



## PRESS RELEASE

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### KINSHIP NAVIGATOR PROGRAM ACCESS MADE EASY BY CALLING NJ 2-1-1

**Paramus, NJ November 4, 2008** - It's not easy to find yourself in the unexpected position of raising a relative's child, especially in tough economic times. Yet it is estimated that more than 7,800 adults in New Jersey have stepped in to do just that, and approximately 75% of these caregivers are grandparents. The Kinship Navigator Program started in 2000 to aid these families. The Kinship Navigator Program is offered through the Department of Human Services, Division of Family Development and is designed to help eligible caregivers navigate through the social service programs that will assist them with basic needs like food, housing, heat and childcare.

In addition to helping caregivers navigate other programs, the Kinship Navigator Program has three components of its own which are as follow: *the Kinship Wraparound* component which provides vouchers for specific items such as clothing and furniture for income eligible Kinship families; the *Kinship Legal Guardianship component* which may legally empower the caregiver to make important decisions concerning the relative child, and, for certain income eligible families, provides a financial subsidy; and the third component, *Child Care*, which provides subsidies for caregivers who are financially eligible. The state's partnership with NJ 2-1-1 is making it easy for these caregivers to take the first step in meeting life's new challenges.

To enhance the connection with the Kinship Navigator program, NJ 2-1-1 has put technology to good use and created an automatic link with the caller and Kinship Care professionals. When someone dials 2-1-1, the resource specialist notifies the Kinship Navigator through a real time e-mail alert system. Once notified, the navigators call the family and begin providing assistance. The system saves time by eliminating phone calls and gets the callers connected to help faster.

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2-1-1 is operational 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Giving people a place to call around-the-clock is important when assisting individuals who are facing stressful situations. Without 2-1-1, a person in need of help would have to wait for the next business day. As one community resource specialist explains, “When people are desperate for help on a Friday night, they can’t wait until Monday morning. I can help them get through the weekend by suggesting local resources where food or emergency assistance might be available. Now I can also notify the Kinship Navigators so the grandmother who called on Friday can receive a call back from the Kinship Navigator first thing Monday morning.” Once contact is made, the Kinship Navigator is well-trained in determining the programs that are designed to help caregivers and to provide support throughout the process.

“We’re pleased to be in a position to foster such a vital connection,” explains Laura Zink Marx, executive director of NJ 2-1-1. “Providing a portal that links callers directly to the Kinship Navigator program is exactly the kind of role that we envision for 2-1-1. Our goal is getting callers the help and support they need, as soon as possible.”

#### **About NJ 2-1-1**

NJ 2-1-1 is a statewide information and assistance network that connects NJ citizens with government, social service and community resources. Working closely with state government agencies and department leaders as well as local community organizations, NJ 2-1-1 provides information that will help NJ residents find solutions to everyday challenges as well as critical life issues. The organization has a statewide database of health and human service resources and call centers that are staffed around the clock. This free, confidential service is accessed by dialing 2-1-1 from any phone in the state or by going to [www.nj211.org](http://www.nj211.org). NJ 2-1-1 is supported by United Way in partnership with the State of New Jersey.