



## Press Release

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### **United Way of the Bay Area Gets “Green Light” to Launch 2-1-1 Phone Service in Marin County**

#### **Marin 2-1-1 Working Group Instrumental in Building Program and Earning PUC Approval**

SAN FRANCISCO, July 17, 2006 -- United Way of the Bay Area (UWBA) is pleased to announce that the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has awarded it the license to operate 2-1-1 phone service in Marin County. United Way, in partnership with the 2-1-1 Marin Working Group, hopes to launch the community services hotline in Marin this fall.

2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember phone number that connects people in need with health and human services. This free, confidential, 24-hour multilingual service also serves as a vital link for individuals seeking to volunteer, provide resources and assist during times of crisis.

“Last winter’s storms and flooding have given new relevancy and urgency to establishing United Way 2-1-1 phone service in Marin County,” said Anne Wilson, CEO of United Way of the Bay Area, who resides in San Rafael. “In times of disaster, United Way 2-1-1 can be mobilized as an essential public communications channel and significantly alleviate non-emergency calls to 9-1-1.”

Ed Schoenberger, executive director of United Way HELPLINK, the UWBA department that will operate 2-1-1 Marin, applauded the accomplishments of the 2-1-1 Marin Working Group: “The hard work of the Marin 2-1-1 Working Group – which included preparing the PUC application, gaining local endorsements, raising public awareness, and establishing local partnerships – was essential in building the 2-1-1 program for the county and gaining regulatory approval.”

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The 2-1-1 Marin Working Group includes representatives from the County's Health and Human Services Department, the Center for Nonprofit and Volunteer Leadership of Marin, the Latino Council, the Healthy Marin Partnership, the Marin Center for Independent Living, the Marin Community Foundation, and the County Office of Emergency Services.

In addition to investments by United Way's Bay Area Community Fund, The San Francisco Foundation and Marin First 5 have provided grants to support 2-1-1 service in Marin. The First 5 grant is intended to help United Way improve its 2-1-1 database, working in cooperation with the Marin Coordinating Council, the county and other Marin organizations to add and enhance information about services for children under five.

After the Marin launch, United Way expects to serve 12,500 county residents per year. Until it expands 2-1-1 service to Marin, United Way HELPLINK will continue to serve the county through its toll-free number, 800-273-6222.

The 2-1-1 Marin program is part of a United Way strategy to promote and establish 2-1-1 service throughout the Bay Area. In March 2006, UWBA launched United Way 2-1-1 phone service in San Francisco, the first introduction of this important telephone number in all of northern California. UWBA is currently working to raise additional funds in order to establish and guarantee operations for Bay Area-wide 2-1-1 service for the next five years.

"To secure the 2-1-1 designation for Marin County from the CPUC, United Way had to demonstrate comprehensive, up-to-date knowledge of public, non-profit and community services and our ability to offer professional, expert and effective assistance to people in need, regardless of language, disability, or financial circumstances," said Schoenberger.

"United Way HELPLINK's 30 years of providing I&R service to the people and agencies of the Bay Area and Marin County was an essential ingredient in receiving the endorsement of so many of the county's public and non-profit service providers.

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Our longstanding partnerships with such key Marin organizations as the Latino Council, the Center for Nonprofit and Volunteer Leadership of Marin, the County Department of Health and Human Services and the Healthy Marin Partnership will be critical to ensuring a high quality of service once 2-1-1 is implemented in Marin,” he added.

More than 55 percent of the US population, including six counties in Southern California, can now access 2-1-1, thanks to United Way of America’s and its non-profit partners’ decade-long campaign to promote the service. Started in Atlanta in 1997, 2-1-1 currently reaches approximately 163 million people through 187 active 2-1-1 systems covering all or part of 38 states.

Residents from around the Bay Area can visit [www.211bayarea.org](http://www.211bayarea.org) to search United Way HELPLINK’s region-wide database of services and learn more about UWBA’s plans to expand 2-1-1 throughout the Bay Area. Information about 2-1-1 nationally can be found at [www.211.org](http://www.211.org).

### **About United Way 2-1-1**

United Way 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember, three-digit phone number that connects people in need with health and human services. This free, confidential, 24-hour multilingual service also serves as a vital link for individuals seeking to volunteer, provide resources and assist during times of crisis. Currently, United Way 2-1-1 service is available only in San Francisco County from landline telephones. Residents using cell phones or calling from outside San Francisco County can reach the United Way 2-1-1 call center by dialing 415-808-HELP or 800-273-6222. United Way’s introduction of 2-1-1 in San Francisco is the first step in plans to promote and establish 2-1-1 service throughout the Bay Area. Learn more at [www.211bayarea.org](http://www.211bayarea.org).

### **About United Way of the Bay Area**

United Way of the Bay Area is a nonprofit organization dedicated to community impact. Our mission is to be the catalyst that enables people to strengthen their communities by investing in one another. Through the Bay Area Community Fund, United Way supports more than 250 local programs that fight poverty and create opportunities for children, youth, families and neighborhoods to thrive. In San Francisco, United Way 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember phone number that connects people in need -- as well as individuals seeking to help -- with community service providers. United Way’s introduction of 2-1-1 in San Francisco is the first step in plans to promote and establish 2-1-1 service throughout the Bay Area. For more information, visit [www.uwba.org](http://www.uwba.org).

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