



2-1-1 Frequently Asked Questions

1.) What is 2-1-1?

2-1-1 is the three digit number set aside by the Federal Communications Commission in July of 2000 for the sole purpose of providing comprehensive health and human service information and referral (I&R). Akin to a simple number for emergency services, 9-1-1 and directory assistance, 4-1-1; 2-1-1 is the three digit dialing code for health and human service information and referral.

2.) What is information and referral?

Community information and referral has been *bringing people and services together* as a critical part of the health and human service delivery system for over 30 years. I&R specialists are skilled professionals who assess callers' needs, determine their options and best course of action, direct them to appropriate programs/services, provide culturally appropriate support, intervene in crisis situations, and advocate for the caller as needed.

3.) How many states have access to 2-1-1?

The status of communities with 2-1-1 access is constantly changing. To date (7/03), 22 states have 2-1-1 via 81 call centers reaching approximately 23% of the US population. When the FCC assigned the 2-1-1 number, they did so with the caveat that the resource be well used. The goal of the 2-1-1 movement is to ensure that at least half of the US has access to 2-1-1 by 2005. For updates on 2-1-1 progress across the country, see www.211.org.

4.) Why 2-1-1?

Finding help is incredibly difficult especially when one is seeking basic services such as shelter, food, prescription assistance, etc. In addition to lacking a clear number to call, it is also challenging to know how to navigate the maze of social services. 2-1-1 simplifies this process by allowing access to such information via a three-digit number. 2-1-1 builds on local resources, reduces duplication and strives for a high quality experience for the caller.

5.) What about 2-1-1 in the metro area?

Historically, there have been four comprehensive information and referral service providers in the four-county metro area (Clackamas, Clark, Multnomah and Washington counties). Each of these organizations has provided information and referral services with their own database. During the fiscal year 2002-2003, the organizations purchased the same I&R software and have begun to merge the individual county databases. This process is slated to be complete by December 2003. In addition, a design was adopted which will result in the collaborative service delivery of 2-1-1 by the end of 2004. The design builds on the existing resources available and establishes a collaboration to deliver 2-1-1 in the region. One agency--will act as the hub for call center activity in three of the four counties. Community Action, Washington County will manage the four-county database. Clackamas County Social Services will provide the quality assurance program for the local 2-1-1 program. Clark and Multnomah County have merged operations (both database and program) as of July 1, 2003. In addition, further private-public partnerships are being explored as opportunities for 2-1-1 delivery in the area.

6.) How can I/my organization become involved?

In the metro area, an Advisory Council has been meeting since December 2002 to make recommendations regarding the design and program of 2-1-1. The group adopted the following as the mission and vision for 2-1-1 in the metro area:

Mission: To provide all people in the metro region access to quality community information all the time.

Vision: A comprehensive regional information and referral system which:

- Delivers consistent, quality service
- Reduces duplication, misinformation and endless searching
- Provides coordination of regional service providers
- Is responsive in times of crisis.

7.) Who are the partners involved in the local project?

Cascade Aids Project, City of Portland Bureau of Housing and Community Development, Clackamas County Social Services, Community Action, Human Services Council, Janus Youth Programs, Multnomah County, One Economy Corp, Oregon SafeNet, and Portland Women's Crisis Line, are a few of the key partners in the 2-1-1 project.

8.) Is United Way of the Columbia Willamette (UWCW) running 2-1-1?

UWCW provided two Focus Funded grants in the spring of 2002 which led to the creation of a 2-1-1 Initiative Coordinator position and funds for the four partners to purchase the same I&R software. Both efforts were funded through the Helping Hands Vision Council and are monitored by community volunteers. UWCW is a funder of the 2-1-1 project and I&R in the community but does not "run" direct service programs.

9.) What is the 2-1-1 database?

IRis 3.0 is the software program that the local 2-1-1 program will utilize. When the four databases are merged, it is estimated that 3,500 resources will be in the database encompassing a broad range of health and human services; from housing services to group homes to specialized information and referral providers.

10.) What about 2-1-1 in Oregon and Washington?

As a two-state region which shares not only a border but similar economic and political conditions, Oregon and Washington's 2-1-1 efforts are closely linked. WIN 211 serves as the facilitator and coordinator of 2-1-1 efforts in Washington. Oregon has a coalition of interested organizations and state departments which has met as a coalition and now is entering a planning process for 2-1-1 thanks to support from a Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF) grant award. Both Oregon and Washington were part of a "NW Partners" grant award from BMGF in the spring of 2003. This award ensures the states will continue to work together to develop and implement 2-1-1. See www.airs.org for details on the quality assurance programs. See www.or211.org for information on Oregon efforts and www.win211.org for information on Washington efforts.

11.) What if I need help now?

If you are currently in need of assistance locating health and human service information or services, see the following for assistance:

By phone:

Clackamas County, OR	503-794-8066
Clark County, WA	360-694-8899
Multnomah County, OR	503-222-5555
Health Services in OR	1-800-SAFENET (1-800-723-3638)

If you have access to the web, try the following sites:

www.oregonhelps.org	www.thebeehive.org
www.caowash.org/find/pages/find.htm	www.housingconnections.org

Contact Liesl Wendt, 2-1-1 Initiative Coordinator at 503-226-9343, lieslw@unitedway-pdx.org to learn more or to request a presentation.