



Agenda Date: 10/10/2006
Agenda Placement: 9A

NAPA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS Board Agenda Letter

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Shelli Brobst for Randy Snowden - Director
Health & Human Services
REPORT BY: Randy Snowden, Director, 253-4219
SUBJECT: United Way of the Bay Area Application to Provide 211 Service in Napa County

RECOMMENDATION

Director of Health and Human Services requests the following:

1. Endorsement of the United Way of the Bay Area's application to the California Public Utilities Commission to provide non-emergency telephone information and referral (2-1-1 service) to members of the public seeking local health, human, social and related services; and
2. Authorization for the Chair and appropriate department heads or their designees to sign endorsements or letters of support for the application.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The California Public Utilities Commission has the authority to certify the exclusive provider of "2-1-1" information and referral services within California counties. The United Way of the Bay Area (UWBA) has requested the endorsement of the Board of Supervisors and of certain County departments of its proposed application to become the exclusive 2-1-1 provider for Napa County. Approval of the requested actions would authorize endorsement of UWBA's application by the Board and departments operating programs that may benefit from or be affected by the 2-1-1 service.

FISCAL IMPACT

Is there a Fiscal Impact? No

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION: The proposed action is not a project as defined by 14 California Code of

Regulations 15378 (State CEQA Guidelines) and therefore CEQA is not applicable.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

"2-1-1" is the national abbreviated dialing code designated by the Federal Communications Commission to be used to reach certified non-emergency community information and referral providers. Upon dialing 2-1-1, a caller reaches the designated information and referral service that will in turn refer the caller to agencies which can provide appropriate social services such as housing assistance, programs to assist with utility bills, food assistance and other less urgent situations not currently addressed by either 911 or 311 services. This type of information service provides an alternative means for the public to learn about available services and also routes non-emergency calls away from 911 emergency services call centers.

The California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) administers the 2-1-1 system in California. Potential providers of the service apply to the PUC to be designated as the exclusive provider of 2-1-1 service within a designated geographic area. This is effectuated by the successful applicant being certified as eligible to purchase network telephone service that will enable it to receive calls from those who dial 2-1-1.

PUC guidelines call for applications to be accompanied by letters of endorsement from certain types of community groups. Endorsement by local government is not a requirement of the application process; however, it is the practice of the PUC to solicit input from the local Board of Supervisors when considering an application. In addition, the 2-1-1 service is so closely linked to the activities of the County's Health and Human Services Agency (HHS) that County input in the selection of a provider through an endorsement is appropriate.

United Way of the Bay Area is a non-profit charitable organization presently providing 2-1-1 services in the City and County of San Francisco. The program operates under the name "HELPLINK" and has recently been certified to also provide 2-1-1 service in Marin County. In addition to Napa County, United Way is developing applications in Solano and San Mateo Counties. These applications provide for calls to be processed through a consolidated, regional call center serving all of the Bay Area counties for which United Way is certified. This structure will enable United Way to provide the service at a substantially lower cost than if a separate, freestanding 24-hour service were developed for each county. United Way has projected the cost of adding Napa County to its call center in the range of \$80,000 per year. This figure compares to an estimated cost of \$500,000 per year to operate a separate, local 2-1-1 program. United Way has committed to internally fund half of the cost of including Napa County in its program and will be looking to the greater Napa community to provide the remaining funding. United Way is not requesting any contribution from the County at this time but may request some assistance from HHS in the future. In such event, HHS will absorb the request within its authorized budget.

United Way is developing its application for Napa County through its local chapter. It has also agreed to collaborate with NapaHelp.Info, an online information and referral website developed by the Napa Superior Court, to ensure that the two services are complementary and that the information that they contain is consistent.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

None

CEO Recommendation: Approve

Reviewed By: Lorenzo Zialcita