

United Way Announces 2-1-1

Easy to remember phone number connects people with health and human services

People often do not know where to look or who to call for essential human services, such as locating child care, finding quality care for aging parents, needing assistance to meet basic needs or job training programs. 2-1-1 centers are staffed by trained specialists who assess the callers' needs and refer them to the help they seek. In addition, the call center specialists facilitate calls and questions from those interested in volunteering or donating items, such as food and clothing.

2-1-1 benefits the community as a whole. In the past, when people were looking for help they called five to eight different phone numbers searching for the right information. There was not a centralized source of information. Now, 2-1-1 serves as our community's information and referral resource and will be a vital connection for those needing help, as well as for those wanting to give help.

And, in times of crisis -- when a community is coping with floods, fires or other large scale emergencies -- 2-1-1 is a key tool.

Additionally, 2-1-1 is a useful planning tool since it provides real time information about the scope of issues local people are facing. The community will be in a better position to anticipate demand for services and mobilize resources.

Certified call specialists at United Way of Lancaster's LINC information and referral service will serve as our region's call center. LINC has been in existence for several years and is equipped to manage the service. Berks TALKLINE, a United Way agency partner, manages the database of agencies and programs to help ensure Berks Countians have accurate access to health and human service programs. 2-1-1 is not to be used for emergency calls/purposes.

2-1-1 is an example of a community collaboration. United Way of Berks County is pleased to help bring this service to our area. We have been advocating for and working towards this for the past decade. Counties are responsible for developing their own resources to support 2-1-1, as no federal or state funding specific to the initiative is available. United Way is grateful to the County's MH/MR office, as they secured a grant for start-up purposes. Efforts are underway to secure additional funding from a coalition of private and public funders.

2-1-1 Highlights

- Connects people to community resources, providing information on a broad range of services, including child care, after-school programs, food banks, elderly care, basic needs, health services and much more.
- Service is effective October 3, 2011. Available Monday through Friday from 7:00 am to 6:30 pm.
- Serves as a vital connection for those needing help, as well as for those wanting to give help.
- Proven to be a key tool during times of crisis.
- Serves as a community planning tool.
- Berks TALKLINE, United Way agency partner, manages the local database of agencies and programs.
- Certified information and referral call specialists serve in a regional call center.



United Way of Berks County