



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 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 and the shooting of [Osaze Osagie in State College, PA](#) on March 20, 2019. Many of these horrible outcomes could have been avoided by redirecting calls for assistance to human service providers. Such an alternative resource, response and referral system can reduce the response burden on police. A comprehensive, reliable information and referral system also can reduce the wait time and more efficiently connect individuals and families to the resources they need.

What would the HELP Act do?

The HELP Act is a proposal to connect people in communities with the human services they need while at the same time 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 systems.
- Provide each state with funds to build out its 2-1-1 referral system to link callers to both emergency and long-term human services 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 would be 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 networks comprised of community members who represent older adults, people with disabilities, ethnic and racial community members and members of other communities. Each system would be evaluated every year and recommendations to improve services would be made public.

Supporters: United Way Worldwide, National Council on Independent Living, Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, National Alliance to End Homelessness, The Arc of the United States, The Arc of Greater Pittsburgh, ACHIEVA, National Association of the Deaf, National Down Syndrome Congress, Association of University Centers on Disabilities, Paralyzed Veterans of America, ANCOR, The Arc of PA, Public Interest Law Center, Center for American Progress

Cosponsors: Gillibrand, Duckworth, Merkley, Hirono, Brown, Blumenthal, Baldwin



HELP Act of 2020 Section by Section

Section I – Short Title

The HELP Act of 2020

Section II – Findings

To be added.

Section III – Purposes

To strengthen existing state 2-1-1 systems, improve their human service referral data bases and reduce the use of 911 services for circumstances not related to law enforcement, fire, or medical emergencies.

Section IV – Allotments to Strengthen Nationwide Availability and Coordination of 2-1-1 Service for Information and Referral for Human Services

Section 4a – HHS Secretary Oversight of Funds

The Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) will provide funds to states to ensure 2-1-1 services and human services referrals are available to everyone.

Section 4b – Guidelines for Allotments to States

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

Section 4c – Creation of a 2-1-1 National Board

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

Section 4d – Creation of State Oversight Entities

States must create a 2-1-1 Collaborative and a 2-1-1 Oversight Council to administer the system and a provide guidance for system activities and evaluation.

Section 4e. Grant Application Procedure

A state's 2-1-1 Collaborative will submit an annual application to the 2-1-1 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 services.

Section 4f. Guidelines for Subgrants

State Collaboratives may award subgrants to entities to help maintain the 2-1-1 system, the referral database and for start-up and planning purposes.

Section 4g. Use of State Allotment and Subgrant Amounts

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

Section 4h. Reporting and Evaluations

Each State 2-1-1 Collaborative that receives funding must submit an annual report to the 2-1-1 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 V – Authorization for Appropriations

Section 5a. Appropriation Amounts

\$350,000,000 will be allocated for each of the fiscal years 2021 and 2022 and \$300,000,000 will be allocated for the fiscal years 2023 through 2027.

Section 5b. Reservations

The 2-1-1 National Board can use one half of one percent for administrative activities.

For more information or to cosponsor, please contact Michael Gamel-McCormick (michael_gamel-mccormick@aging.senate.gov) or Thomas Eagen (Thomas_eagen@aging.senate.gov).