

2-1-1 Fact Sheet

2-1-1 is an easy to remember phone number that connects individuals with resources in their community.

With approximately 1.5 million nonprofit organizations in the United States plus scores of government agencies, finding help can be confusing and intimidating. People who want to give help often do not know where to begin. 2-1-1 centers are staffed by trained specialists who quickly assess the callers' needs and refer them to the help they seek. It's simple to remember, accessible to everyone at no cost, available 24/7, with multilingual capabilities.

2-1-1 enables people to get help or give help.

2-1-1 offers information on a broad range of services, including rent assistance, food banks, affordable housing, health resources, child care, after-school programs, elderly care, financial literacy, and job training programs. Specialists at 2-1-1 centers facilitate thousands of volunteer hours and direct donors to locations where their gifts may be most needed and appropriate. One call center's referrals facilitated nearly 65,000 volunteer staff hours worth over \$1 million.

2-1-1 benefits the nation.

The human services system in many of our cities and states is not only inefficient and costly, but is confusing and time consuming for consumers seeking to give or get help. It need not be this way. A 2004 University of Texas at Austin cost-benefit analysis of 2-1-1 estimates a net value to society approaching \$130 million in the first year alone, and a conservative estimate of \$1.1 billion over ten years. A national 2-1-1 system produces cost savings for tax payers, employers and government; and 2-1-1 in any community saves time and enhances the human services experience for those needing assistance.

Supporting 2-1-1 benefits your community.

2-1-1 is locally designed by community stakeholders, who are aware of their local and state needs and resources. 2-1-1 is part of the community fabric, employs local citizens, and serves the local community. Businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government officials support 2-1-1 as a way to improve the lives of the residents in their communities. As of April, 2009, 2-1-1 was available to over 240 million Americans – approximately 80% of the U.S. population – covering all or parts of 46 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

2-1-1 enhances public safety and crisis recovery efforts.

The nation is prepared to make considerable investments in public safety and disaster relief infrastructure and capacity in response to events of natural or human agency. From hurricanes and floods to bio-terrorism, 2-1-1 call centers that already exist in communities, operating 24/7, are the logical platform for building emergency response communication capacity. In the wake of the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, hundreds of thousands of Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas, and Alabama residents called 2-1-1 with a multitude of needs, including shelter, transportation, medical, food and water, construction materials, mental health, and questions about the availability of and application process for federal, state, and nonprofit assistance. 9-1-1 referred non-emergency calls to 2-1-1, freeing up 9-1-1 operators for life-and-death situations.

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2-1-1 is a private-public partnership.

2-1-1 is funded through local and state sources including local United Ways and other nonprofits, foundations, businesses, and state and local government. *The Calling for 2-1-1 Act* seeks to authorize federal funding of \$150 million for years one and two, and \$100 million for years three through five through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to help implement and sustain 2-1-1 nationwide. States would be required to provide a 50% match in order to draw down the federal dollars.

For additional information, visit United Way of America's web site at <http://www.liveunited.org/211/>