
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About 2-1-1

“2-1-1” is the three digit dialing code designated in 2000 by the Federal Communications Commission to provide widespread public access to community information and referral services. In response, there has been a national effort to develop statewide “2-1-1 systems” to ensure that 2-1-1 becomes as easily recognized as 911 and 411.

As of March 2009, 2-1-1 was available to over 234 million Americans, more than 78% of the entire population, through 244 active 2-1-1 systems covering all or part of 48 states (including 31 states with 90%+ coverage) plus Washington DC and Puerto Rico. In 2008, 2-1-1s responded to over 14 million calls. This represents a more than 40% increase over the previous year, an increase driven not only by expanded access but by Americans’ growing need for services to help them confront the current economic crisis.

2-1-1 in Kentucky

Development of 2-1-1 in Kentucky has been underway since 2001 when the United Way of Kentucky was assigned responsibility for the 2-1-1 dialing code by the Kentucky Public Service Commission. Designation of United Way as the lead agency for statewide implementation of 2-1-1 was made permanent by the PSC in 2004.

Today, 2-1-1 is available to some 1.7 million people in 21 counties, roughly 43% of our state’s population through 2-1-1s in Louisville, Lexington and Northern Kentucky. Together they handled over 67,000 calls in 2008.

2-1-1 has demonstrated its value in Kentucky. Now is the time to ensure that everyone in the state has access to this vital service.

Our Plan

Kentucky 2-1-1 is building a statewide 2-1-1 system that will combine decentralized services with shared systemwide functions. This model has been independently assessed nationally as the most cost-efficient and effective model for a statewide system. It will include:

- 2-1-1 centers and local partners that will contribute local information to an integrated, comprehensive statewide database of community resources while building the public visibility of 2-1-1;
- a robust system of call centers interconnected through a shared telephone routing system that will provide uninterrupted service to 2-1-1 in times of disaster;
- a highly visible website; and,
- a single office, incorporated as an independent non-profit subsidiary of United Way of Kentucky, that manages systemwide functions, coordinates marketing and resource development and acts as the primary link to state government.

Based on our experience in Kentucky and that of 2-1-1 systems in other states, we project that by the third full year of operation as a completed system, we will be handling almost 250,000 calls annually.

The Demonstrated Value and Impact of 2-1-1 Nationwide

Throughout the country 2-1-1 systems consistently provide significant public benefits in a variety of ways, including:

- Improving the way in which people learn about and connect with the services they need;
- Helping to create new efficiencies in delivery of health and human services;
- Providing a new resource for businesses and other employers to help their employees while maintaining their productivity;
- Providing a new way in which government can respond to the expectations and needs of all their constituents;
- Providing an expanded infrastructure for information and referral that can ensure consistent, standards-driven service;
- Serving as a support system for emergency management and playing a role in homeland security;
- Providing new trend data on health and human service needs, met and unmet, for planning and resource allocation;
- Connecting people with opportunities to “give help” through volunteering and contribution of money and in-kind goods.

Why 2-1-1 Is Important to Kentucky Now

Why is 2-1-1 critically important to the people of Kentucky?

We are living through a period of economic and social transformation that has touched the lives of virtually everyone – as old jobs disappear before new ones are in place, as we seek to maximize the investment we have made in our public sector by making government more efficient and more effective and as we recognize that increased attention must be given to homeland security and emergency management. As change affects all of us, we must seek new ways to connect with one another and with the help all of us need at some point in our lives.

2-1-1 will respond to these needs:

- It is a major challenge for people in Kentucky to learn about and connect with services that are available.
- The growing need of our population for human services increases the need to effectively and efficiently connect people with the broadest possible range of community resources.
- Our state and communities must be fully prepared to respond to and recover from natural and man-made disasters.
- There is ongoing demand for greater efficiencies in service delivery, both within the public sector and in nonprofit organizations.

The Benefits of 2-1-1

2-1-1 will be of immediate added value:

- Providing an easy, visible, timely and non-judgmental universal access point to information and referral from a live referral specialist for people who need to turn outside their families or other networks for help that is available;

- Increasing efficiency by helping callers clearly define their needs and access appropriate help, reducing misdirected calls to agencies, and providing a ready resource for service providers to use in referring their current clients to additional services available from other providers and for human resource professionals to assist their organization's employees;
- Expanding emergency response capabilities by relieving some of the burden of misdirected calls to 911 call centers, particularly after normal business hours, and by being available as an outlet for statewide dissemination of rumor-control information, and assisting in handling calls from the public during emergencies;
- Creating new knowledge about needs and gaps in services that can help elected and appointed policy-makers and public and private funders make better decisions and more effectively plan for the future; and,
- Helping people connect with opportunities to give their time and talent as volunteers to community organizations, helping to build strong, healthy communities.

As a result of 2-1-1:

- Individuals will be better able to manage their own lives because they have access to the information and resources they require to find and make decisions about the support they need.
- Service providers will have an expanded knowledge of statewide resources to help them better serve their consumers.
- Policy makers and funders – both public and private – will have more complete information about trends in demand for services and early awareness of emerging needs.
- Emergency management will have access to a new statewide infrastructure to help disseminate critical information, assist people through disasters and provide long-term connection to relief and recovery services.
- Businesses will have an additional tool to support their employees with their personal needs.
- Government will have access to a proven, 24/7/365, multilingual infrastructure available to help increase its efficiency and effectiveness.
- Public officials will be assured that their constituents are better able to get connected with the services they need in cost-effective, responsive ways.

The Partnership with State Government

As in other states with successful 2-1-1 programs, we want to work in close partnership with state government with a shared commitment to serving the people of Kentucky while developing a 2-1-1 system that is broadly supported by a wide variety of investors – federal, state, county and local governments, private foundations, businesses, community foundations and United Ways.

By working together, in a public-private partnership, we can ensure that sustaining 2-1-1 minimizes any funding impact on existing human service

providers and does not become the exclusive financial responsibility of state government by attracting private sector support for the system.

We are seeking four things from state government:

- Positioning with state agencies as a “preferred partner/vendor” or “first choice” in providing phone-based information and referral services in support of agencies’ priorities;
 - Financial support for development and operation of the 2-1-1 system with specific focus on investment in start-up costs for the system – particularly development of the statewide database and the required technology infrastructure – and ongoing investment in operational costs;
 - Recognition and definition of the role 2-1-1s can play in supporting disaster preparation, prevention, response and recovery activities; and,
 - Formal designation as the conduit for federal funds that may come available for the support of 2-1-1 nationwide.
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