

# 2-1-1

## What is 2-1-1?

2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember telephone number that connects people with essential community information and referral services. When a person calls 2-1-1, specially trained information and referral personnel analyze what services are needed and provide the appropriate resource and related information. In essence, 2-1-1 assists people in their search for help.

## How does 2-1-1 impact communities?

2-1-1 saves time and frustration by eliminating the need for callers to navigate a maze of agencies and help-lines.

Specifically, 2-1-1 connects people to:

- **Food and Shelter Resources:** food banks, clothing closets, shelters, rent assistance, utility assistance.
- **Physical and Mental Health Resources:** health insurance programs, Medicaid and Medicare, maternal health, Children's Health Insurance Program, medical information lines, crisis intervention, counseling, drug and alcohol intervention and rehabilitation.
- **Employment Supports:** Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) assistance, job training, transportation assistance, education programs.
- **Help for Older Americans and Persons with Disabilities:** adult day care, congregate meals, Meals on Wheels, respite care, home health care, transportation, homemaker services.
- **Resources for Children and Families:** child care, after school programs, Head Start centers, family resource centers, summer camps and recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring, protective services.

## What are the Costs/Benefits of a National 2-1-1 System?

A national cost-benefit analysis conducted by the University of Texas estimates a net value to society of a national 2-1-1 system approaching \$130 million in the first year alone and a conservative estimate of \$1.1 billion over ten years. Savings include a reduction in non-emergency calls to 9-1-1, a reduction in the usage of 1-800 numbers, enhanced consumer awareness of income generating services such as EITC, and improved efficiencies from the decrease in misdirected calls to state and local agencies.

In the Northeast Tri-State area following the attacks of September 11th, and in the Gulf Coast region following the devastating hurricanes of 2004 and 2005, areas served by 2-1-1 responded more quickly and more efficiently than areas without 2-1-1. Both in preparation for and in response to major disasters and crises, a national 2-1-1 system would make an immediate and profound impact on community stability and recovery.

## What is the Current Status of 2-1-1?

Today, 2-1-1 reaches approximately 225 million Americans—75% of the U.S. population—with 240 active 2-1-1 systems covering all or part of 45 states (including 19 states with 100% coverage) plus Puerto Rico. Five locations in Canada also have 2-1-1 service.

United Way's ultimate goal is to ensure that 100% of the U.S. population has access to quality community information and referral services in times of need. **Federal legislation is needed to accomplish this goal.** In the 110th Congress, The Calling for 2-1-1 Act of 2007 (S 211/HR 211) was introduced in the Senate by Senators Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) and in the House by Representatives Anna Eshoo (D-CA).

United Way urges Congress to pass S.211/H.R.2-1-1.

## The Calling for 2-1-1 Act: Bill Summary

The Calling for 2-1-1 Act of 2007 (S.211/H.R.211), which enjoys broad bi-partisan support, would authorize \$700 million over six years to complete implementation of 2-1-1 nationwide. 2-1-1 centers would have to provide a 50 percent match to the grant, which could come from current 2-1-1 funding in the community, such as United Way funding or funding through other non-profits, state and local government, foundations and businesses. The grant program would be administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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