

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. 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, and available 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 January 1, 2007, 2-1-1 was available to over 190 million Americans – approximately 65% of the U.S. population – with 209 active 2-1-1 systems operating in 41 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

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

From hurricanes and floods to bio-terrorism, 2-1-1 call centers that already exist in communities, often operating 24/7, are the logical platform for building emergency response communication capacity. In the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, hundreds of thousands of Louisiana, 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.

“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.”

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.

The Calling for 2-1-1 Act

In January 2007, both houses of the 110th Congress re-introduced the *Calling for 2-1-1 Act*, which, if passed, will provide financial support to designated 2-1-1 state entities.

Local support of the *Calling for 2-1-1 Act* – from state legislators, community leaders, nonprofit agencies and citizens – is critical in moving this legislation through Congress.

What does the Calling for 2-1-1 Act do?

The bill authorizes \$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 designate, if they have not already, a lead entity for 2-1-1 which would develop a statewide plan for implementation and administration of the funds. States would be required to provide a 50% match in order to draw down the federal dollars.

Why \$150 million in federal funding?

The University of Texas at Austin's cost/benefit analysis estimates that operating a decentralized nationwide 2-1-1 system (the model that describes the current system) costs approximately \$285 million. These operating expenses do not include costs to launch 2-1-1 centers, which are estimated at \$50 million for the next two years. 2-1-1 leaders are working to unify the nationwide system.

What are the financial benefits of 2-1-1?

A national cost-benefit analysis conducted by the University of Texas estimates a net value to society of a national 2-1-1 system at almost \$130 million in the first year alone and a conservative estimate of \$1.1 billion over ten years. Savings include time saved, tax assistance and recovery, volunteer recruitment, 24/7 service, a reduction in the number of 1-800 numbers, and a reduction in non-emergency calls to 9-1-1.

The research found that the viability of maintaining and expanding a standards-based, national 2-1-1 information and referral network is dependent on the infusion of additional funds.

The study also determined that the national 2-1-1 effort is ripe for enhanced public-private sector collaboration, as the entities which operate the 2-1-1 call centers and the public agencies, which administer the vast majority of health and human services resources recognize the complementary features of their service delivery systems.

Finally, 93% of the users surveyed by the University of Texas indicated they found the information they sought with ease, and 97% said they would call 2-1-1 again.

There is evidence that investing in 2-1-1 will result in long-term cost savings. The University of Nebraska's Public Policy Center estimates that a fully realized 2-1-1 system in Nebraska will bring \$7.4 million in benefits to the state of Nebraska with a population of 1.7 million.

Why does the Calling for 2-1-1 Act call for administration through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services?

HHS has years of experience in administering information and referral services for human needs. There are approximately 1.5 million nonprofit organizations in the United States plus scores of government agencies. People looking for assistance have trouble navigating a complicated web of health and human service programs.

In a report following the events of September 11th, the General Accounting Office highlighted the need for a more efficient service delivery system:

While charitable organizations took immediate steps to get aid to those in need, families and victims generally believed that they had to navigate a maze of service providers and confusion existed about the range of services available to people, particularly those facing job or housing losses. (GAO-03-259 Report)

What can the federal funding be used for?

The federal funding can be used for a variety of 2-1-1 related purposes, including but not limited to planning for and implementing 2-1-1, operating costs, technology upgrades, public awareness, training and evaluation.

2-1-1: A Critical Tool in Times of Disaster

When United Way of America and the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems petitioned the FCC in 2000 to designate 2-1-1 as the official information and referral phone number, advocates described its value largely in terms of the ease of a three-digit, readily accessible number capable of connecting citizens with needed services.

Following the September 11 attacks, the necessity for 2-1-1 as a means of aggregating resources and enhancing post-disaster assistance became obvious. In fact, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, having observed 2-1-1's effectiveness in providing post-attack assistance to citizens in neighboring Connecticut, where a statewide 2-1-1 system was in place, noted, "We need this in New York. We need this everywhere."

Following the attacks, the Brookings Institution and Urban Institute collaborated on a study concluding that in Washington, D.C., the post-September 11 recovery efforts were "haphazard and disjointed." The study went on to document that those affected by disasters "found it difficult to connect with resources, due to a social services infrastructure that does not support a simple and efficient method for people to learn about and access services and agencies to coordinate their activities."

