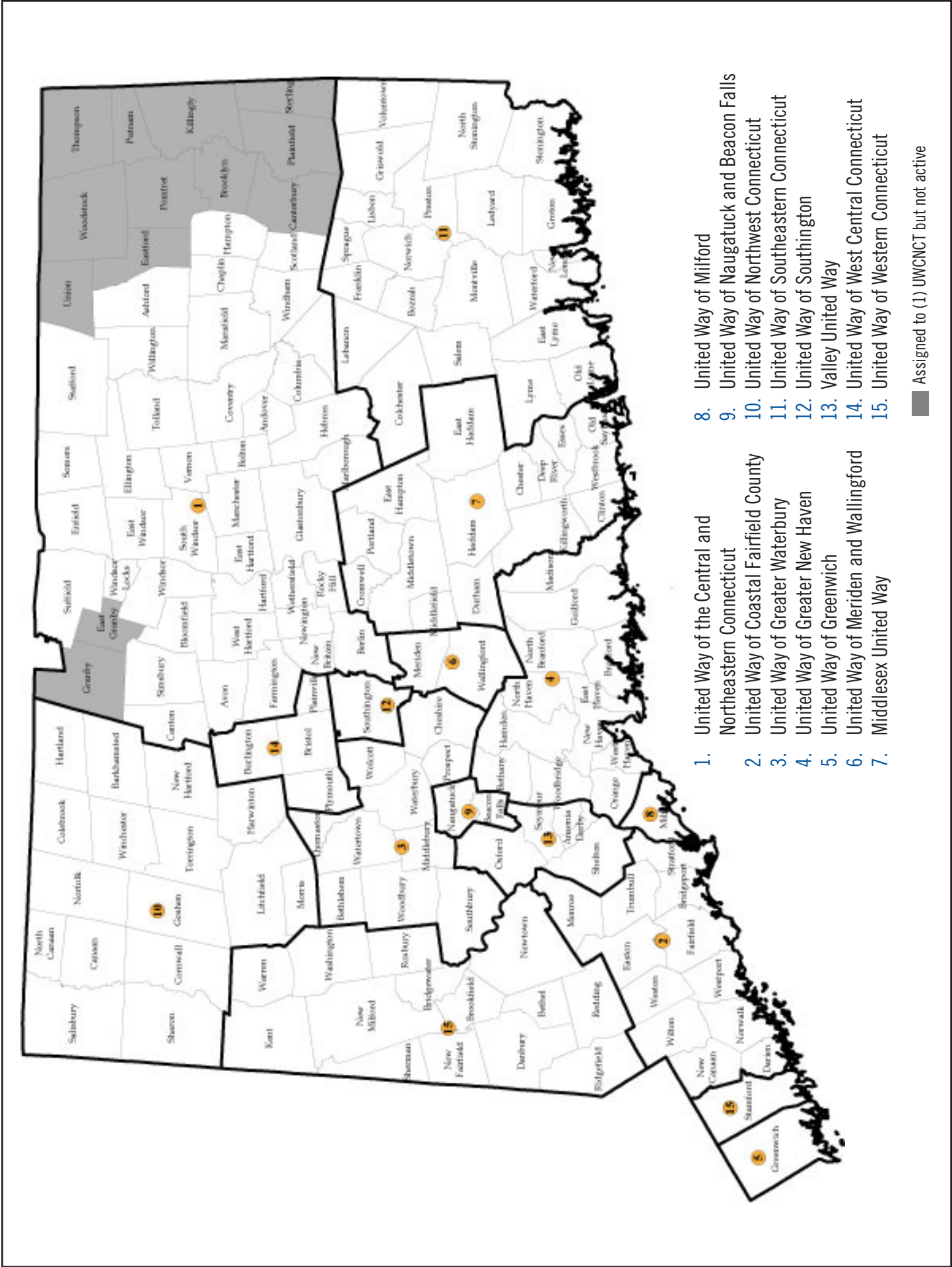
- Education
- Income
- Health
- United Way 2-1-1: Connecticut's Connection to Health and Human Services

If you would like to discuss any of these policy areas further, just call Richard Porth, President/CEO of United Way of Connecticut at (860) 571-7501 or email him at Richard.Porth@ctunitedway.org.

To learn more about United Ways and their efforts to build strong communities in Connecticut, please contact United Way of Connecticut or your local United Way. A map of United Way coverage areas is provided on the next page.

Thank you.

