



2-1-1 Presentation to Oregon Department of Health and Human Services April 23, 2008

Request:

- We request the Oregon Department of Human Services support the development of a statewide 2-1-1 call center system.
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Overview

- The National 2-1-1 Initiative was launched in July 2000 when United Way of America, the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) and several other partners successfully petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to assign 2-1-1 as the universal telephone number for information and referral services. At the time, 2-1-1 was seen largely as a means through which those in need would more easily access a human services system that is often disjointed and confusing to understand and access.

In the nearly eight years since the FCC formally assigned the number, it has become clear to creative citizens, community leaders, funders and government officials that 2-1-1 now available to approximately 76% of Americans, is a powerful tool that innovative communities can leverage to address their specific needs, and 2-1-1 has gained particular notice during times of disaster.

Even as early as 2001, during the September 11 attacks, the necessity for 2-1-1 as a means of aggregating resources and enhancing post-disaster assistance became obvious. In Connecticut, were a statewide 2-1-1 system was in place, the Governor optimized the 2-1-1 infrastructure to assist those searching for loved ones employed at the World Trade Center – and later used the system to connect those suffering

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from the attack's aftermath to mental health services.

In contrast, New York City and Washington were left with what the Brookings Institution and the Urban Institute later called, in referring particularly to D.C., "disjointed and haphazard" health and human services system. Their follow-up report specifically recommended the implementation of a 2-1-1 system to provide a single access point through which agencies' services could be effectively coordinated. This need was particularly evident in New York City, where hundreds of unique 800 numbers were launched to assist those needing information, but ultimately added to the confusion.

Following the Katrina and Rita disasters, FEMA issued a follow-up study in which it both recognized the accomplishments of 2-1-1 and made a strong recommendation that states move forward on statewide 2-1-1 implementation.

A specific benefit during times of disaster is the freeing up of 9-1-1 operators. 911 Coordinator during the 2005 Florida Hurricanes is quoted as saying "We estimated that 2-1-1 got 60,000 calls that normally would have gone to 9-1-1, freeing those operators to handle emergency calls.

In October 2007, Southern California communities experienced first-hand the role 2-1-1 can play during a disaster. Twenty separate wildfires consumed large part of six Southern California counties; in all, more than 500,000 people would be evacuated from homes in San Diego County alone. During these evacuations, major highways were closed as new fires began and existing fires spread. Information about evacuations, shelters, and road closures changed by the minute. Over the period of October 21-October 25 more than 130,000 calls to 2-1-1 were answered.

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Oregon:

- Oregon Legislation House Bill 3443 was passed in July 2005 designating 2-1-1 in Oregon for access to social services and in some community's access to volunteer opportunities.
- The Oregon State Office of Emergency Management (OEM) will contract with the 2-1-1 system facilitator to design, implement and support a statewide 2-1-1 system.
- In time of reduced resources establishing a cost-effective means to continue to inform the public about available social services is vital.
- An integrated statewide system of local information and referral service providers will build upon an already existing network of experienced service providers
- OR211 is a Statewide board with the primary purpose to provide people in Oregon access to an integrated, easy-to-use, statewide, standards-based information and referral system for health and human services.
- 211Info call center in Portland, received **63,627** calls last year of people searching for social services.
- 211Lane.org an online 211 database in Lane county received **100, 509** hits last month (March 2008) of people searching for social services.
- United Ways of Oregon enthusiastically supports the development of a statewide 2-1-1 system.
- Again I request that the Oregon Department of Human Services support the development of a statewide 2-1-1 call center system.

Presenters:

- June Sedarbaum 541-741-6000 X131
- Ted Stevens 541-345-1930