**"We need this in New York.
We need this everywhere."**

— Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton

Since the September 11 attacks, 2-1-1 has proved its worth in times of crisis time and again:

- 2-1-1's role during and following the 2004 Florida hurricane disasters was studied and summarized in "Trial by Wind and Water: How 2-1-1 Played a Vital Role During the 2004 Florida Hurricanes." In that report, Dr. Kenn Allen, president of the Civil Society Consulting Group LLC in Washington, D.C., concludes that despite its availability to only 75% of Floridians, "2-1-1s conclusively demonstrated the significant contribution that they can make in an emergency," including expanding the capacity of the emergency response system; managing unmet needs; reassuring callers; mobilizing and managing volunteers; serving as intake for service providers; and sustaining the critical connection to citizens.
- Following the Katrina and Rita disasters, FEMA issued a follow-up study titled, "2005 Hurricane Season After-Action Report," in which it both recognized the accomplishments of 2-1-1 and made a strong recommendation that states should move forward on statewide 2-1-1 implementation:
[We] encourage states to establish a 2-1-1 telephone system [like those in Texas, Louisiana and Arizona] from which victims can get shelter information, where [Disaster Response Centers] are, what the hours are, locations and telephone numbers.
- During recent tornadoes in Indiana, unusually severe snow storms in Denver and Buffalo, heat waves in St. Louis, wild fires in San Diego and Arizona, and chemical spills in South Carolina, the 2-1-1 system provided residents with invaluable information and connections to important resources.

As Americans have faced numerous natural and man-made disasters over the past several years, we have been compelled to examine our willingness to confront crises before they are beyond our control. As 2-1-1 continues to prove its worth as a critical tool in disaster response, we must join together – as stakeholders, providers, funders and citizens. This partnership can ensure that we have a coherent plan to serve all who are in need – quickly, efficiently and ubiquitously. 2-1-1 is, and must remain, a critical component of that plan.

The Cost Savings of 2-1-1:

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*. The analysis is based largely on the data of eleven 2-1-1 centers in the following areas: Hawaii; Idaho; Connecticut; Houston, TX; Twin Cities, MN; Salt Lake City, UT; Albuquerque, NM; Grand Rapids, MI; Atlanta, GA; Sioux Falls, SD; and Jacksonville, FL.

“... the national 2-1-1 effort is ripe for enhanced public-private sector collaboration.”

Examples of Cost Savings for Taxpayers, Employers and Government

- Reduction of non-emergency calls to 9-1-1
- Enhanced efficiencies due to decrease in misdirected calls to state, local and nonprofit agencies
- Enhanced consumer awareness of income-generating services such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- An efficient communications infrastructure through which to quickly disseminate public health and crisis preparedness information or changes in federal, state or local programs
- Increased efficiencies in cities' and counties' planning processes due to instant data collection capabilities available through the 2-1-1 database
- Increased cost savings to nonprofits due to enhanced awareness of and referrals to agencies needing volunteer assistance or donations
- The potential for savings for businesses through reduced absenteeism and increased productivity due to the instant availability of quality referrals for a comprehensive array of services

The benefits of 2-1-1 systems increase over time. For example, Connecticut's statewide 2-1-1 system manages the State of



Connecticut's QuitLine, a tobacco use cessation hotline. To implement the service, Connecticut 2-1-1 hired one program manager and trained 2-1-1 call specialists on how to handle QuitLine-specific calls. It is estimated that without the 2-1-1 partnership, the state would have needed to establish a call center and hire five to seven people to handle the calls.

Other Key Findings of the University of Texas Study

The University of Texas research found that the viability of maintaining and expanding a high quality, national 2-1-1 network is dependent on the infusion of additional funds to sustain the current operations and expand the current system.

The study also determined that the national 2-1-1 effort is ripe for enhanced public-private sector collaboration. There is greater opportunity to maximize resources as the 2-1-1 call centers — and the public and nonprofit agencies to which they make referrals — recognize the complementary features of their service delivery systems.

Finally, 93% of the users surveyed by the University of Texas indicated they found the information they sought with ease, and 97% said they would call 2-1-1 again.

To view the entire study, please visit <http://www.211.org/news.html>

Expanding Earned Income Tax Credit Outreach Through 2-1-1

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is the largest and most effective federal aid program for the working poor.

Enacted by Congress in 1975 to offset the burden of social security taxes on low-wage workers, the credit has been widely praised for its success in supporting work and reducing poverty. Five million people, half of whom are children, escape poverty each year as a result of the EITC. In 2004 alone, more than 21 million people claimed the EITC, returning \$39 billion in income to low-wage workers.

Despite the significant benefits it provides, the IRS estimates that 4 million eligible individuals annually fail to file for the tax credit, forfeiting an estimated \$2.9 billion dollars in EITC income. Others claim the EITC, only to lose a significant portion in tax preparation fees and costly refund anticipation loans (RALs).

Recognizing the EITC's potential economic impact on families and — by extension — communities, organizations nationwide are working together to initiate outreach and free tax preparation campaigns to ensure that families receive the full amount of the credit they earned.

According to data from United Way of America (UWA) and the IRS, local United Ways participate in over 40 percent of the 271 EITC campaigns throughout the country, serving hundreds of thousands of individuals each year — more than any other national network. Though an impressive effort, there are millions of families who are not reached by these campaigns, and consequently do not have access to the services necessary to help them file for the EITC. 2-1-1 could help to close that gap.

