



## **NJ 2-1-1 Partnership**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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# **NJ 2-1-1 Celebrates 2-1-1 Day**

## ***Offering Help and Hope 24/7***

(East Hanover, NJ) On February 11 NJ 2-1-1 and all 2-1-1s across the country will be commemorating 2-1-1 Day in honor of a national system designed to be a front line in resource and referral for those seeking help with health and human service needs. In our state the system was put in place when the N.J. Board of Public Utilities designated the 3 digit dialing code as a direct line for information and referral services for New Jerseyans in need. NJ 2-1-1 opened its doors in 2005 and has been answering calls for help since then, each year showing increasingly higher call volumes. “In 2017 we responded to 458,134 inquiries,” says NJ 2-1-1 Executive Director Melissa Acree. “When someone is in need of help and just doesn’t know where to turn, the power of being able to dial 2-1-1 and speak directly with someone who knows all about state and local programs and services just can’t be over stated. It’s a life saver.”

The call center is always open, and services are free, confidential and multilingual. Callers’ stories offer a poignant portrayal of the essential service being provided. “Working at NJ 2-1-1 gives me the opportunity to really feel like I can make a difference in someone’s life,” explains Michael, a community resource specialist. When asked for an example, he says he has many, but he talks of a caller who was distraught because she was struggling with being homeless.

She had slept in her car for several days and said that she had reached out to a few organizations that she knew of, but had been told that she could not get help because her part-time salary precluded them from assisting her with emergency housing. Michael shook his head and said, “She was frightened that she was going to lose her job because she felt that she had nowhere to get a foundation to put her life together. I talked with her for a while and learned that she was a veteran with an addiction issue. She felt that there was no one to turn to. Everyone in her life had abandoned her and she sounded like she wanted to give up.”

The longer Michael spoke with her, the calmer she sounded, he said. He was able to refer her to a VA hospital where she could get her addiction issue addressed while simultaneously being housed in the domiciliary. That setting would enable her to speak with fellow veterans who would sincerely understand her plight and would help her back on her feet. While there, she would also be exposed to a case management team at no cost who would work with her to find the foundation that she needed to

'put her life back together'. SSVF (Supportive Services for Veteran Families) is another referral often given to veterans in this situation because this organization provides services that address multiple needs.

"You would like to think that this is an exceptional story that Michael has conveyed," says Ms. Acree, "but it is not. We hear stories of struggle every day and more often than not, we are able to point people towards existing programs and services that can help." That ability to offer help and hope is what NJ 2-1-1 is all about. It's worth celebrating.

**In 2017 NJ 2-1-1 answered 458,134 inquiries for help, including:**

- 212,798 calls, chats and text messages
- 245,336 web visitors who were able to access the resource directory online

**Calls for help with finances and housing-related issues are consistently among the top needs expressed.**

- 108,973 people who were looking for financial assistance
- 12,031 web searches using one of the following terms: Finance; Financial; Money; Fund
- 35,514 people who were looking for assistance with a housing-related issue; over 25,847 of those calling were looking for shelter or emergency housing.
- 195,000 web searches using one of the following terms: Housing; Shelter; Homeless.

**About NJ 2-1-1** The statewide information and referral service began in 2002 when the United Ways of New Jersey spearheaded efforts to give people-in-need an easy way to find health and human services by encouraging the Board of Public Utilities to designate the NJ 2-1-1 Partnership as the sole administrator of the three digit dialing code. Statewide coverage began in 2005. In 2017 alone, the NJ 2-1-1 Partnership provided resource assistance to over 455,000 people who called 2-1-1 or visited our website. With roughly 3,000 agencies in the organization's resource database and over 10,000 programs and services listed, NJ 2-1-1 provides the public with front door access to nonprofit, government and faith-based services, as well as disaster response information. Follow us on Twitter @NJ211 and FB <https://www.facebook.com/nj211partnership/>.