



NJ 2-1-1 Partnership

**FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE:**

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**February 7, 2014**

## **2-1-1 Day on February 11 Celebrates Human Service Number**

**East Hanover, NJ** -- February 11 is 2-1-1 Day, in recognition of the free, user-friendly phone number that serves 90% of America's population, and connects some 16 million people a year to critical resources, information and services.

In New Jersey, more than 210,000 people turned to 2-1-1 for help last year. People called to find information for meeting basic needs, like heating or utility assistance, emergency help, or to find the closest food bank. But they also called for everyday information, to find out where to take their child for developmental screening, or how to locate job training or to find free tax filing support. NJ residents can also visit [www.nj211.org](http://www.nj211.org) to "self-serve," whether to read about how to find help for specific problems or to search the database of over 14,000 programs and services.

"Without 2-1-1, callers can make an average of eight phone calls to different numbers before finding the services they need," said Laura Zink Marx, Executive Director, NJ 2-1-1 Partnership. "2-1-1 gets people to the best resources the first time while providing agencies with appropriate referrals from callers who meet the agency's eligibility criteria." (OR INSERT LOCAL UNITED WAY QUOTE)

2-1-1 was launched by the United Ways of New Jersey 8 years ago as a free way for individuals to connect to essential resources. Nationally, 2-1-1 serves more than 283 million Americans-- more than 90% of our population -- in all 50 states, plus Washington DC and Puerto Rico. In 2012 (most recent data available,) almost 16 million people called 2-1-1 in the U.S. about job training, employment, food pantries, help for an aging parent, addiction prevention programs, affordable housing options, support groups and volunteer opportunities. After a disaster, when many land lines aren't working, people call 2-1-1 to search out water, food, shelter, and disaster aid.

For example here in New Jersey, following Hurricane Sandy, a family in temporary housing was waiting for months for housing assistance. The frustrated mom, feeling like no one cared, called the Disaster Case Management portal at 2-1-1 to see how they could get back in their home. A 2-1-1 call specialist

connected the caller and her family to a Disaster Case Manager at Catholic Charities where a family plan was put in place and much needed support provided.

But 2-1-1 does more than connect people with help. It also takes the "pulse" of American communities. Calls to 2-1-1 Centers in many communities spiked before the recession was declared in 2009, for example. And in 2010 a national survey found 90% of 2-1-1 Centers were getting pleas for help from people who'd never sought any help from food pantries, public assistance or rent and utility help before. Many communities analyze 2-1-1 data as one social indicator of local needs and economic stability.

So what happens with a 2-1-1 call? When you dial 2-1-1 (for free), the call is routed to the 2-1-1 Call Center. It's answered by trained information and referral specialist, who discerns your need, then searches a comprehensive database of relevant human service referrals. The 2-1-1 specialist explains how to access those services. In the case of a worker who has recently been laid off or whose hours have been reduced, the 2-1-1 specialist may share information about unemployment benefits, job search options, food stamps, food pantries, mortgage or rent help, utility assistance, counseling and other available resources.

Here's just one example of how 2-1-1 is helping New Jerseyans find solutions to their problems.

On January 6, 2014 a call was placed to the 2-1-1 call center in New Jersey. The caller left the following message:

*"I'm so happy for this 211 service, because I don't have internet and am not able to look up what the resources are out there that could help me and I'm a senior and I don't have heat and I just thank you so much for the information I was able to get and I'm going to use that information to see if I can get help. Thank you so much."*

United Ways have been long-standing supporters and the national leader of the 2-1-1 movement in Partnership with AIRS (Alliance of Information and Referral Services). As the largest private funder of the 2-1-1 network, the United Ways of New Jersey, in partnership with the State of NJ continue to strengthen and support 2-1-1 as another way to build stronger communities in our state and to create opportunities for all.

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Tours of New Jersey's 2-1-1 Center in East Hanover are available upon request. For additional reports about calls handled by 2-1-1 contact Laura Zink Marx at [973-929-3704](tel:973-929-3704) or visit [www.nj211.org](http://www.nj211.org).