

**SEMINOLE COUNTY GOVERNMENT
AGENDA MEMORANDUM**

SUBJECT: Matching funds for 211 Community Information and Referral Helpline

DEPARTMENT: Community Services **DIVISION:** Community Assistance
Phillip C. Stalvey, Director David Medley, Manager

AUTHORIZED BY: *[Signature]* 7/23/03 **CONTACT:** David Medley **EXT.** 3363

Agenda Date <u>8/12/03</u>	Regular <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Consent <input type="checkbox"/>	Work Session <input type="checkbox"/>	Briefing <input type="checkbox"/>
	Public Hearing – 1:30 <input type="checkbox"/>		Public Hearing – 7:00 <input type="checkbox"/>	

MOTION/RECOMMENDATION:

Approval by the Board of County Commissioners of \$15,000 as matching funds for the local 211 Community Information and Referral/Elder Helpline and authorization for the chairman to execute contract with Community Services Network.

BACKGROUND:

In July 2003 the local 211 Community Information and Referral Helpline was officially begun. 2-1-1 is a simple, easy to remember, three digit telephone number that local residents will be able to use to access comprehensive community resource information about available services and programs with the assistance of trained and certified Information & Referral (I&R) professionals.

The *Community Foundation of Central Florida* has made available \$15,000 as a dollar for dollar match to Seminole County to support this regional effort. *The Community Foundation of Central Florida* was established as a 501 (C)(3) in 1994 and serves the needs of charities and communities throughout Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties by managing and investing donor funds, connecting donors with projects they feel passionate about and providing research for donors to make informed decisions.

Funds are available in the current 2002/03 Budget for these matching dollars. The BCC approved \$20,000 as matching funds for the local children's health program called Kids Care. These funds have not been needed this year due to availability of resources carried over from previous years. It is requested that \$15,000 of these funds be approved as matching funds to assist in the startup of this program.

Reviewed by: <u>7:30 03</u>
Co Atty: <u><i>[Signature]</i></u>
DFS: <u><i>[Signature]</i></u>
Other: _____
DCM: <u><i>[Signature]</i></u>
CM: <u><i>[Signature]</i></u>
File No. <u>RCS01</u>

211 Community Information and Referral/Elder Helpline Program Summary

The *Community Services Network* (CSN) has a long history of service in Central Florida and has continually evolved in response to opportunities to better serve all residents of Central Florida, specifically in the Orange, Osceola & Seminole Counties. Started in 1968 as the *Human Services Council*, the agency has always focused on finding ways to systematically gather information about community resources available to meet the local human service needs of residents. In October 2002, CSN entered into a formal Affiliation Agreement with the Heart of Florida United Way (HFUW) to introduce 2-1-1 to the tri-county service area. 2-1-1 is a simple, easy to remember, three digit telephone number that local residents will be able to use to access comprehensive community resource information about available services and programs with the assistance of trained and certified Information & Referral (I&R) professionals. 2-1-1 was started in Atlanta, GA, in 1997 and since then has received the official endorsement and approval by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 2000. The primary purpose of the Affiliation Agreement between CSN and HFUW is to collaboratively implement 2-1-1 by enhancing CSN's First Call for Help program in the most cost-effective and timely way possible.

The service that CSN/2-1-1 proposes to provide to the citizens of Seminole County is a comprehensive information and referral (I&R) service that all residents can access via an abbreviated 2-1-1 telephone number. In the 2002 calendar year, our current I&R program, First Call for Help/Elder Helpline, processed more than 9,400 calls by residents of Seminole County that were looking for assistance in identifying available community resources to address a specific health and human service need. Although the number of calls handled is very significant, to reach our service many of these callers had to be very persistent in their efforts to find appropriate help. The current ten (10) digit telephone number, despite being listed in three different places in the telephone directory, was still difficult to find and remember outside of professional social service networks.

The funds requested, along with the matching dollars from the Community Foundation of Central Florida will provide the following services to Seminole County residents:

- 24/7/365 access to a live, certified and professionally trained I&R Specialist to assist callers in assessing their presenting problems;
- Provision of specific information and referrals available community resources in the health and human service sector that can assist in addressing their needs, including accurate contact information and service requirements; and
- Selected callers will also receive follow-up contacts to ensure quality of service and to determine the extent to which the social service providers met their needs, with the option of additional referrals if necessary.

The service is also staffed with bilingual specialists to handle Spanish language callers and has access to AT&T's language line for over 150 languages. The hearing-impaired will be served through a TTD access line.

Additionally, social service providers and other key community stakeholders will be provided community reports on a regular basis indicating the following statistical data:

- Call volume totals in designated areas of interest and by location;
- Utilization of resources by service categories and agency; and
- Analysis of trends comparing previous month and same month, previous year data.

The availability of community resources to address the needs of families and individuals in our communities is quite significant. Several programs and services for special populations (i.e., the disabled, children, seniors, etc.) and topic-areas (i.e., employment, addictions, counseling, basic needs, etc.) have been created over the last decades that simply were not available in the past. Yet the growth of these programs and services has not always kept pace with the demands of increasingly complex social and economic developments. The services provided by 2-1-1 Community Information & Referral/Elder Helpline are designed to promote the self-sufficiency of families and individuals by increasing the appropriate use of currently available community resources and to help community leaders better understand the demands on and utilization of those resources.

An important illustration of this need comes from the report entitled "Community Health Assessment: Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties, Florida," published by the Winter Park Health Foundation in November 2000. Although this report focuses primarily on specific health-related issues, its emphasis on "increasing accessibility to preventive health services" is based on findings that many of those services exist, but are underutilized. One of the key dimensions of "increasing accessibility to preventive health services" relates directly to increasing awareness that many of those preventive services exist in the social service sector and how to access them.

One of the best examples of the need for this service is based on an analysis of the single most requested community resource: temporary emergency financial assistance. Approximately 800 to 1,200 calls each month (one third of all calls) from the tri-county are from residents that need temporary financial assistance for rent, mortgage or utilities due to reduced work hours, sickness or another unexpected emergency or an unanticipated expense. The financial assistance available through existing programs is only able to assist 15% to 25% of these cases. Yet by working with callers to better understand the underlying causes of their current situation, I&R Specialists are able to provide additional options (e.g., credit & financial management services, employment counseling, alternative housing resources, child care, prescription assistance, transportation, etc.) depending on the identified need.

By providing easy access to families and individuals in need of services to trained I&R professionals with knowledge of a wide array of community resources, this service will fill a critical role in helping them to become more self-sufficient.