

TO: Kent County COVID Emergency Sub-Committee

FROM: Michelle Van Dyke, President & CEO
Heart of West Michigan United Way

DATE: May 27, 2020

RE: 2-1-1 COVID Response

Heart of West Michigan United Way's 2-1-1 is Kent County's comprehensive information and referral service. 2-1-1 is the primary starting point for individuals, families, and professionals seeking information to meet their basic needs and access critical programs and services. United Way's 2-1-1 provides information about community resources to inquirers seeking help for a variety of needs, including food, shelter, medical care, and housing. Since its inception in 2002, United Way's 2-1-1 has assisted over 900,000 people in West Michigan with accessing services to meet their most basic, essential needs.

As you can imagine, 2-1-1 has played an important role in responding to the COVID pandemic. Recently, 2-1-1 entered into a partnership with the Emergency Management Division of the Kent County Sheriff's Office, and there has been excellent coordination between these teams.

Since March, 2-1-1 has been answering COVID-related calls, including those calling the Kent County Health Department with general COVID questions. From March 1- May 25, we have answered 11,807 calls to 2-1-1. The number of calls in April 2020 was up 52% from April 2019 due to the COVID crisis.

2-1-1 tracks the purpose of each call. See below for the top reasons for a Kent County resident to call 2-1-1 during the crisis:

-Food Assistance/Access	20.07%
-Housing Assistance	17.8%
-Income Support	16.5%
-Utility Assistance	12.4%

United Way monitors the reasons for calling 2-1-1 to ensure that the Coronavirus Response Fund dollars are going to the agencies providing these services. To date, United Way has raised over \$3.3 million for the Coronavirus Response Fund and has granted \$2.7 million in 185 grants to 134 different agencies. Grants are decisioned and funded within 48 hours of the request.

Because of the increased number of COVID-related calls to 2-1-1, Heart of West Michigan United Way has had to provide additional staff to this effort. **The cost for these services-directly related to COVID in Kent County- will be \$11,410. I respectfully request that the COVID Emergency Sub-Committee considers reimbursement of these expenses to Heart of West Michigan United Way.** Thank you.