



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

## Senate Majority Leader Flanagan Joins United Way Of Long Island And Middle Country Public Library In Recognizing 2-1-1 Day

JOHN J. FLANAGAN February 19, 2016

| ISSUE: **COMMUNITY**



In an effort to make residents aware that there is a seamless way to obtain referrals for service, United Way of Long Island joined a nationwide effort by recognizing February 11, 2016 as 2-1-1 Day.

Year-round Long Islanders dial 2-1-1 to get reassuring referrals to a myriad of human service and health related resources that can make a critical difference in their lives. A program of

United Way of Long Island, in partnership with the Middle County Public Library, highly skilled information specialists, who can communicate in over 170 languages, help callers navigate through a resource database of 10,000 services available to assist with their most acute needs.

**New York Senate Majority Leader John J. Flanagan commented on the importance of 2-1-1, "Both Long Island and New York offer some of the most comprehensive human service programs in the United States. To make sure Long Islanders connect with those effective programs and benefits, United Way's 2-1-1 helps increase awareness, closes the gaps, and gets people connected to the help they truly need."**

Each call to the free non-emergency information service is easy and completely confidential. In 2015, 2-1-1 Long Island answered close to 9,000 requests for help in their call center. An additional 270,000 unique visitors came to the 2-1-1 database to obtain referral information online at [www.211longisland.com](http://www.211longisland.com). The 2-1-1 database is continually updated throughout the year by the Middle County Public Library through communication with the participating agencies.

Theresa Regnante, President and CEO of United Way of Long Island understands what a daunting task it can be for someone in need to find assistance. She said, "The most difficult aspect of seeking help is not knowing where to turn or how to reach an agency that can provide aid. With so many high-quality services offered on Long Island, it can take a person who is in need three or four calls before they connect with an organization that can help. 2-1-1 relieves anxiety by assuring that one simple call will start the process of providing relief."

Sophia Serlis-McPhillips, Director of Middle Country Public Library added, "The Middle Country Public Library is proud to partner with the United Way of Long Island on the 2-1-1 Initiative. It's imperative for Long Islanders to have access to these much needed resources in their daily lives and during times of crises."

An actual case in point of the effectiveness of dialing 2-1-1 came into focus recently. A distressed woman contacted 2-1-1 to find help dealing with overwhelming emotional problems. After determining the caller was not suicidal, the 2-1-1 call center specialist provided referrals to several crisis centers that offer a warm voice to talk with. The caller didn't realize specific agencies had crisis lines that allowed a person to just "talk" about their issues. Without 2-1-1, the caller might have never known these resources existed and told the 2-1-1 staff she now felt comfortable calling the crisis line herself.

In addition to the general online database of resources offered by 2-1-1, three specialty sections make specific connections even easier to access:

1. 2-1-1 provides a wealth of information through the Veterans Support Services portal geared to the needs of Long Island's large veteran's population.
2. A link to MyBenefits.NY.Gov helps people, in a systematic way, to determine eligibility for programs created and administered by the State of New York.
3. New this year, a separate contact point has been established to find critical resources for Long Island adults, as well as children with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities.

**The 2-1-1 Call Center operates seven days a week, Monday-Saturday from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm and Sundays from noon to 4:00 pm. The services are free, confidential and multi lingual. Call 2-1-1 or 1-888-774-7633 or for a free 24-hour online directory of health and human service agencies and programs in Nassau and Suffolk counties, visit [www.211longisland.org](http://www.211longisland.org).**