

**United Way
of America**

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United Way Coordinating Long-Term Response to Hurricane Katrina

*Hurricane Katrina Response Fund activated to aid
immediate relief and long-term recovery*

Alexandria, VA – In the wake of the unimaginable destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina throughout the Gulf Coast states and up into the Ohio Valley, thousands of people are waiting helplessly to return to their communities and assess what will be needed to put their lives back together.

In response to this need, United Ways throughout the region are mobilizing to help lead response and recovery efforts by working hard to identify the most serious needs of devastated communities. Additionally, many other communities are suffering indirectly as they host thousands of evacuees, many of whom will likely be there for weeks to come.

“Many United Ways will be active in coordinating the community’s response, working with community partners to ensure that immediate needs are met, although each United Way’s role in its community will be different, depending on the specific needs and the United Way’s resources,” said Brian Gallagher, president and CEO of United Way of America. “United Ways are committed to long-term positive changes in community conditions, so in most areas, while they can help with providing some front-line disaster relief, their primary focus will be long-term recovery—those needs that are often not addressed until weeks or months following a disaster.

The United Way Hurricane Katrina Response Fund has been activated to help affected communities begin rebuilding their lives. To donate to this fund, please visit www.unitedway.org and click on “Hurricane Katrina Response Fund.” Credit card donations may also be made by calling 1-800-272-4630 or by mailing a check (made out to United Way of America with “Hurricane Katrina Fund” in the memo line) to:

United Way of America
P.O. Box 630568
Baltimore, MD 21263-0568

All funds will be allocated for both front-line disaster relief and long-term recovery needs as determined by local United Ways in affected areas, in coordination with a vast network of human services agencies and volunteer centers.

Throughout the state of Louisiana, every community has access to 2-1-1, a single, easy-to-remember telephone number service (similar to 9-1-1 and 4-1-1), which directs victims to needed services such as shelters, food, medical assistance, disaster preparedness and response activities, post-disaster assistance, and recovery information. In addition, local 2-1-1 operators are matching volunteers with opportunities to give help in affected communities, such as assisting local media outlets with their food drive efforts by soliciting assistance in loading trucks in designated areas.

Local 2-1-1 operators can respond immediately during times of crisis, to field calls regarding the crisis and to direct callers to services most appropriate for their needs. It maintains a permanent presence in the community and as a result, people can find the help they need whether their needs arise a week or several years after the crisis event.

"That human contact is so important, said Gallagher. "Sometimes I think we underestimate the value of having a live person on the other end of the phone when you are afraid and seeking information about evacuation, shelter, power, or ice. "

United Way and 2-1-1 officials are asking their human service agency partners, emergency management and local media to engage directly with their local 2-1-1 call centers to help create of a database of available resources, so that 2-1-1 can better serve the tens of thousands of callers they are expecting to serve in the coming days. At the same time, partner agencies are also requested to inform these call centers with the types of resources they need, so 2-1-1 can help direct these needed resources their way as well.

Today, 2-1-1 is available to approximately 50 percent of the U.S. population, but United Way of America is working diligently to try to ensure every American has access to this valuable service in the coming years.

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About United Way of America

United Way of America is the national organization dedicated to leading the United Way movement in making a measurable impact in every community across America by focusing on the root causes of the most serious problems. The United Way movement includes approximately 1,350 community-based United Way organizations. Each is independent, separately incorporated, and governed by local volunteers. For more information about United Way of America, please visit: www.unitedway.org.