

CHEFA ANNOUNCES \$250,000 GRANT TO UNITED WAY OF CONNECTICUT TO BATTLE OPIOID CRISIS IN CONNECTICUT

Hartford, CT — CHEFA (Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority) today announced a \$250,000 one-year grant awarded to United Way of Connecticut to increase resources and training to fight opioid abuse and overdose in Connecticut. The grant, called “Funding the 2-1-1 Opioid Enhanced Information and Referral Initiative,” provides funding for improved access to information and resources for opioid treatment and addiction services available in Connecticut.

“This grant reflects CHEFA’s mission to help improve the health and welfare of the citizens of Connecticut, and we believe it will provide needed support for those who are grappling with opioid addiction issues,” says Jeanette Weldon, CHEFA’s Executive Director. “We’re proud to support the United Way’s efforts to expand their services in this area and get helpful information to people through United Way’s 2-1-1 hotline and the healthylivesct.com website.”

Funding from the grant will be used to hire additional in-house expertise at United Way’s toll-free 2-1-1 hotline; increase staff training of 2-1-1 call specialists on opioids and opioid use disorder; and foster public-private partnerships, particularly with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), which is a key resource for staff training and also provides an addiction hotline.

“This grant helps us provide more in-depth training for our call specialists, which has significantly increased their knowledge about additional resources available in the State of Connecticut,” says Richard Porth, President and CEO of United Way of Connecticut. “For example, our call specialists better understand the role of outpatient facilities and their locations throughout the state. This is a key improvement, as we’ve traditionally referred people to inpatient facilities, which often have a waiting list. We’ve found that outpatient facilities provide extremely effective care in a time-sensitive way. As a result, we’re getting the right type of help to people when they are asking for it, which is critical.”

The grant will fund the expansion of United Way’s 2-1-1 hotline online database with information, resources and treatment services available on opioid use disorders in Connecticut. For example, the 2-1-1 hotline resource directory now includes expanded information about how to use naloxone, the life-saving medication used to reverse an opioid overdose, as well as locations where residents can obtain naloxone across the state. Other information updates include DMHAS’ new live addiction bed availability website and medication disposal drop box sites statewide.

“The opioid crisis is a complex problem and therefore we have taken a multi-faceted approach to prevention and intervention. It is important that we all play a role in helping to turn the tide of opioid addiction in our state,” said DMHAS Commissioner

Miriam Delphin-Rittmon. "Our partnership with United Way and community providers underscores the importance of public-private collaboration. Together we can work toward making a difference, capitalize on joint resources and improve our ability to connect people to key services available in their communities."

A new comprehensive website developed primarily with funding from the CHEFA grant, healthylivesct.com, will also provide information on wellness resources, including interactive screening tools for mental health and substance use disorders. "People who are reluctant to talk about addiction issues, may seek information online instead," says Weldon. "The healthylivesct.com website will provide information for Connecticut residents looking for updates about mental health, physical wellness and addiction issues. "The healthylivesct.com website is the product of a statewide collaborative effort which includes the United Way, DMHAS, the Department of Children and Families, the Child Health and Development Institute, and other providers of substance use disorder services in Connecticut. The website is expected to launch in the coming weeks.

About Opioids

Opioids are powerful painkillers that can be highly addictive, even when used as prescribed, often leading to misuse and/or abuse, and are a class of drugs that include heroin and certain prescription drugs (e.g., Vicodin, Percocet, OxyContin). According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), deaths from opioid overdoses have quadrupled since 1999 in the United States. In Connecticut, there has been an unprecedented level of opioid use, causing a huge toll in terms of dependence, addiction, overdose and death. Since 2012, the number of accidental deaths resulting from opioids has increased by 177%.

About 2-1-1 and United Way of Connecticut

2-1-1 is Connecticut's free statewide, confidential, multilingual information and referral service available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, providing information and access to health and human services and crisis intervention. Services can be accessed by dialing 2-1-1 or visiting www.211ct.org. Callers can dial 2-1-1 from anywhere in Connecticut and will speak with a highly trained specialist who can assess the callers' needs, and provide referrals to community resources in targeted services in child development, child care, housing, crisis intervention, and substance abuse treatment.

The mission of United Way of Connecticut is to help meet the needs of Connecticut residents by providing information, education and connection to services. United Way of Connecticut furthers its mission by providing 24/7 toll-free information and referral through United Way 2-1-1; specialized services in child care, child development and disabilities, and HUSKY health insurance; and by collaborating with local United Ways and Connecticut state agencies and elected officials.

About DMHAS

The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) promotes and administers comprehensive, recovery-oriented services in the areas of mental health treatment and substance abuse prevention and treatment throughout Connecticut.

While the Department's prevention services serve all Connecticut citizens, its mandate is to serve adults (over 18 years of age) with psychiatric or substance use disorders, or both, who lack the financial means to obtain such services on their own. DMHAS also provides collaborative programs for individuals with special needs, such as persons with HIV/AIDS infection, people in the criminal justice system, those with problem gambling disorders, substance abusing pregnant women, persons with traumatic brain injury or hearing impairment, those with co-occurring substance abuse and mental illness, and special populations transitioning out of the Department of Children and Families.

For more information about DMHAS, visit www.ct.gov/dmhas.

About CHEFA

The Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) is a quasi-public agency that provides access to tax-exempt financing and other financial assistance, including grant programs, to educational institutions, healthcare providers, childcare providers, cultural institutions, and other eligible nonprofit entities. CHEFA derives its revenues from the annual loan servicing fee it charges its clients, and operates without any State or taxpayer funds. CHEFA also expands higher educational opportunities for Connecticut students through its subsidiary, the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority (CHESLA).

For more information on CHEFA or CHESLA, visit www.chefa.com, or www.chesla.org.