

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 2-1-1?

2-1-1 is an easy to remember telephone number to connect callers to information about critical health and human services available in their community.

What kinds of help can I get through 2-1-1?

2-1-1 provides callers with information about and referrals to human services for every day and urgent needs. For example, 2-1-1 can offer access to the following types of services:

- **Basic human needs resource:** food banks, clothing, shelters
- **Physical and mental health resources:** medical information lines, crisis intervention services, support groups, counseling, drug and alcohol intervention, rehabilitation, Medicaid and Medicare, maternal health, children's health insurance programs.
- **Employment support:** financial assistance, job training, transportation assistance, education programs, Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) filing assistance.
- **Support for older adults, people with disabilities:** home health care, adult day care, congregate meals, Meals on Wheels, respite care, transportation, homemaker services.
- **Support for Children, Youth and Families:** quality childcare, Success by 6, after school programs, Head Start, family resource centers, summer camps and recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring, protective services.
- **Volunteer/donor opportunities**
- **Help in non-emergency crisis situations**

What are 2-1-1's hours of operation?

2-1-1 is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days per year.

When will the service be available in my area?

- All of Missouri is currently able to call 2-1-1 from a land line.
- During 2008 we will also work on implementation of cell phone use.

Why does Missouri need a 2-1-1 program?

A 2-1-1 program enables residents to have better access to needed health and human services. Many people aren't sure who to call for assistance when they have a problem. With one call to 2-1-1, a person can be assured they are being referred to the correct agency or organization in their area to deal with their specific problem or concern.

Why are Missouri Foundation for Health and United Way of Greater St. Louis working together on this program?

Missouri Foundation for Health's funding of the start-up costs is in line with its mission to empower the people in the communities it serves to achieve equal access to quality health services. It was a natural fit for United Way to take the lead in developing the program, which will be a statewide expansion of a similar hotline service it currently operates in the St. Louis region. Together, the two organizations will jointly fund operational costs for the first five years to ensure stability.

How many other states have a 2-1-1 program?

Missouri becomes the 21st state to have total coverage. There are 209 active 2-1-1 systems operating in 41 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico.

Frequently Asked Questions continued

Will the Kansas City area 2-1-1 program be folded into this effort?

No, the Kansas City area program, which started in March 2006, will continue to operate seamlessly but separately from this 2-1-1 program. The Kansas City program covers 16 counties in its service area. However, the two systems will work collaboratively to ensure a consistently high quality service for all Missourians.

What happens when a person calls 2-1-1?

A trained specialist will determine the area from which the person is calling and what services are needed, and then provide contact information for all available services in the person's community.

Is 2-1-1 an emergency hotline?

No, residents should continue to call local emergency numbers for situations such as medical emergencies, fires and police assistance. 2-1-1 can potentially relieve the 9-1-1 system from dealing with non-emergency situations, which sometimes slow down response times in dealing with real emergencies. 2-1-1 does not replace 9-1-1 or other community emergency access numbers.

How will community information be kept up to date?

2-1-1 staff at the four data hubs around the state are responsible for continually updating information about various community services, to ensure access telephone numbers, contact names, lists of services offered and other relevant information is current. The hubs are located in Cape Girardeau, Columbia, St. Louis and Springfield, Missouri.

Is my local United Way involved in this effort?

Currently 10 other Missouri United Ways partner with United Way of Greater St. Louis on this effort. Those are: United Way of Central Missouri, United Way of the Ozarks, Columbia Area United Way, United Way of Southeast Missouri, United Way of Adair County, United Way of the Mark Twain Area, Callaway County United Way, Carthage Area United Way, United Way of Southwest Missouri, and United Way of St. Francois County.

Does a health or human services organization have to be a United Way-funded agency in order to be listed in the 2-1-1 service directory?

No, information has been gathered about non-profit, government and faith-based health and human services organizations in each Missouri community, and made available to residents through 2-1-1.

What about Illinois residents?

