

COVID-19 Community Response Advisory Council

Friday, May 8, 2020

2:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Jay Williams, President, Hartford Foundation for Public Giving

- United Way is a critical partner, not just in this work but prior to this crisis
 - always valued, appreciated the work they do, thank you Paula for co-convening these conversations
- Also the City of Hartford, although we work with 29 towns and cities, we've been able to establish a relationship with Mayor Bronin over the past few years
- Last session, Mayor Bronin said something that encapsulates that we are all going through something that will shape and impact us for the rest of our lives
- Jay shares with his own son: "At some point in 20, 25 years you are going to be talking to your kids about the pandemic of 2020 the way some of us heard our parents, grandparents talk about the Great Depression. Obviously, we are going through this with more resources."
- Mayor and Paula, thank you for your leadership
- We need to coordinate, complement each other more than ever as Paula shared
- Convening this group was to inform and shape our work on an ongoing basis and in real time
- Today we will be looking at the 2-1-1 data, exploring ways to support and keep that essential community resource as additional neighborhood supports are available
- Please review notes from last meeting, we will continue to document those so we have an addendum of the things we are working on, issues put on the table we will tackle together in the community
 - Some will be tackled in the short, immediate term while others will be part of a long-term approach

Paula Gilberto, President, United Way of Central and Northeastern CT

- Thank you the Hartford Foundation for this partnership, so we can all learn together, share together and help advance our community together
- It is important for each of us as family members, co-workers, friends, neighbors that we do what we can to be personally resilient: our ability will have significant and positive impact on how we navigate through this
 - We should also recognize we are resilient, and if we have a moment where we doubt that, to be personally resilient, we make a commitment to reach out and get support from someone else whether from within our network or outside

- It is important to recognize the effect this has on us, but also recognize there are members of our community being disproportionately affected
 - Renew our commitment to those individuals, communities that are bearing a heavier and have additional obstacles
 - We are in a unique position of privilege; and a place to do something about that
- I encourage you all to pause and reflect on all you have to be grateful for, both personally and professionally
- Thank you to Annie Scully and everyone who supports their local United Way, as it is a way to ensure we can support 2-1-1

Luke Bronin, Mayor of Hartford

Two topics to discuss:

- 1) How can we support our youth and keep them engaged
 - Held a conversation with Hartford Opportunity Youth Collaborative yesterday (this is a couple dozen youth-serving organizations that work in close coordination to create pipelines to employment, combat chronic absenteeism and keep young people engaged)
 - Despite Hartford Public School's effort to engage students; providing thousands of devices, individualized outreach to families, etc.
 - 29% rising 9th graders have been actively participating
 - While 16% of current 9th graders have been active participants
 - Active involvement means students are consistently participating in remote learning opportunities
 - Does not mean they are not participating at all, but not regularly
 - Is everyone not in that active involvement in some sense chronically absent right now?
 - It is a strange time and we cannot measure anything by what is happening in this moment, but it is important to get these children back on track for next school year, in the absence of traditional summer programming this summer
 - We have to think hard and quickly about very concrete things we are putting together to reach these young people
 - Starting with the most at risk
- 2) Delayed housing crisis
 - Could occur as tenant protections roll off and as people may not have the funds as multiple months of rent are due

- There may be an opportunity here to strengthen/double down on our housing prevention and homelessness diversion efforts rather than expanding emergency shelter capacity
- Ensuring people in the hotels enter a stable housing environment and those who may be at risk for homelessness because of the delayed rent challenge and drop off in tenant protections, that we focus our efforts on prevention and diversion rather than emergency shelter response

Annie Scully, United Way of Connecticut

We are grateful for this network across the state and the Greater Hartford area

- 2-1-1 is a program of United Way of Connecticut
- We rely heavily on support from the 15 local United Ways, all of you, and the state of Connecticut
- This presentation will show the work 2-1-1 is doing on behalf of the State of Connecticut and Department of Public Health, the role 2-1-1 plays and what the data shows as top needs from residents and communities this council represents

2-1-1 Presentation: PowerPoint

- [2-1-1 Counts](#) is an online, interactive updated dashboard that depicts service request data
- 2-1-1 Connecticut is part of the State of Connecticut's Emergency Response Framework and is the gateway to services for emergency/disaster response and recovery
- Some functions include: information dissemination, rumor control, connection to program and services, situation reporting, volunteer and donation collection, call trend reporting and data collection, temporary hotel placements, transportation coordination, case management coordination, 2-1-1 staffing at the State Emergency Operations Center

Participate in all emergency/disaster response drills conducted by FEMA and the state

- Require 2-1-1 to staff the Emergency Operations Center, work collaboratively with various partners, and include mock calls to the 2-1-1 Contact Center
- Past activation, though past experience does not compare to what we are currently doing:
 - Extreme cold or hot weather
 - Hurricane Maria
 - Hurricane Sandy
 - Sandy Hook
 - H1N1

Flow of information; the State's EOC relies on 2-1-1 to:

