

United Way 2-1-1



The Issue

Most people have little idea where to turn for help when a social service need arises, during a disaster or when they want to volunteer. When confronted with a personal or family need, finding the right resource can be daunting and frustrating. They need help making connections to appropriate community resources.

If people can't easily find the help they need to work through health and life issues, what happens?

The answer is simple: Little problems can become big ones. Single challenges begin to multiply. The circle of those whose lives are affected grows. Finally, the number of resources required to fix the problem can increase over time.

The Opportunity

The 2-1-1 service of United Way of Greater Kansas City is the only comprehensive nationally accredited information and referral resource available every hour of every day to more than 2.3 million people who live in a 23-county area – 16 Missouri counties and seven Kansas counties. A resident only has to make one phone call to be connected to caring Call Specialists with access to a comprehensive database with more than 8,000 services.

The database is maintained and updated regularly by trained resource specialists who build relationships with service providers in order to obtain the most accurate and complete information on resources. The goal of the 2-1-1 service is to provide a "one-stop" option for residents who need to navigate a variety of social services and community resources in the area.

The Approach

United Way 2-1-1 is a free, confidential, multilingual, comprehensive information and referral service available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. By dialing 2-1-1, a single call connects residents to not just phone numbers, but accurate referrals that are relevant to the caller's specific needs and complete information on how to access those services. By dialing 2-1-1, the caller can make one call to find or give help. In addition to calling 2-1-1, individuals can also access the resources online at www.211KC.org.

2-1-1 connects callers to vital human services information and referrals and it is free, fast, and confidential.

Why it matters

A wealth of community resources provides little value to those in need if they do not know what they are or how to access those services.

Similar to dialing 9-1-1 for emergency services, 2-1-1 is an easy to remember telephone number that connects people to information about critical health and human services available in their community. Every hour of every day, people are in need of essential human services – they are looking for utility assistance, food pantries, shelter, help for an aging parent, parenting classes, community health clinics, etc. While not all services can be accessed 24 hours, 2-1-1 is there to talk to people about their concerns.

2-1-1 has a specially-trained Veteran's Navigator who helps military families and veterans find services specific to their needs.

2-1-1 also serves as a key connector for emergency management coordination during a disaster or public emergency. 2-1-1 can help connect individuals and organizations who want to offer monetary donations, volunteer services, sheltering, or food to local disaster victims needing assistance.

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Focus on Results

In 2016, United Way 2-1-1 was contacted 168,042 times, through calls, emails and website visits, and 91 percent of the people who used 2-1-1 were successfully connected to resources. Call data is used by a variety of public and charitable entities to measure community needs and identify service gaps to continue to improve their services. Finally, the concept of a universal three-digit phone number has proved itself beyond any question to be user-friendly, efficient, accurate and cost-effective for the community's overall charitable budget.

United Way 2-1-1 strives to serve those in need and has set several goals to maintain a high level of service. Service level benchmarks are as follows:

- » Abandoned calls, 10 percent or less
- » 75 percent of the calls should be answered within 90 seconds
- » Calls overflowed to voicemail should be 10 percent or less
- » Time waiting for a Call Specialist should be 45 seconds or less

These calls are also randomly screened for quality assurance in order to ensure all callers are treated with empathy and respect by a caring professional and received the help they were looking for.