GIVE. ADVOCATE. VOLUNTEER. LIVE UNITED



- 1. United Way of the Central and Northeastern Connecticut
- 2. United Way of Coastal Fairfield County
- 3. United Way of Greater Waterbury
- 4. United Way of Greater New Haven
- 5. United Way of Greenwich
- 6. United Way of Meriden and Wallingford
- 7. Middlesex United Way
- 8. United Way of Milford
- 9. United Way of Naugatuck and Beacon Falls
- 10. United Way of Northwest Connecticut
- 11. United Way of Southeastern Connecticut
- 12. United Way of Southington
- 13. Valley United Way
- 14. United Way of West Central Connecticut
- 15. United Way of Western Connecticut

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WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Readiness to Achieve in School

The Institute for a Competitive Workforce, an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, cites research by respected scientific sources on the formation and development of the brain in young children. It documents “that early childhood education is likely more efficient and less costly than interventions later in life”.

The research they cite shows correlations between participation in early care and education programs and better academic performance in later years, lower incidence of being held back or being placed in special education, and lower rates of involvement with the juvenile justice system. Various studies have calculated that for every dollar invested in quality early learning programs, savings later in life range from \$2.50 up to \$17.00.

Yet, Connecticut Voices for Children reports that in 2009-2010 only 67.7% of students in Connecticut’s poorest school districts entered kindergarten with preschool experience compared to 95.9% of children in the wealthiest school districts.

Academic Achievement

It is estimated that about 90% of the fastest growing and highest paying jobs in Connecticut require high school graduation AND some post-secondary or higher education. Lifetime earning potential correlates with level of educational attainment in study after study, here in Connecticut and across the country.

Grade level proficiency in 4th grade is widely regarded as a reliable indicator of future school performance and success. As is often stated, “Until 3rd grade students learn to read and after third grade students read to learn.”

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) allows state by state comparisons of student math and reading test scores at selected grade levels including 4th grade. Connecticut’s aggregate achievement scores in the NAEP compare favorably

AT A GLANCE

- Connecticut’s future prosperity depends on maintaining our competitive standing in educational achievement for our young people.
- United Ways in Connecticut have a long history of investing in quality early care and education. In recent years, some United Ways have provided leadership to make real impact in areas such as 3rd grade reading proficiency and high school graduation rates.
- Readiness to achieve in school and K-12 academic achievement will only be strengthened in Connecticut with coordinated and focused effort.

to other states. But a closer analysis indicates that Connecticut has some of the largest achievement gaps in the nation with white students scoring slightly above national averages while our black and Hispanic students score comparably or lower than black and Hispanic students in the rest of the nation.

For 2011, 42% of Connecticut 4th graders scored at or above grade level NAEP proficiency goals for reading. However, 55% of white students scored at or above proficiency, while 14% of blacks and 17% of Hispanics did so – indicating a substantial achievement gap in the state. Among those eligible for the school lunch program, 17% scored at or above the proficient level, while 57% of students not eligible scored at the proficient level.

United Way has identified high school graduation rates as a target indicator to mark progress in building a stronger workforce and helping to increase income for more working families. In a recent report, the State Department of Education documented that 80% of all Connecticut students graduated in the latest four year cohort (2010).

Here again, an achievement gap exists in Connecticut with 89% of white students graduating in four years compared to 69% of black students and 64% of Hispanic students.

The Governor has highlighted the importance of educational achievement for Connecticut’s young people. As such, Governor Malloy is calling for a focus on education during the 2012 Legislative Session and in the coming months.

“Until 3rd grade students learn to read and after third grade students read to learn.”

UNITED WAY'S COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION

Readiness to Achieve in School

All Connecticut United Ways support early care and education in their communities, funding agencies that serve children and families, convening communities around early learning, leading Born Learning and Success by 6 initiatives, and building child care capacity.

Eleven Connecticut United Ways provide local leadership in the Graustein Discovery Initiative, serving as fiduciary for the initiative. Discovery helps communities establish collaborative structures for local decision-making that focus on increasing parent engagement and leadership, improving access to family and center-based early care, increasing early language and literacy development among all children and increasing state and local capacity to set goals, measure progress and encourage those most affected to share their own stories.