Currently, the metro-east region of Illinois does not have 3-digit access to 2-1-1 (but will soon). The United Way of Greater St. Louis, which serves this area, is looking into the possible funding opportunities. However, Illinois residents can still access the United Way 2-1-1 Call Center by calling toll-free: 1-800-427-4626.

Can I use my cell phone to call 2-1-1?

Cell phones are currently not included in the 2-1-1 service, however people on cell phones can access the 2-1-1 Call Center by calling : 1-800-427-4626. In 2008 we will work with the necessary providers to implement cell phone usage for 2-1-1.

I get a fast busy signal when I try 2-1-1 from work. What's wrong?

Many offices do not allow what are called N-1-1 calls from their phones. Since 2-1-1 is a free number to call, ask your administrators if they will allow 2-1-1 in your phone system. Otherwise, please call 1-800-427-4626 or visit us online at www.211missouri.org.

How many people will Missouri 2-1-1 serve?

There are 4.3 million people in Missouri 2-1-1's service area. We anticipate serving between 100,000 and 200,000 calls per year once the service has become fully operational.

Frequently Asked Questions continued

How many call centers are there in Missouri?

One call center in St. Louis serves 99 Missouri counties. Another call center through United Way of Greater Kansas City serves residents in the Kansas City metropolitan area, including 16 Missouri counties.

Will 2-1-1 operators connect people directly to 9-1-1 if necessary and does 9-1-1 do the same thing?

2-1-1 can connect people to 9-1-1 if needed, but 9-1-1 is likely to redirect callers to dial 2-1-1 if appropriate. It's important to remember to call 9-1-1 in emergency situations, not 2-1-1.

Who trains the call specialists and how are they trained?

Call specialists are trained using a curriculum developed by AIRS, the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems, which leads to professional certification. This curriculum is supplemented by training specific to Missouri resources.

Do we have state funding for Missouri 2-1-1 and approximately how much?

At this time there is no State funding for 2-1-1

Who are the funders for Missouri 2-1-1 and our local 2-1-1, or are they one and the same?

2-1-1 Missouri is jointly funded by the Missouri Foundation for Health and the United Way of Greater St. Louis.

Who administers Missouri 2-1-1 funds at the local and state levels?

The United Way of Greater St. Louis administers and operates 2-1-1. Currently there is no local funding.

How many people in the U.S. does 2-1-1 reach?

The most recent numbers are 198 million Americans and more than 65% of the U.S. population in 42 states, D.C. and Puerto Rico.

Can calls be transferred from one 2-1-1 service to another (since there are 20 other statewide 2-1-1 services)?

Generally, no. Each local telephone exchange is linked to a particular 2-1-1 call center. However, each 2-1-1 also has a 10-digit or 800 telephone number; if someone calls seeking resources in an area outside of the local 2-1-1, the caller is provided with the telephone number of the closest 2-1-1 or information and referral service to the area in which they seek services. For example, if someone calls 2-1-1 Missouri seeking resources in San Diego, CA, they will be provided with the regular number for the 2-1-1 service in San Diego.

Will 2-1-1 replace hotlines established for particular types of services or needs?

2-1-1 is designed to link callers with the best source of information and will work in partnership with organizations with specialized expertise or information. For example, a caller seeking child care resources might be linked to the Child Care Resource & Referral (CCRR) agency serving their county.

When will 2-1-1 be available to cell phone users?

2-1-1 is being rolled out to land lines first. It is up to each cell phone provider to make the changes necessary to link their customers to 2-1-1. In the mean time, cell phone users can access the 2-1-1 call center by calling 1-800-427-4626. We are working to implement 2-1-1 for cell phones in 2008.

How often is the database updated?

The database must be updated according to AIRS' Standards, which requires that each resource be verified every year.

Will an organization be dropped if they don't respond to requests for updating?

Yes, organizations who wish to be listed agree to keep their information up to date. Agencies who fail to verify their information will be removed from the resource database.