

**City Council Committee on Technology in Government**  
**Testimony of Louisa Chafee, Director for Management Innovation**  
**Office of Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services**  
**September 24, 2009**

Good morning Chairperson Brewer and members of the Technology in Government Committee. My name is Louisa Chafee, I am the Director of Management Innovation for the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, Linda Gibbs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding New York City's health and human service information and referral at 3-1-1, known as 211 in other jurisdictions, and referred to in NYC as "e311". Working in close conjunction with DoITT, and our nonprofit partners, we are responsible for leading the effort to bring 211 services to 311.

In November of 2005, Mayor Bloomberg made the public commitment to bring telephone based information and referral to New Yorkers through the 311 calling center. Shortly after that announcement, Council Woman Brewer, you held a hearing, and DoITT discussed the many challenges that lay ahead: identifying appropriate call takers, incorporating critical information to the call takers database, adhering to national data standards, obtaining the 211 number, and --perhaps mostly importantly-- engaging the nonprofit community's expertise in designing service provision. Today 311 provides health and human service information and referral services to over 8,000 callers a day, 24/7 in nearly 180 languages. I am pleased to testify on how we have achieved these critical building blocks, and the unique blended model we developed that is the governance structure behind this innovative government-nonprofit approach to effective social service information and referral provision.

Working with DoITT, we formed a coalition of nonprofits and government agencies to together plan the best approach to delivering this service. With strong leadership from Safe Horizon, Life Net, Visions/Blindline, Human Services Council and, of course, the United Way of New York City, these nonprofits, as well as New York State Alliance of Information and Referral Specialists (AIRS), and over 40 not-for-profits, formed an advisory committee that advises DoITT on many aspects of service implementation. Council Women Brewer, we thank you and your staff for your participation in this effort since its inception. This workgroup was renamed the advisory committee, when we formed a nonprofit organization, in order to have the right to turn on the 211 number. This entity, the NYC Health and Human Service Information and Referral Corporation, has a board consisting of 6 City officials and 3 nonprofit leadership organizations: UWNYS, HSC and Visions/Blindline. We were granted rights to use the 211 number in March of 2007.

We created a unique blended model of 211 and 311 -- joining DoITT's robust technology with the nonprofit community and NYC government agencies social service provision expertise. For data standards, and call taking certification, we continue to work with the Alliance of Information and Referral Specialists (AIRS) to have the call center

accredited, bringing high standards to the call takers, and allowing the analysis of data in the AIRS taxonomy, so that one can compare call volume and usage across jurisdictions.

In addition to City funds, New York State has issued about \$5 million to New York City, over two thirds of which has been used to develop and enhance the content of 311 by adding social service content and provider information. Recognizing the merits of the HITE information system, a database developed by Greater NY Hospital Corporation to assist case workers when discharging patients, we have worked together for over 3 years to incorporate content and leverage their excellent not-for-profit knowledge. The remainder of the funding was used by the United Way of New York City to build the capacity of our not-for-profit community to receive referrals from 311—including a series of trainings and grants of hardware such as phone systems and computers.

Thank you again for your invitation to testify. This concludes my prepared remarks. I would like to introduce you to my colleague at DoITT, First Deputy Commissioner Ron Bergmann.

**DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS TESTIMONY  
BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY IN GOVERNMENT  
OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE ENHANCED 311 INITIATIVE  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2009**

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Good morning Chair Brewer and members of the City Council Committee on Technology in Government. My name is Ron Bergmann, First Deputy Commissioner of the New York City Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, or DoITT. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the City's implementation of the Enhanced 311 Initiative, which provides the public with round-the-clock access to comprehensive human services information and referral from both City agencies and non-profits across the five boroughs.

What in many jurisdictions throughout the country is being developed through the "211" abbreviated dialing arrangement, New York City's Enhanced 311 leverages the staff, technology infrastructure, and business processes already in place at the City's 311 Customer Service Center. Launched in March 2003, 311 is New York City's phone number for all non-emergency government information and services, operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, and with translation services in nearly 180 languages. 311 can also be accessed from anywhere in the world by dialing (212) NEW-YORK, via Skype, or online at [www.nyc.gov/311](http://www.nyc.gov/311); users can follow '311NYC' on Twitter as well.

Now receiving about 16 million calls per year and more than 87 million since inception, 311 has become a model for non-emergency government service numbers around the world, including Denmark, Germany, Ireland and the United Kingdom. Stateside, the cities of Philadelphia, Newark and San Francisco have all established innovative non-emergency service numbers based upon our model.

When we last testified before the committee on this topic in February 2006, Mayor Bloomberg had recently announced the commitment to bring health and human service information and referral to 311. Since that time, under the leadership of Deputy Mayor Linda Gibbs and with a consortium of non-profit organizations across the city, Enhanced 311 – or simply "E311" has become the nation's largest social service information and referral call center. This transformation began in November 2006 when we partnered with the City's Department for the Aging to handle, at expanded hours, calls regarding the City's aging population; it continued the next year when we partnered with the Human Resource Administration (HRA) to consolidate the Food and Hunger Hotline. Hungry New Yorkers today can call 311 and speak with trained specialists to learn about the location and hours of emergency food programs citywide.

