



SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

Chairman Bob Casey

The Human-Services Emergency Logistics Program (HELP) Act

Why do we need the HELP Act?

In 2016, the Chief of Police of Dallas, Texas said, “We’re asking cops to do too much in this country...every societal failure...policing was never meant to solve all those problems.” In addition to their traditional responsibilities, law enforcement officers are now tasked with responding to calls about people who are homeless, those in mental health crises and many other non-criminal emergencies. Subsequently, the number of people with disabilities experiencing violence and shootings when interacting with law enforcement is also increasing. *The Washington Post* database of police shootings estimates that at least 25 percent of shootings involve a person with a mental health disability. A 2016 Ruderman Foundation [report](#) estimated that between one-third and one-half of 2015 shootings involving a law enforcement officer included a person with a disability.

There are recent examples of police shootings of people with disabilities such as [Linden Cameron in Utah](#) in September 2020, [Osaze Osagie in State College, PA](#) on March 20, 2019 and [Christian Hall in Hamilton Township, PA](#) on December 30, 2020. Many of these horrible outcomes could have been avoided by redirecting calls for assistance away from 9-1-1 and to human-services and mental health providers of 2-1-1 and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, 9-8-8.

These alternative resource, response, and referral systems can reduce the burden placed on police. A comprehensive, reliable information and referral system and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline can reduce the wait time and more efficiently connect people with disabilities, older Americans and people experiencing mental health crises and their families to the resources they need.

What will the HELP Act do?

The HELP ACT will connect people in communities with the human-services and mental health resources they need while reducing the call and response burden on local and state law enforcement agencies. The Act would:

- Divert non-criminal, non-fire, and non-medical emergency calls from 9-1-1 systems to state and regional 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 systems.
- Provide each state with funds to build out its 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 referral systems to link callers to both emergency and long-term human-services and mental health resources in order to address their needs. Special emphasis would be placed on responses for mental health emergencies, homelessness needs, and other non-criminal emergencies.

- In addition, the 2-1-1 system will serve as a robust resource and referral system capable of linking individuals and families to other human-services needs such as food assistance and child care.
- Create an oversight system for the 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 networks comprised of community members who represent older adults, people with disabilities, ethnic and racial minorities and members of other communities. Each system will be evaluated every year and recommendations to improve services will be made public.

Cosponsors: Senators **Moran**, Hirono, Duckworth, Gillibrand, Sanders, Merkley, Menendez, Murphy, Blumenthal, Kelly, Baldwin

Supporting Organizations

United Way Worldwide, Fraternal Order of Police, Association of Rural Independent Living Programs, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, National Association of the Deaf, the Autism Society of America, Association of University Centers on Disabilities, National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, ACHIEVA, American Network of Community Options and Resources, National Down Syndrome Congress, Autism Connection of Pennsylvania, Rehabilitation and Community Providers Association of Pennsylvania, A.J. Drexel Autism Institute, 2-1-1 Washington, United Way of Lancaster County, United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania



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Section I – Short Title

The HELP Act of 2021

Section II – Purposes

To strengthen existing 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 systems, improve the human-service referral databases and reduce the use of 9-1-1 services for circumstances not related to law enforcement, fire, or medical emergencies.

Section III – Allotments to Strengthen Nationwide Availability and Coordination of 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 Services for Information and Referral for Human-Services and Mental Health Needs

Section 3a – The Secretary of Health and Human Services Will Oversee Funds

The Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) will provide funds based on a formula to states to ensure 2-1-1 human-services and 9-8-8 mental health services and referrals are available to everyone.

Section 3b – Guidelines for Allotments to States

Funding will be allocated based on state data for need for human-services and mental health resources. States must also secure non-federal funding to be awarded a grant.

Section 3c – Creation of a Human-Services National Board

Establishes a Human-Services National Board to manage funds and review state plans for their 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 systems. The Board will be composed of members of both national and community-based organizations that represent people with disabilities, human-services organizations, and civil rights groups.

Section 3d – Creation of State Oversight Entities

States must create a Human-Services Collaborative and a Human-Services Oversight Council to administer the system and provide guidance for system activities and evaluation.

Section 3e – Grant Application Procedure

A state's Human-Services Collaborative will submit an annual application to the Human-Services National Board for funding. Applications will include information on how the state will achieve the goals of the grant and additional sources of funding for statewide 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 services.

Section 3f – Guidelines for Subgrants

State Collaboratives may award Subgrants to entities to help maintain the 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 systems, the human-services referral database and for start-up and planning purposes.

Section 3g – Use of State Allotment and Subgrant Amounts

Subgrants can be awarded to improve the 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 service availability and referrals. Funds can also be used for development and maintenance of a comprehensive database of services available within the 2-1-1 and 9-8-8 systems.

Section 3h – Reporting and Evaluation

Each State Human-Services Collaborative that receives funding must submit an annual report to the Human-Services National Board describing their program and its effectiveness. The Collaborative must contract with an independent organization to conduct an evaluation of the program every two years.

Section IV – Authorization for Appropriations

Section 4a – Appropriations Amounts

\$550,000,000 will be allocated for each of the fiscal years 2022 and 2023 and \$450,000,000 will be allocated for the fiscal years 2024 through 2028.

Section 4b – Reservations

The Human Services National Board can use one-half of one percent for administrative activities.

If you would like more information on the Human-Services Emergency Logistics Program Act please contact Christian Clesi (Christian_Clesi@aging.senate.gov) or Michael Gamel-McCormick (Michael_Gamel-McCormick@aging.senate.gov) in Senator Casey's office or Garrison Holmberg (Garrison_Holmberg@moran.senate.gov) in Senator Moran's office.