The United Ways that participate in Discovery include:

- Middlesex United Way
- United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut
- United Way of Coastal Fairfield County
- United Way of Greater New Haven
- United Way of Greater Waterbury
- United Way of Greenwich
- United Way of Milford
- United Way of Naugatuck & Beacon Falls
- United Way of West Central Connecticut
- United Way of Western Connecticut
- Valley United Way



Academic Achievement

- United Way of Greater New Haven (UWGNH) is a key partner along with the city of New Haven and the New Haven Public Schools in the nationally-recognized New Haven School Change Initiative. Specifically, UWGNH supports the Boost! Partnership to increase access to quality wraparound services by community partners with the goals of closing the achievement gap, cutting the dropout rate in half and ensuring that every graduating student can succeed in college.
- United Way of Coastal Fairfield County (UWCFC) launched the Schools of Hope initiative to eliminate the achievement gap and to improve the educational success of students in target schools. The initiative works with school leaders using various strategies responding to each school's unique needs that lead to improved 3rd grade reading proficiency. In May 2011, 63% of Schools of Hope participants were reading at or above proficiency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Readiness to Achieve in School

- Support the implementation of Public Act 11-181 and Executive order No. 11 to establish a coordinated system of early care and education and child development.
- Invest in and implement an Early Care and Education Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to promote quality early care and education and to leverage more federal support for strengthening education in Connecticut. United Way of Connecticut's 2-1-1 Child Care is well positioned to help implement the QRIS, by providing the repository for quality ratings in our database for each provider profile 2-1-1 Child Care maintains.

Academic Achievement

- Focus on proven strategies that lead to academic achievement for students, with particular emphasis on students in high-need schools and districts.
- Support high school reform policies aimed at enabling students to graduate on time and prepared for higher education and/or careers in the new global economy.

INCOME: PROMOTING FINANCIAL STABILITY AND INDEPENDENCE

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Connecticut's prosperity and strong competitive position for many years has been built on the quality of its workforce. Much of this prosperity was built on good "middle wage" jobs, such as manufacturing, construction and building trades, and technicians. In turn, most Connecticut workers and their families have enjoyed financial stability in a state that has been ranked at or near the top in per capita income.

But the impact of long-term economic trends in the nation and the world, as well as the immediate impact of the recent recession, are undermining our competitive standing, reducing our "middle wage" and other good paying jobs, and threatening the financial stability of many Connecticut families.

In *The State of Working Connecticut 2010*, published by Connecticut Voices for Children, these trends affecting income and earnings were identified:

- The number of hours worked declined by 2% to 5% in all sectors, except for the financial sector from 2007 to 2010. When coupled with stagnant or declining wages, this led to declines in earnings for most Connecticut workers.
- Real wages have been stagnant in most of Connecticut's largest sectors over the last five years. In the low-paying sectors such as retail and food services, weekly wages have actually declined slightly since 2006. Higher-paying sectors, such as health care, public education and manufacturing, have provided modest increases in wages since 2006 (2% to 4%).
- People with bachelor's degrees had median wages that were twice as large as those for people with less education in Connecticut; and they also benefited from an average 8% increase in wages since 2006. During the same time, people with a high school diploma but no additional education actually endured a reduction in median wages of 5%.

Connecticut's long-term unemployment rate (people who have been out of work for longer than six months) is the fifth highest in the country. Long-term unemployment is hitting workers 55 years and older the hardest in Connecticut. Unemployment, in general, is highest among young workers, Hispanics, and blacks.

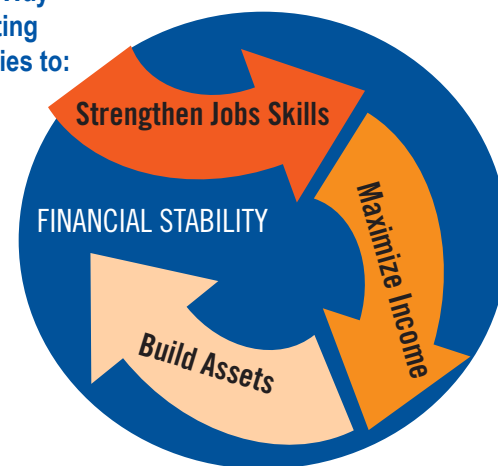
AT A GLANCE

- Connecticut's quality workforce has provided the state with a strong competitive advantage for many years and the resulting prosperity has provided financial stability for most Connecticut households. But long-term and far reaching economic and workforce trends require new strategies to maintain our competitive advantage.
- United Way is investing in and promoting strategies to Strengthen Jobs Skills, Maximize Income, and Build Assets for Connecticut residents.
- Investment in targeted sectors and programs to increase skills and put people back to work will be necessary to maintain Connecticut's competitive standing.