- Disseminate consistent and accurate information
- Connect help seekers to help and community resources in the 2-1-1 database
- Track and report call trends and unmet needs to EOC
- Track and report rumors to EOC and dispel rumors once confirmed by EOC
- What is missing are the various community programs, services, agencies, which help to report into our 2-1-1 info services department to let them know about info they receive, whether or not their programs are operating at full capacity

Department of Public Health is the lead agency

- Asked 2-1-1 to stand up COVID-19 Public information Line (March 7 - present)
 - >29,000 calls made to date and pre-recorded messages have been accessed >29,000 times
 - 2-1-1 Contact Specialist are documenting caller needs, and reporting call trends, rumors and unmet needs to the State Emergency Operations Center
 - This data is used to inform announcements from the Governor's office, gaps in service and how decision-makers allocate available resources

Breakdown of Listens to Pre-Recorded Messages

- These messages are consistent, some are retired as people no longer need a response to certain questions

2-1-1's Top Service Requests (as shown on the dashboard)

- Statewide
 - Week to week comparison, comparing year to year
- Shows top categories of need
 - Notable increases: food, employment and income and healthcare (COVID-19 testing/general questions)

Talk Line/Warm Line Support

- There is also a significant number of calls from people not in crisis or looking for resources, but looking for someone to talk to
- Provide a "warm line" of support for individuals

Top Website Searches on 211ct.org

- Food is the highest searched service (food pantries, soup kitchens, SNAP, home-delivered meals, etc.)
 - This data is not captured by the data dashboard
 - Individuals are using the website more than ever before to access information about where food resources are located
 - Grateful to food partners across the state that are standing up in innovative and creative ways to serve food insecure populations who are not comfortable going into a food pantry right now or lack of volunteers or cannot operate at normal capacity due to social distancing

2-1-1 Resource Guide of Community-Based Organizations

- Specific to COVID-19 Response
- Easy to navigate through, page on website
- Also pointing people to the State of Connecticut's COVID-19 website where executive ordinances and other guidance is being kept up to date

[Ct.211counts.org](https://ct.211counts.org) Walkthrough

- Provides real-time, searchable and visual presentations of 2-1-1 Call Center data across 13 top service categories and 76 subcategories
- Created by the Health Communication Research Laboratory at Washington University in St. Louis
- 2-1-1 CT launched the 2-1-1 Counts dashboard in June 2016
- The dashboard contains data dating back to May 2014
- The dashboard can be used to establish trends and identify statewide/community specific needs by:
 - ZIP code
 - Region or municipality
 - State, Senate or Congressional District
 - Age and gender
 - Custom time frame
- It allows interested parties, stakeholders and decision makers to:
 - Analyze call data
 - Expose and address unmet needs
 - Study trends
 - Make comparisons
 - Conduct community needs assessments
 - Share information
- Total Calls vs. Total Requests
 - A call received at the Contact Center to a Specialist counts as one call
 - The call could result in multiple requests for service; if the caller loses their job, they may be placed under a service request for housing, food, etc.
- There are 13 top service areas
 - You can dive deeper into each one of these areas by clicking on it i.e. select "Housing and Shelter": once clicked this category will expand, displaying spiked out data
 - Hovering over the categories will give a quick description of what that category includes (also for sub categories)
 - Data can be displayed as a percentage or count
- Right hand of screen: column "Unmet"
 - Decision makers are usually most interested in this

- This means that a caller was not connected to a resource that met their need
- Rent assistance is one of the highest unmet needs; years ago there was a statewide rent assistance program for those who qualified, but we no longer have this resource to share
- Can show County or ZIP code on the maps which highlights or shows the highest concentration of need across the ZIP code
 - Can highlight a specific category, ie food
 - Can further filter by requests for sub category, ie “help buying food”

2-1-1 Responses

Luke Bronin, Mayor of Hartford

- There is a noticeable increase year over year in the “Other” category, what are the largest drivers of this?
 - This category includes COVID-19 requests, but will likely change in the next few weeks as 2-1-1 works update/clean up data
- Housing and shelter requests appear down from last year, what is the percentage of need that’s being met?
 - There appears to be a slight decrease, perhaps due to current protections for rental assistance

Richard Cho, Chief Executive Officer, Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness

- Comparing April 2019 and 2020 the housing/shelter calls appear flat
- We do not know if the calls for rent assistance or landlord/tenant issues are down due to the eviction moratorium, but it would be interesting to track this over time
- Number of calls for shelter seems flat from 2019, but we have seen fewer shelter admissions and the number of CAN referrals has gone down
- We should rethink the homeless system and shrink the shelter census
- There are fewer people in shelters, but they could be seeking other alternatives
- There has not been a huge spike in unsheltered homeless
- Slides comparing 2-1-1 data and CAN’s

Lena Rodriguez, President & CEO, Community Renewal Team

- Could we clarify why “Utilities” on the 2-1-1 Count dashboard had unmet needs, what does this mean?
 - CRT funds the energy program, which has a lot of funding
 - This service area has documented “unmet needs”, likely because there is no program in the database that meets what individuals need or they are not eligible
- What is the system for updating your resource database?

