

## Legislative Priority: OHIO 2-1-1



### Ohio United Way supports:

- Funding for completing universal 2-1-1 coverage in the state operating budget.
- Funding to continue the ongoing operations of the completed Ohio 2-1-1 system.
- Integration of statewide hotlines into the Ohio 2-1-1 system, providing savings and freeing funds that could be used to expand and sustain Ohio 2-1-1.

Regardless of the channel clients use to reach the 2-1-1 system – phone, mobile, chat, or text – or the time of day they contact it, all receive an in-person, compassionate response to human need. Community Resource Navigation Specialists listen to the client, ask appropriate questions, and use the Community Resource Database to identify appropriate options for help. Working in tandem with the client, specialists work to develop an individualized strategy for getting the level of assistance required, advocate on behalf of the consumer, and offer follow-up when necessary. 2-1-1 pre-screens clients for eligibility for community services, reducing time and needless trips from agency to agency, and serves as a neutral, accurate, efficient link to health and human services for the entire community.

2-1-1 provides help when people need it, every day, in **68** of Ohio's 88 counties to over **91%** of the population. Two counties to be added in 2017 will increase the population served in Ohio to over **94%**. Local United Ways provide approximately 50% of the annual funding. Other investors include local government, private foundations, community businesses and other partners.

In 2015, Ohio 2-1-1 received nearly 1.2 million calls and 600,000 web visits. A majority of requests were from people with basic needs, with housing/utility assistance the top request (22%), followed by food (15%) and health/medical inquiries (14%). With a stagnant economy in many Ohio counties, a significant number of calls are taken from individuals and families who have never needed to seek assistance, and who may have difficulty with accessing local services. 2-1-1 is the pathway to hundreds of resources, including healthcare options, employment assistance and educational opportunities.

2-1-1 uses certified Information & Referral specialists to help callers, while tele-interpreters can provide assistance in over 170 languages. Increasingly, Ohioans are also using chat and text options provided by some of the state's 2-1-1 providers.

2-1-1 experiences increased call volume during tax season, providing assistance regarding the federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), linking callers to area VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) sites and Ohio Benefit

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Bank Tax sites. These referrals contributed to the **\$2.3 billion dollars** returned to Ohio's citizens and communities in 2016 via the EITC.

Through United Way of Greater Cleveland's 2-1-1 Help2Veterans program, veterans and their families in the Cuyahoga County area are helped with everything from immediate needs to more complex issues, where a dedicated Veteran's Specialist advocates for the best possible outcome. **Each caller to UWGC 2-1-1 is asked if anyone in the household is a veteran or active military** and this question has resulted in **27,000** households being assisted, adding to the potential of a completed 2-1-1 statewide system.

2-1-1 has proven success when dealing with emergencies and natural disasters, as evidenced by the response to the 2014 water emergency in Toledo, where 2-1-1 handled 3,600 calls in 56 hours and placed more than 1,880 elderly, homebound, and disabled individuals on water delivery lists. Because 2-1-1 existed in the impacted area, local officials were able to publicly ask people to call 2-1-1 for assistance. **Our goal is to have this capability throughout the state.**

### **2-1-1 Expansion**

Since 2008, Ohio United Way has secured **\$2.1 million** dollars from Federal, State and other stakeholders to expand 2-1-1. In 2017, Ohio United Way will work with local United Ways to bring 2-1-1 to Warren & Clinton counties, and will continue to aggressively seek all available funding to help bring coverage to the remaining counties without 2-1-1.

### **Ohio United Way Supports Continued Funding for 2-1-1**

We wish to bring all 88 counties onto the Ohio 2-1-1 system. It is estimated this will require an additional 4 years and more funding from partners in the public and private sector. Statewide implementation of 2-1-1 will bring many benefits, including the consolidation of resources across the state, the elimination of redundant data sources and costly hotlines/toll free numbers, and the opportunity to expand collaborative efforts with the State by promoting statewide programs through this single phone number.