Marking these successes, in April 2008 Mayor Bloomberg announced that E311 was providing access to nearly 1,000 unique social services and 1,300 non-profit organizations, an event Chair Brewer attended at the 311 Call Center. These services included the Department of Youth and Community Development's Summer Youth Employment Program, the Department of Correction's Inmate Lookup capability, and eviction assistance services from the Legal Aid Society in conjunction with the Department of Homeless Services and HRA.

To promote the availability of these enhanced services available to New Yorkers – especially the working poor, many of whom have limited English language proficiency – the City also unveiled a multi-language marketing effort in English, Arabic, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian and Spanish.

Ads also appeared in bus shelters, on subways, and on new bumper stickers on taxicabs and City vehicles. The campaign featured the familiar 311 logo and introduced a new 311 tagline – "*Your city. Your needs. Your number.*" – informing New Yorkers that they could now simply "get the 311:" they could "311" senior services, "311" food assistance, "311" domestic violence assistance, etc., for all their human service needs.

Through E311, callers can receive information and referrals to assist with housing, health care, job training, daycare, substance abuse programs, workforce development and educational opportunities, among others. Calls coming into 311 are first addressed by a Call Center Representative, who assists a caller in narrowing down his/her inquiry to a relevant requested service. For more complex human service inquiries, the caller can then be transferred to an E311 Information and Referral (I&R) specialist, to determine underlying needs and provide referrals to related services. These I&R Specialists assist callers – both individual clients and professionals – in assessing which services they are seeking, referring callers to not-for-profits, community-based, faith-based and government health and human services and programs.

Today, we continue our work with Deputy Mayor Gibbs and her staff to further improve not only upon the vast array of human services offered, but the ways in which they are made accessible.

For instance, information about many E311 services as well as ACCESS NYC (the web-based portal that pre-screens New Yorkers in nearly 40 City, state and federal human services programs) are also available via 311Online. Launched last March, 311Online is a terrific new web-based service offering customers multiple ways to find nearly 4,000 City services. Customers can search by keyword, locate information about specific programs and initiatives, and create service requests directly online. Users can browse the full range of City services and drill down to topics within each of these categories, as well as look for available services by specific demographics or service type. Easy “keyword” searches allow customers to navigate directly to the point of service in just a few clicks.

A significant feature of the 311Online portal is the Health and Human Services Provider Directory, a comprehensive online tool to help New Yorkers connect with community based organizations providing human services across the City. Customers can use the directory to search for information by zip code, borough, service category or organization name on everything from smoking cessation clinics, food stamp centers, public hospitals and Greenmarkets to career centers, after school programs, libraries, and much more. Once users identify specific providers, they are presented with the organizations’ addresses, phone number, hours of operation and a description of services offered.

I am pleased to announce that 311Online is being recognized today by the Center for Digital Government with a *Best of New York Award* as the Project Best Advancing Service to the Public.

As the City’s technology agency, DoITT works to transform the way the City interacts with its customers by leveraging IT to improve services and increase transparency, accountability, and accessibility. These services span the range of the City’s key mission areas – from public safety to economic development to infrastructure services. Among our portfolio of projects, Enhanced 311 and related initiatives are among the most rewarding – because they succeed in helping New Yorkers and their families change their lives for the better. As E311 continues to evolve and grow, we welcome the challenge of improving upon these services even still.

Thank you again for your time this morning. We would now be pleased to address any questions you may have.



United Way  
of New York City

United Way of New York City  
Testimony to the New York City Council  
Committee on Technology in Government  
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Good morning. My name is Alex Martinez and I am Chief of Staff at United Way of New York City (UWNYC). Thank you, Council Member Brewer and members of the Committee on Technology in Government for this opportunity to testify regarding our collaboration with the City of New York on health and human services information and referral. The mission of United Way of New York City is to connect people, resources, and ideas to create a thriving community characterized by income stability, educational success, and healthy people. We believe that everyone has a role in building a better future for all.

*2-1-1 at 311*, also known as "E311", is a unique partnership of the public and not-for-profit sectors to ensure that all those who live in, work in, or visit New York City have easy access to the full range of health and human services programs and services provided throughout the five boroughs. UWNYC has collaborated closely with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, with the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, and with nonprofit stakeholders to develop a system that takes advantage of the breadth and depth of essential human services offered by not-for-profit agencies.

I will now ask my colleague, Hayyim Obadyah, Director of 211/311 Initiatives at United Way of New York City, to speak in more detail about our work with *2-1-1 at 311*.

2-1-1 Around the Nation and the State.

Around the nation, 2-1-1 is an information and referral line that connects people to vital social services provided by a range of nonprofit and government agencies. This easy-to-remember number saves time and frustration by eliminating the need for callers to navigate a maze of agencies and help-lines. Specially trained personnel analyze what services are needed and provide the appropriate resource and related information.