Gaining and sustaining assets has become more challenging for some Connecticut families, as evidenced in a recent report, *Housing in Connecticut 2011*, by The Partnership for Strong Communities:

- In 112 of Connecticut's 169 towns, families earning at the state median household income level cannot afford a median priced home.
- Among Connecticut households who rent their housing, 51 percent spend over 30 percent of their income on rent, an increase from 36% in 2000. This 30 percent mark is generally regarded as the threshold beyond which housing costs cut into spending on other necessary needs such as food, healthcare and transportation.

United Way
promoting
strategies to:



INCOME: PROMOTING FINANCIAL STABILITY AND INDEPENDENCE

UNITED WAY'S COMMITMENT TO FINANCIAL STABILITY FOR CONNECTICUT FAMILIES

Strengthening Jobs Skills

United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut (UWCNCT) continues to lead the Workforce Solutions Collaborative of Metro Hartford, recently receiving national funding support from the National Fund for Workforce Solutions for its innovative work to create an educated and economically self-sufficient workforce in three sectors which can provide more middle-wage jobs in Connecticut: healthcare, manufacturing, and utilities.

Maximizing Income

A number of Connecticut United Ways play critical roles in campaigns to increase household income in lower-income working families by encouraging eligible families to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit and other credits, and to do so through a network of Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites across the state.

Building Assets

- United Way of Coastal Fairfield County, United Way of Central and Northeastern CT, and United Way of West Central Connecticut continue to offer leadership and support in initiatives to provide budget coaching, credit repair, and financial literacy skills to lower-income families. Many of the budget coaches are volunteers recruited with the help of local United Ways.
- United Way of Western Connecticut, through its Strong Home Initiative, provides funding to create affordable housing, to help low-income families own their first home, prevent foreclosures, and provide for supportive and transitional housing.

ACCESS TO EITC



- Handles over 8,000 requests for tax prep assistance annually.
- Maintains a complete listing of free tax preparation sites.
- Informs all callers about the state and federal EITC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Strengthening Jobs Skills

- Invest more state funding in sector-based initiatives, particularly those that realistically can maintain or grow middle-wage jobs in Connecticut. Maintain good paying jobs and enable career advancement with more investment in incumbent worker training.
- Support the plans of regional workforce boards to strengthen adult literacy programs, particularly strategies that employ workplace contextualized learning.

Maximizing Income

- Support campaigns to encourage eligible low-income working families to claim the new state Earned Income Tax Credit as well as the federal EITC and other tax credits.
- Maintain work supports for low-income working families, such as HUSKY (the state children's health insurance plan), and Care 4 Kids, the state's child care subsidy for low-income working families.
- Provide subsidized work experience for the long-term unemployed and maintain safety net services for workers whose unemployment compensation eligibility is used up.

Building Assets

- Preserve funding that leverages the creation of more affordable housing through the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority and other respected agencies.
- Protect recent progress in homeownership for working families by supporting effective foreclosure prevention programs.

HEALTH: IMPROVING PEOPLE'S HEALTH

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Maternal Health and Infant Well Being

Based on the 2011 Kids Count data book, Connecticut compares favorably to most other states in the percent of low birth weight babies (birth weight of 5.5 pounds or less). Connecticut's low birth weight percentage was 8.0% in SFY 2008, compared to a national rate of 8.2%. However, Connecticut's rate increased by 8% (from 7.4% in 2000 to 8.0%) since 2000.

Low birth weight corresponds closely with infant mortality. In 2006, hospital stays for low birth weight babies were 15 times longer than for higher birth weight babies in Connecticut. Teen mothers have a significantly higher risk of giving birth to low birth weight babies.

Low birth weight links to other health challenges in infants and early childhood including developmental concerns and special needs.

Basic Health Care Coverage and Prevention

Connecticut's rate of health care insurance coverage for children is 95%, which compares favorably to the national rate of 90.7%, according to a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation study.

However, Connecticut Voices for Children has documented the loss of coverage for many eligible children because their eligibility was not re-established at required renewal deadlines. For example, in one study, an analysis of newly enrolled HUSKY clients revealed that 19% of them had previously lost coverage at the 12-month renewal deadline. Further, 25% of children/families who discontinued at renewal were re-enrolled within 6 months.

Loss of insurance coverage results in limited access to health care, with potentially harmful impacts on children and higher health care costs due to lack of preventative care and more use of hospital emergency rooms.

Healthy Youth and Adults Avoiding Risky Behaviors

According to the Connecticut Commission on Children, obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death nationwide. More than half of Connecticut adults are obese or overweight, as are 26% of our high school students. This can lead to health risks such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and shortened life expectancy.