- 6 full-time resource specialists who update all (approx. 40,000) services/ programs reflected in the database at least once per year
- These specialists continuously work with agencies which populate those programs to make sure they are updating to reflect current info
- Right now is difficult because the majority of programs and services have changed; hours of operation, off-site services, etc.
- These are manual changes which will be continuously updated
- To add or update a resource on 2-1-1
 - Go to the [211ct.org → professionals](https://211ct.org/professionals)
If you have agencies that you work with closely that are already reflected in our database, share the flyer with them to update information (**Annie to share pdf**)
 - Or search for your listing and select update this listing, submit the form (would later be confirmed and shared on the site)

Senior Pastor Ronald Holmes, Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church,
President, Greater Hartford Interdenominational Ministries Alliance

- Serving Hartford and Bloomfield communities mostly virtually now
 - Ministry meetings are conference calls/Zoom meetings
 - Bible studies have grown
 - Virtual service every Sunday now 1 hour but over 1,000 viewers
- This is a difficult time for those who have passed
 - Lack of traditional funerals (drive-thru)/ways of grieving
- Not being able to see one another is difficult
 - There is a social aspect to church - to worship with those we know, hug and handshake
 - Phone trees instead; ministry leaders call seniors, drive-by homes, wave
 - Phone trees help people stay connected, feel less isolated and vent
 - Drive-thru communion and colleagues in IMA have been giving away dinner and lunches
 - Nursing homes are most affected
 - In collaboration to serve meals to staff, complete and online by Monday
- Thank God for faith; those who do not know faith are now being introduced to faith
- A pastor cannot do it alone, it is nice to be connected with references/ organizations that we can make referrals here you can get the information

Richard Sugarman, Hartford Promise

- Commend Ronald on the creation of a phone tree
- Offers scholars to help expand phone tree

Melanie Tavares, Director, Nonprofit Support Program, Hartford Foundation

- Value of having people listen to webinars
- Webinar sponsored by the council which would elevate the concerns we have all witnessed, inclusive of data
- Going to follow up with more detail

Elysa Gordon, Vice President and Senior Advisor, Hartford Foundation

- The Foundation has granted \$4.9 million to a broad range of organizations throughout Greater Hartford through COVID-19 Relief Fund
- Build relationships with smaller organizations that residents feel most safe and comfortable going to
- Needs for immediate personal protection, working with Alliance Districts to mitigate learning loss through distance learning, technology and other supports as well as thinking about summer engagement
 - Working with HPS superintendent to understand how we might support
- The Foundation, the City, United Way and Travelers Foundation are having conversations about what could ensure all children and youth are connected to a youth development organization this summer, possibly into the fall
 - Summer programs will either not run or look very different
- Where we need to be thinking about building infrastructure for coordination
 - Readiness and resilience so we can be ready for anticipated crisis (housing and learning loss)
- The small business micro-grant program that is a collaboration with the City of Hartford, HFPG, corporate and private funders has seen 150-200 applications in 24 hour/48 hour period
 - Hartford Foundation's contribution was to focus on small businesses owned by people of color, located in lower-income areas of Hartford
 - 10% of our contributions set aside to support family childcare providers
- We are reviewing these applications now and conversations about continuing this effort have begun
- 2 issues: we look forward to being informed by folks on this call
 1. Related to family childcare provider issue broadly
 - How can we support these individuals, families, and children they serve? (as things open more and people look for employment/ go back to work)
 - Kim Oliver has been in these conversations; whom else might we need to bring together for support for this group?
 2. Mayor Bronin has been publicly speaking about Census learning

- Value at some point insight/ideas from this group on how we might integrate the work we are already doing to (where people are already able to gather; food or testing site, perhaps one of these orgs)
- Engage young people looking for work experience how can we encourage them to get people to fill out the Census on their phones, etc

Luke Bronin, Mayor of Hartford

- Every single one of Connecticut's cities is among the worst right now in the country in terms of self-response rate, and Hartford is at the bottom
- Any opportunity for whatever engagement you have to spread the word is critical
- Is 2-1-1 encouraging anyone to fill out the Census or can they take forms as people call 2-1-1?
- We have reached out to the state to include Census materials in any mailings going to residents
- Digital campaign with HFPG
- Taking forms at lunch distribution
- Every one of these organizations interacts with a lot of people and if you build into those contacts, information and facilitation it would make a big difference

Elysa, Vice President and Senior Advisor, Hartford Foundation

- We want to hear more good ideas
- Open to thinking about how we could provide funding/support for innovative ways you are already doing your work and how additional support could help with the census count
- Thank you to United Way and Hartford Foundation team who makes this all possible

Paula Gilberto, President, United Way of Central and Northeastern CT

- Thank you, Judy, Elysa, all of the team members, the Foundation staff, United Way staff and all of you who have volunteered to be on these calls to share your expertise, help inform and contribute to all of us staying engaged
- We will get through this