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UNITED WAY ANNOUNCES SPRING LAUNCH OF 2-1-1 INFORMATION & REFERRAL SERVICE
The community's social service providers are encouraged to be part of 2-1-1 database.

SPRINGFIELD – United Way of Central Illinois is pleased to announce the spring launch of the 2-1-1 Information and Referral Service in Sangamon County. United Way's 2-1-1 is an easy to remember, toll-free number that connects individuals with the community's network of health and human services. Trained specialists respond to callers' inquiries 24 hours, seven days a week, with multi-lingual and hearing impaired capabilities. The anticipated start date for 2-1-1 is May 1, 2012.

"2-1-1 is United Way's gift to our community. We know an increasing number of individuals and families are seeking assistance from social service agencies and we want to make access to help easier," said John P. Kelker, United Way President. "This important resource line will offer callers information on a wide range of support services including senior care, job training, healthcare resources, housing and rent assistance, counseling, and after school programs."

The 2-1-1 database will be built with the information received from local health and human service agencies and community service providers. Over the next few months, agencies will be asked to provide data about their programs, along with program criteria, deadlines, contact names and other pertinent information. "The database will be an invaluable community tool and quite comprehensive, provided that agencies respond to data collection inquiries," said Karen Zangerle, Executive Director of PATH Crisis Center. PATH, (*acronym for Providing Access to Help*), is the non-profit organization that will operate the 2-1-1 call center and maintain the database. It will be updated twice a year to ensure reliability.

United Way member agencies look forward to the start of 2-1-1 because they know it will reduce staff time spent on routine referral assistance. "Many of the families we serve need more than the behavioral health care we provide. It is imperative for our clinicians to be able to connect our clients to community resources, such as housing options, food pantries, caregiver and legal services. 2-1-1 will give our staff and our clients easy access to trained specialists who can quickly assess the caller's needs and refer them to the help they seek," said Jan Gambach, President of Mental Health Centers of Central Illinois and Administrator of Behavioral Health for Memorial Health System.

Mayor Michael Houston supports United Way's 2-1-1 service understanding its value as a resource for Springfield's citizenry every day as well as during crisis. "In the unfortunate event of a natural or man-made disaster, it is great to know that 2-1-1 will be a partner with the city of Springfield in communicating vital information about resources," said Mayor Houston. "We will work with 2-1-1 to enhance our crisis communications plan." Since the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) designated the phone number "2-1-1" for information and referral in 2000, the service has been a critical component in several emergencies including Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

When 2-1-1 goes live this spring, our community will join over 86% of the nation already realizing the benefits of this service. In Illinois, Sangamon County and Rockford will join McLean County, St. Louis Metro East area, and the Quad Cities in offering this service.