



# Power to People with Critical Medical Needs

Proposed Partnership Between 211 MD United Way Helpline and the Fuel Fund of Maryland

Jan. 3, 2020

## **1. Statement of Need**

The consequences of an unpaid utility bill for people with critical health problems can be dire. Their health may decline further in an unpowered home, and they may no longer be able to store or safely take refrigerated medication(s). When the utilities are turned off, critically ill people face an increased risk of eviction and the loss of their housing assistance.

To remedy this situation, in 2015 a utilities pilot program was launched to help people with critical medical needs. This partnership, the *Critical Medical Needs Program (CMNP)*, includes the Office of Peoples Counsel, Office of Home Energy Programs, BGE, the Fuel Fund of Maryland, and the Cancer Support Foundation. The program utilizes 350 trained volunteer “Navigators,” housed at the medical facilities and community assistance agencies statewide. As a result, the Cancer Support Foundation has seen a 70% reduction in termination of power for its clients. Following these impressive results, the Maryland General Assembly passed Bill HB1189/SB425 in 2019, which secures continued funding for the CMNP program.

While the pilot has generated significant impacts, Navigators are only accessible to patients at a limited number of hospitals and medical centers. Furthermore, many patients visit treatment centers that do not currently participate in the CMNP and are beyond the reach of navigators. Therefore, without the assistance of paid professional navigators, most individuals with critical medical needs are unlikely to complete the application process on their own and are literally “left out in the cold.”

The proposed new partnership between 211 MD United Way Helpline and the Fuel Fund of Maryland will close this gap and significantly expand the project’s reach and impact. In 2019, the United Way of Central Maryland tracked more than 24,000 callers who were seeking energy assistance. Helpline case managers funded through the “Power to People” project will serve as Navigators, helping critically ill people obtain energy assistance, over the phone and in-person. This new partnership will further expand the *Critical Medical Needs Program*, filling an important service gap and increasing reach, health, and livelihood impacts.



## **2. Background of Partnering Organizations**

### **United Way of Central Maryland**

The 211 Maryland United Way Helpline receives more than 100,000 calls each year from Central Maryland residents in need (and thousands of calls from outside of Central Maryland). 211 is a number people can call when they are in crisis and aren't sure where to turn for help with food, shelter, healthcare, childcare and other critical services. 211 is available 23/7 in 150 languages, assisting people in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, Howard County, Harford County, and Carroll County.

### **The Fuel Fund of Maryland**

The Fuel Fund of Maryland aims to be a lifeline for vulnerable Maryland neighbors struggling with a home utility hardship. It provides navigation through an array of financial, educational, and community resources that empower, engage, and safely connect a household in times of crisis. The Fuel Fund refers applicants to government funded programs that operate out of the Office of Home Energy. Often a family receives adequate assistance from these programs. If they are still in need, the Fuel Fund helps. *The Fuel Fund's geographic reach overlaps with the United Way of Central Maryland's service area.*

## **3. Project Description & Deliverables**

211 MD United Way Helpline case managers funded through this project will serve as Critical Medical Needs Program (CMNP) navigators, helping eligible individuals in need obtain energy assistance over the phone and in-person through home visits. This project builds on good work relationship with the Fuel Fund of Maryland. More than 25% of the calls 211 MD United Way Helpline receives are related to energy assistance, and 211 information and referral specialists are trained to refer such callers to the Fuel Fund.

This "Power to People" project fills a significant service gap as many critically ill people are beyond the reach of the 350 statewide volunteer navigators. With this new project design, we intend to significantly increase the CMNP's project's reach and impact by utilizing the statewide name recognition of the 211 name brand, and its referral and information power combined with the Fuel Fund of Maryland's forty years of unprecedented experience in the energy assistance field.



According to the Fuel Fund of Maryland, 72 Marylanders with critically ill needs received energy assistance in FY 18/19. (Note: From July 1, 2019 through November 30, 2019, the Fuel Fund has provided financial assistance to 61 critically ill individuals OR a 100% monthly increase from FY 18/19). It is this project's intention to significantly expand the reach of services to people with severe health problems, providing energy assistance services to many more ill Marylanders. Considering that 23,961 callers requested utility assistance and 8,743 callers asked for healthcare assistance, in 2018, United Way's 211 case managers are in an excellent position to increase their impact among the most vulnerable.

With funding for the "Power to People" project, the following services will be provided:

**2-1-1 MD United Way Helpline Intake Specialist (1 FTE)**

- **Screening for Eligibility:** 211 MD United Way Helpline establishes a new screening intake process to identify callers with CMNP.
- **Signed Doctor's Note:** Project staff work with eligible callers to obtain the necessary physician certification to obtain a 30-day hold to prevent a utility shut-off.
- **Energy Assistance Application:** As designated CMNP Navigators, 211 project staff submit completed application forms to Office of Home Energy Programs.
- **Referral to Fuel Fund for Additional Financial Assistance:** Clients who still owe money on their BGE bill will be referred to the Fuel Fund of Maryland for additional cash assistance and community resources.

**2-1-1 MD United Way Helpline Case Manager (1 FTE)**

- **Screening for Other Needs:** Helpline staff are trained to screen for other needs. All staff have at least a B.A. degree in a human services field, and 211 has several licensed social workers on staff. The Helpline's database contains more than 5,000 resources that are updated continuously.
- **Home Visits and Case Management Support:** Project staff offer holistic case management support, conduct home visits and connect clients to other services, including food, safe housing, health and mental health.

**Fuel Fund of Maryland, Project Coordinator (0.5 FTE)**

- **Fuel Fund Project Coordination:** An additional staff person coordinates the partnership with 211.
- **Additional Financial Assistance:** Clients who still owe money on their BGE bill will be referred to the Fuel Fund of Maryland for additional cash assistance and community resources.



## 4.0 Logical Frameworks

### 4.1 Budget

<b>211 NAVIGATORS: COST</b>		
Item	Full-Time Equivalent	Annual Salary
2-1-1 MD United Way Helpline Intake Specialist	1 FTE	\$55,000
2-1-1 MD United Way Helpline Case Manager	1 FTE	\$65,000
Fuel Fund of Maryland Project Coordinator	0.5 FTE	\$26,000
<b>Sub-Total (Salary)</b>	<b>2.5 FTE</b>	<b>\$146,000</b>
Item		Funding Amount
Travel & Miscellaneous		\$10,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$156,000</b>

### 4.2 Impact

<b>211 NAVIGATORS: IMPACT</b>					
Issue	Indicator	Outcome	# of Clients	\$Value of Savings or Assistance	IMPACT: Projected Annual Savings
<b>HEALTH &amp; HOUSING</b>	People with critical medical needs identified to receive services	# number of people with critical medical needs receiving energy assistance	350	\$400.00	\$140,000
<b>ADDITIONAL FUEL ASSISTANCE</b>	People with critical medical needs identified to receive services	# number of people with critical medical needs receiving additional cash assistance from the Fuel Fund of Maryland	200	\$500.00	\$100,000
<b>OTHER NEEDS</b>	People with critical medical needs identified to receive services	# number of people with critical medical needs receiving case management support, food, health, and transportation assistance	200	\$500.00	\$100,000
<b>IN KIND VALUE</b>	People with critical medical needs identified to receive services	# number of people with critical medical needs receiving United Way in-kind volunteer support (valued at \$25.43 per service hour)	250	\$1,272	\$317,875
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$657,875</b>



## **5. Project Contacts**

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