2-1-1, the national information and referral number championed by UWA, presents a significant opportunity to increase communication about tax preparation assistance sites, helping to increase EITC filings. Similar in operation to 9-1-1, 2-1-1 has been designated by the Federal Communications Commission to provide callers with information about and referrals to local health and human service providers, government agencies, and community based organizations.

As of January 1, 2007, 2-1-1 reaches approximately 193 million people in 41 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico (65% of the population). In states where it is currently available, some 2-1-1s are utilized to disseminate information about the EITC and local tax assistance sites.

2-1-1 callers can access information about:

- The eligibility criteria for the EITC
- The location and hours of tax assistance sites in their community
- The language(s) in which tax preparation services are offered
- The list of documents needed
- Referrals to other applicable services, such as Food Stamps or credit counseling and repair

Going forward, 2-1-1 could be used to recruit volunteers for free tax preparation efforts or to increase participation in asset-building programs by referring callers to financial education or Individual Development Account (IDA) programs in their areas.

For more information about 2-1-1, or to find out if there is a 2-1-1 call center in your area, please visit www.211.org

For more information about United Way and the Earned Income Tax Credit contact, please visit www.unitedway.org/eitc or send an email to eitc.info@uwa.unitedway.org

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Mass 2-1-1 FAQ

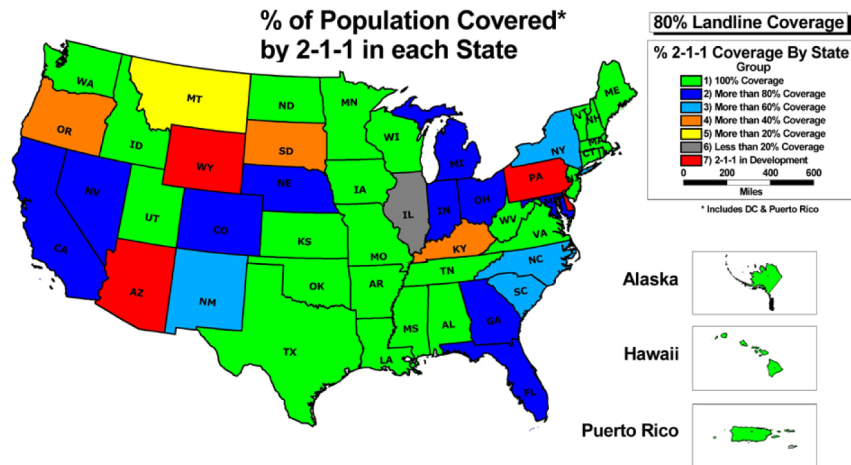
What is Mass 2-1-1?

Mass 211 was created by The Council of Massachusetts United Ways (COMUW) on behalf of 22 local United Ways serving every community in the Commonwealth. Each local United Way is an independent 501 C 3 non-profit organization governed by local volunteers who comprise each organizations board of directors. Nationwide 1350 local United Way organizations raised, and locally invested, over 4 billion dollars last year. Seven years ago COMUW embraced the national 211 program as established by the Federal Communications Commission and initiated by United Way of America. Mass 211 is a program of COMUW and the Massachusetts Association of Information & Referral Specialists (MAIRS). COMUW is the controlling entity and primary funder of Mass211.

The 211 phone number was established by the Federal Communications Commission as a nationwide number to call for non-emergency information & referral services. The number is utilized as a resource to human service and public safety/disaster response and planning agencies. It was designed in part to reduce the number of inappropriate non-emergency calls made to 911. Currently, Mass211 operates it's call center 24 hours a day/7 days a week. The Mass211 call center is located in Framingham, MA. Daily management and financial oversight of Mass211 is provided by the United Way of Tri-County.

The Mass 2-1-1 relationship with EOHHS & MEMA

Mass 2-1-1 and The Executive Office of Health & Human Services (EOHHS) have collaborated on the “resource locator” database for the last 5 years. The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) and the Council of Massachusetts United Ways (COMUW) have agreed to utilize Mass 2-1-1 as the Commonwealth’s primary telephone information call center during times of emergency.



How is Mass 2-1-1 funded?

Mass 2-1-1 is currently funded by 19 local United Ways with annual support totaling over \$600,000. The following local United Ways provide funding for Mass 2- 1-1:

- UW Attleboro/Taunton
- UW Greater Plymouth County
- UW Central Mass
- UW Massachusetts Bay & Merrimack Valley
- UW Tri-County
- UW Pioneer Valley
- UW Acton Boxborough
- UW Webster/Dudley
- Concord/Carlisle Community Chest
- UW North Central Massachusetts
- Berkshire UW
- Northern Berkshire UW
- UW Franklin County
- UW Greater New Bedford
- North Shore UW
- Cape and Islands UW
- UW of Greater Fall River
- UW of Hampshire County
- UW of Southbridge, Sturbridge, and Charlton