On July 21, 2000, the Federal Communications Commission designated 2-1-1 to be used for community information and referral services. Currently 2-1-1 is available to nearly 80% of the U.S. population, with 236 active 2-1-1 call centers in 45 states. Nationwide, 2-1-1 call centers received more than 14 million calls in 2008, 44% higher than in 2007. Volume in 2009 will be dramatically higher, especially in the regions

hardest hit by natural disasters and the current economic crisis. United Way of America has made it a priority to advocate for the "Calling for 2-1-1 Act" currently pending in Congress, which would authorize Federal funds to match State support of the 2-1-1 system.

United Way of New York State and the New York State Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, Inc. (NYS AIRS) partnered in 1999 to bring 2-1-1 to New York State, and in 2002 the Public Service Commission assigned 2-1-1 implementation to the "2-1-1 New York" collaborative. Now, 77% of the population has access to 2-1-1 services. By the end of this calendar year, that reach will increase to 93%. In 2008, 2-1-1 New York handled 1.8 million calls, but calls in the first half of 2009 already totaled 1.7 million.

### 2-1-1 at 311: A Meaningful and Effective Collaboration

Here in New York City, a close partnership between the City and the nonprofit sector enables 2-1-1 services to be provided by 311. In April 2008, Mayor Bloomberg announced the expansion of the New York City's 311 Customer Service Center (administered by the City's Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications) to include human service information and referrals. Now including "2-1-1"-type services, 311 has become the nation's largest social service information and referral center. The expansion of 311 provides an additional and critical gateway for New Yorkers to access vital health and human services, and it represents a cutting-edge public/not-for-profit partnership.

Gordon Campbell, President and CEO of United Way of New York City, sits on the Board of the New York City Health and Human Services Information and Referral Corporation, the entity entrusted by the statewide 2-1-1 New York Collaborative to operate 2-1-1 services in the New York City Region. Together with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, UWNYP co-convenes the E311 Advisory Committee. Both UWNYP and the Office of the Deputy Mayor HHS sit on the Policy Board of 2-1-1 New York, representing our Region's interests on a state level.

The vast bulk of costs to expand 311 to provide health and human services information and referral has been covered by the City of New York. In addition, support for 2-1-1 from the State legislature, provided through a NYS Office of Children and Family Services contract with United Way of New York State, has amounted to a total of \$4,982,483 for the New York City Region. UWNYP is the Region's fiscal agent for these funds. When fully expended, we expect about \$3,671,962 to have gone towards the costs of the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications to upgrade equipment, design systems, and train staff. About \$1,310,521 will have gone to United Way of New York City.

### The Work of United Way of New York City in 2-1-1 at 311

In the context of this blended 2-1-1 at 311 model, United Way of New York City builds the capacity of not-for-profit organizations to participate in the health and human services information and referral system by enhancing their technology and training their staff.

Our training for staff of not-for-profit agencies builds skills not only for Information and Referral Specialists, but also for other agency staff who help people identify their needs, determine the services that can address those needs, and connect them to those services. We currently provide six different workshops, and have offered to date 63 sessions to 715 registrants. The trainings provide specific skills, such as active listening and managing difficult calls, and also include information on how to use 311 as a resource in helping clients. UWNYPC encourages nonprofit providers to see 311 not only as a service for the public, but also as a professional resource. Evaluations of the trainings have been consistently very positive, and it is particularly gratifying that the staff who have participated largely represent small community-based organizations that otherwise would not be able to provide such an opportunity for staff development.

UWNYPC has also helped a small group of not-for-profit service providers to enhance their capacity by providing telecommunications and technology enhancements. Throughout the five boroughs, people are reaching out for help. In the face of increasing demand, nonprofit agencies help people directly when they can and help people find other resources when they cannot. United Way wants to ensure that these agencies can manage the calls that come in, including those that are referred by 311, and can provide necessary information and referral, including referral to 311 when appropriate. To date, we have incurred capital costs, primarily to upgrade telephone systems and increase computer hardware, in the amount of \$201,701. The 16 nonprofits that have received technology are primarily small community-based organizations. The enhancements have been used to enable organizations, for example, to transfer phone calls between program sites, to take referral information into the field, and to expand an information center. We anticipate that we will expend another \$186,525 by the end of this calendar year.

### The Future of 2-1-1 at 311

In the three years since 2-1-1 New York awarded the 2-1-1 designation in New York City, there has been tremendous progress. The 311 Customer Service Center has designated and trained specialized staff to handle sophisticated health and human services information and referral. Complex design work has created a database much better able to manage information on health and human services. An ad campaign in seven languages publicized the availability of these services through 311. The work, of course, is not finished. We must be prepared to take advantage of technology innovation to expand the reach of health and human services information and referral.

We must also solidify and sustain the progress that has been achieved to date. United Way of New York City is particularly pleased that in the coming months the priority of 2-1-1 at 311 will be to increase the number of nonprofit services included in the 311 database. New York City is blessed with a multitude of nonprofit human service providers of all sizes addressing a vast range of needs. As the access to these human services is made easy and convenient by 2-1-1 at 311, all New Yorkers will benefit. United Way of New York City is committed to working with the Council and the Administration to ensure effective, efficient, and compassionate information and referral.

Mr. Martinez and I would be happy to take any questions you might have.