



United Ways of Iowa
1111 9th Street, Ste. 100, Des Moines, Iowa 50314

What is 2-1-1?

2-1-1 is a free health and human service information and referral helpline assigned nationwide by the FCC. Calls are answered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The system covers all 99 counties and fielded over 100,000 calls and over 81,000 web visits in 2005 (www.211iowa.org).

What types of information are available by calling 2-1-1?

2-1-1 offers six basic types of assistance: Emergency Preparedness/ Recovery, Basic Human Needs; Physical and Mental Health Resources; Employment Supports; Support for Older Americans and Persons with Disabilities; and Children, Youth and Families. Information in multiple languages is available via phone and on the website.

What does 2-1-1 look like in Iowa?

Iowa is one of only eighteen states with complete statewide coverage. The three top requested needs for this year were: basic human needs resources, physical and mental health resources, and employment supports.

The governing body for 2-1-1 is Iowa/Nebraska Alliance of Information & Referral Systems (AIRS). A national partnership between AIRS and United Way of America was formed with the mission to, "build America's capacity to strengthen the way people access help and engage in civic life."



What are the benefits of 2-1-1 for Iowa?

To 2-1-1 Users:

- 2-1-1 is simple and easy to remember, and offers one point of contact
- 2-1-1 calls are answered 24/7, with bi-lingual services available
- 2-1-1 provides trained professionals to assist callers
- 2-1-1 helps 9-1-1 operators and first responders focus on emergency calls

To Iowa's Communities:

- 2-1-1 helps citizens navigate the complicated web of health and human service programs. Over 12,000 non-profit organizations and government agencies offer resources in Iowa.
- 2-1-1 provides an essential public service to the community by providing one central resource for all health and human services information and referral.
- 2-1-1 reduces government bureaucracy and provides control to local communities who know best how to assist their citizens.
- 2-1-1 is a useful planning tool to understand a community's changing needs.

To Emergency Preparedness:

- 2-1-1 is a critical information system, which is necessary prior to, during and after a community crisis such as a flood, fire, attack or other local or national tragedy.
- 2-1-1 responds immediately during times of crisis, to field calls regarding the crisis and to direct callers to services most appropriate for their needs.

What does it cost to operate 2-1-1?

In its current capacity, United Ways of Iowa and their community partners spend approximately \$1.2 million annually to operate the eight call centers. Approximately 20 2-1-1 systems have received financial assistance from their state governments, such as Nebraska and Wisconsin.

How can 2-1-1 in Iowa become a better system?

Currently, 2-1-1 call centers are struggling to staff the increased demand for 2-1-1 in local communities. Adequate staffing and training, updating and maintaining hardware and software, and updating the databases are the top challenges facing 2-1-1. Centers also want to create comprehensive disaster response plans to help their communities handle non-emergency calls during disasters, but cannot do so without adequate funding. Iowa needs a 2-1-1 **system** that is comprehensive, coordinated, sustainable and integrated with local and state partners.

Who should I contact if I have questions about the program?

Chris Juett, 2-1-1 Program Manager, First Call for Help Iowa, Inc., Cedar Rapids. 319-398-5372 ext. 12 or e-mail at cjuett@uweci.org.

Tim Schoh, 2-1-1 Director, Red Cross, Des Moines. 515-471-8324 or e-mail at schoht@desmoines-redcross.org.