

**City Council Committee on Technology in Government  
Testimony of Louisa Chafee, Director for Management Innovation  
Office of Deputy mayor for Health and Human Services  
September 24, 2009**

Good morning Chairperson Brewer and members of the Technology in Government Committee. My name is Louisa Chafee, I am the Director of Management Innovation for the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, Linda Gibbs. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding New York City's health and human service information and referral at 3-1-1, known as "e311". Working in close conjunction with DoITT, and our nonprofit partners, we are responsible for leading the effort to bring 211 services to 311.

In November of 2005, Mayor Bloomberg made the public commitment to bring telephone based information and referral, known as 211 in other jurisdictions, to New Yorkers through the 311 calling center within one year. Shortly after that announcement, Council Woman Brewer, you held a hearing, and DoITT discussed the many challenges that lay ahead: identifying appropriate call takers, incorporating critical information to the call takers database, adhering to national data standards, obtaining the 211 number, and – perhaps mostly importantly, engaging the nonprofit community's expertise in designing service provision. Today 311 provides health and human service information and referral services to over 8,000 callers a day, 24/7 in over 170 languages I am pleased to testify on how we have achieved these critical building blocks, and the unique blended model we developed that is the governance structure behind this innovative government-nonprofit approach to effective social service information and referral provision.

Working with DoITT , we formed a coalition of nonprofits and government agencies to together plan the best approach to delivering this service. With strong leadership from Safe Horizon, Life Net, Visions/Blindline, Human Services Council and, of course, the United Way of New York City, these nonprofits, as well as New York State AIRS, and over 40 over not-for-profits, formed an advisory committee that still advises DoITT on many aspects of service implementation. Council Women Brewer, we thank you and your staff for your participation in this effort since its inception. This workgroup was renamed the advisory committee, when we formed a nonprofit organization, in order to have the right to turn on the 211 number. This entity, the NYC Health and Human Service Information and Referral Corporation, has a board consisting of 6 City officials and 3 nonprofit leadership organizations: UWNYP, HSC and Visions/Blindline. We were granted rights to use to use the 211 number in March of 2007.

We created a unique blended model of 211 and 311 – joining DoITT's robust technology with the nonprofit community and NYC government agencies social service provision expertise. For data standards, and call taking certification, we continue to work with the Alliance of Information and Referral Specialists (AIRS) to have the call center accredited, bringing high standards to the call takers, and allowing the analysis of data in the AIRS taxonomy, so that one can compare call volume and usage across jurisdictions.

In addition to City funds, New York State has issued about \$5 million to New York City, over two thirds of which has been used to develop and enhance the content of 311 by adding social service content and provider information. Recognizing the merits of the HITE the information system developed by Greater NY Hospital Corporation, a database developed to assist case workers in discharging patients, we have worked together for over 3 years to incorporate content and leverage their excellent not-for-profit knowledge. The remainder of the funding was used by the United Way of New York City to build the capacity of our not-for-profit community to receive referrals from 311—including a series of trainings and grants of hardware such as phone systems and computers.

Thank you again for your invitation to testify. This concludes my prepared remarks. I would like to introduce you to my colleague at DoITT, First Deputy Commissioner Ron Bergmann.