AT A GLANCE

- Easier access to preventative health services and early intervention when health problems exist will lead to better quality of life for many Connecticut residents and lower overall health costs.
- United Way provides support to direct service programs like HUSKY Infoline, Child Development Infoline, and through investment and leadership in community-based programs addressing a range of health issues.
- Support for initiatives that improve access to health care and health education will go a long way toward improving health outcomes in Connecticut.

Connecticut is among the 10 states with the highest rates of illicit drug use for those 18 to 25 years old, and for alcohol use for those in three age categories: 12 years old or older, 18 to 25 years old, and 26 years old or older. (Source: U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.)

Top Five 2-1-1 Health-Related Requests for Services by Category - 2011

Health Care Services (Total)	30,287
Health Care Referrals	4,692
Public Health Information	3,236
Community Clinics	3,036
Health Insurance Information	2,149
Dental Care	1,754

Mental Health Care Services (Total)	38,622
Psychiatric Mobile Response Teams	15,133
Helplines/Warmlines	8,939
General Counseling Services	2,511
Domestic Violence Hotlines	2,443
Suicide Prevention Hotlines	1,814

Substance Abuse Services (Total)	17,075
Inpatient Drug Detoxification	2,824
Residential Substance Abuse Treatment	2,223
Inpatient Alcohol Detoxification	1,887
Alcohol Dependency Support Groups	1,671
Inpatient Substance Abuse Treatment	1,235



HEALTH: IMPROVING PEOPLE'S HEALTH

UNITED WAY'S COMMITMENT TO A HEALTHY CONNECTICUT

Maternal Health and Infant Well Being

- With support from the state Department of Public Health's Maternal Child Health Program, United Way of Connecticut's 2-1-1 and Child Development Infoline provide assistance to expectant and new mothers to find and access maternal and child health services.
- UWC's Child Development Infoline serves as the access point for the State of Connecticut Birth to Three System and the Help Me Grow Program providing information about early intervention services for developmental concerns, and challenging behavioral, disability, and health-related issues.

Basic Health Care Coverage and Prevention

- United Way of Connecticut's HUSKY Infoline is a part of 2-1-1 and provides information and access to health care coverage and services through the state's children's health insurance program.
- HUSKY Infoline care coordinators serve as patient navigators helping parents/caregivers, employers, and providers by providing information on HUSKY covered services and program eligibility, helping to find and access participating health care providers that accept their insurance, advocating on behalf of HUSKY clients for health care services they need and helping to enroll and maintain enrollment for eligible HUSKY families.

Healthy Youth and Adults Avoiding Risky Behaviors

- United Way of Western Connecticut (UWWCT) created its Strong Heart Initiative to help address the growing problems associated with obesity. UWWCT has led key community collaborations among health and education and youth services providers, funded innovative start-up projects addressing childhood obesity and promoted the 5-2-1-0 message campaign (5 fruits and vegetables, 2 hours or less of screen time, 1 hour or more of physical activity, and 0 to almost no sugar-sweetened drinks).

Healthy Youth Initiatives

- Middlesex United Way's (MUW) Healthy Communities/Healthy Youth initiative uses surveys and follow-up work to promote positive experiences and qualities that give young people the strength they need to make positive choices, and to avoid risky behaviors. MUW collaborates with schools, parents, students, police and community leaders, surveying young people every 2 to 4 years with the help of schools and local Youth Services Bureaus. The surveys have documented measurable progress in reducing risk factors, such as substance abuse and violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Maternal Health and Infant Wellbeing

- Provide easier access to prenatal wellness services for lower income and/or uninsured expectant mothers. Use care coordination outreach strategies to remind mothers about prenatal doctor's appointments and healthy lifestyle choices.

Basic Health Care Coverage and Prevention

- Reduce the number of eligible families that lose HUSKY health insurance coverage due to paperwork issues during the redetermination process.
- Focus on health care access in conjunction with implementation of federal health care reform, the new state health insurance exchange and HUSKY Administrative Services Organization.
- Build care coordination capacity in Connecticut, working with community partners such as United Way of Connecticut to assist with new consumer assistance requirements in the federal Affordable Care Act (health care reform).

Healthy Youth and Adults Avoiding Risky Behaviors

- Reduce childhood obesity by improving nutrition and physical fitness for young people.
- Support proven strategies to reduce alcohol and drug dependencies, particularly among Connecticut's younger population.



2-1-1: CONNECTICUT'S CONNECTION TO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

2-1-1 is Connecticut's link for residents to find the help they need and to access community and health and human services. 2-1-1 is free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to all state residents, regardless of income, age, or language.

Last year, 2-1-1 in Connecticut handled over 390,000 calls resulting in over 525,000 service requests for people looking for help with needs such as housing, utilities and food, and for help with child care needs and elder care issues, mental health supports, substance abuse counseling, and many more health and human services.

The state's support coupled with United Way support has also enabled UWC to build up and maintain the most comprehensive, up to date health and human services database in Connecticut, including information on approximately 4,500 public and non-profit health and human services providers with 48,000 different services and 4,800 licensed and licensed exempt child care providers.

The partnership between the state government and United Way of Connecticut 2-1-1 dates back to the 1970's. From the very beginning, the state's investment in 2-1-1 (formerly Infoline) has leveraged financial support from local United Ways across the state.

2-1-1 also plays a critical role in the state's emergency response after storms and other disasters serving as the statewide source for information on basic needs services for the public and fulfilling the important rumor control function.

Connecticut was the first state in the nation to authorize statewide three-digit telephone service for residents who need help finding and accessing community and health and human services. Early state support was provided because 2-1-1 is easy for people to remember and because it simplifies what can be a complicated and frustrating process, particularly when services are provided across a number of state agencies and nonprofits. It was also seen as an investment in Connecticut's service delivery infrastructure, streamlining access to services and enabling more cost-effective use of many different health and human services funded by various state agencies.

AT A GLANCE

- 2-1-1's partnership with the state of Connecticut dates back to the 1970's and has strengthened over the ensuing years to help residents find and access the health and human services they need.
- 2-1-1 and other programs under the 2-1-1 umbrella, such as HUSKY Infoline, Child Development Infoline, and 2-1-1 Child Care, work together synergistically as an investment in Connecticut's service delivery infrastructure, enabling more cost effective use of many services funded by the state.
- Protecting the state's long term investment in 2-1-1 will enable more cost effective delivery of other state and nonprofit health and human services and the continuation of 2-1-1 as a strong state partner, capable of quick and innovative response to special projects and emergencies for the state.

2-1-1 TOP TEN REQUESTS FOR SERVICES - 2011

1	Housing/Shelter	51,756
2	Utilities/Heat	50,507
3	Information Services	42,654
4	Financial Assistance	41,410
5	Disaster Services	37,992
6	Outpatient Mental Health Care	35,806
7	Public Assistance Programs	25,263
8	Holiday Assistance	22,248
9	Legal Services	20,241
10	Food	18,289

Total (all requests for services) 526,705

2-1-1: CONNECTICUT'S CONNECTION TO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

2-1-1: A strong public-private partnership

- The 2-1-1 Contact Center has been built up over 30 plus years, adding new components and services such as 2-1-1 Child Care, HUSKY Infoline, and Child Development Infoline. These and other programs under the 2-1-1 umbrella work together within 2-1-1 so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts, and so that each new state investment leverages earlier investments by the state and others.
- 2-1-1 has increasingly served as a statewide gateway for accessing key services, including the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) Birth to Three Program, the Department of Social Services (DSS) Help Me Grow program, and the Department of Children and Family's (DCF) Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Service.

The Governor and leadership in state agencies have called on 2-1-1 to help with special projects over the years, often on short notice. We have worked hard to respond quickly and nimbly on these projects for various state agencies, including these recent examples:

- Storm damage claims collected by telephone and website for Connecticut residents following recent storms;
- The HUSKY/Medicaid citizenship/identification documentation project for DSS;
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) electronic benefit transfer card replacement for DSS;
- The shelter access coordination project we have worked on together with the Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (DEMHS) and DSS at the Governor's request during extreme cold spells; and
- Our work with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and DSS to assume responsibility for the state Section 8 housing website.

United Way of Connecticut's Community Results Center analyzes 2-1-1 data and external data to help government and nonprofit decision-makers assess the needs in their communities and plan for addressing those needs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Leverage previous United Way and state investments in 2-1-1 in the effort to simplify access to work supports and other services to help Connecticut residents contribute to the state's vitality.
- Protect the state's long term investment in 2-1-1, which enables more cost-effective delivery of government and nonprofit health and human services.
- Support United Way 2-1-1's vital role in emergency/disaster response as the statewide vehicle for information dissemination and rumor control, complimenting public safety and municipal communications efforts.
- Maintain United Way of Connecticut/2-1-1 as a strong state partner with capability to respond innovatively and with agility to special project needs of state agencies.

