



Frequently Asked Questions:

2-1-1 and the Idaho CareLine

What is 2-1-1? 2-1-1 is a national initiative.

2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember three-digit phone number that provides easy access for callers to learn about and get connected to local community resources. Idaho was one of 20 states to implement this service in 2002, and in July 2003 became the 4th state in the nation to provide 2-1-1 services statewide. In Idaho, 2-1-1 rings to the Idaho CareLine, a telephone information and referral service for the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare since 1991.

What service does 2-1-1 provide in Idaho? The 2-1-1 Idaho CareLine refers callers to a database of 3,200 programs and agencies around the state to help callers find health and human services or programs in their local community.

What are some examples of the help I can get by calling 2-1-1? Persons seeking help with anything from food and shelter, child care to disability resources, early childhood to elderly services, parenting resources to medical assistance and counseling will be able to simply dial 2-1-1 to locate available services in their local community.

How does the service work? Persons seeking help or information are able to simply dial 2-1-1 to locate available services in their local community. The statewide database includes approximately 3200 government and private and non-profit agencies and programs who provide either a free, low-cost, or sliding fee health and human service. When a caller dials 2-1-1, a team of trained, bilingual Customer Service Representatives (CSR) will answer. Using the comprehensive database of information, the CSR will help callers identify the community services best suited to meet their need. The same comprehensive services are available by dialing 1-800-926-2588.

Who can use 2-1-1? Anyone needing access to health and human service programs in Idaho can use the service. The call is free of charge and confidential. Bilingual CSRs who speak English and Spanish are available and/or the AT&T Language Line is used to access over 140 other languages.

Will the 1-800 number now go away? No – the 1-800 number will continue to be operational. The 1-800 number will be needed for out-of-state callers, as well as those areas of the state where 2-1-1 may not currently operate (pay phones or cell phone companies who have not yet made the programming change).

What are the hours of operation? Current Call Center hours of operation are Monday–Friday from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. MST. This provides access to north Idaho callers from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. PST. After hours and on weekends or holidays callers have the option to leave a voice mail or immediately access emergency on call services.

Why doesn't the 2-1-1 number work from my cell phone? The 2-1-1 service became statewide July 21, 2003 on all land lines in Idaho. Most wireless service providers have now implemented the 2-1-1 service for their customers [AT&T, Edge, Cingular, Cricket, Nextel, Inland, Sprint PCS (most areas), T-Mobile and Verizon Wireless]. Placement of the provider's cellular tower governs how and where the call is routed – especially with respect to “border” areas between states. For example, if you are in Idaho and dial 2-1-1 the call may be routed to the Washington 2-1-1 call center. This means your provider's “tower” sits in Washington and you will need to use the 1-800 number to reach the Idaho 2-1-1 program. Because this is a national issue with cellular service, agreements between states exist regarding rerouting of the calls.

I tried to dial 2-1-1 from work and couldn't get through? Do you have an in-house office telephone network? You do if you dial a “9” or “8” to get an outside line. If dialing 2-1-1 is not working from your business line, contact your company's service provider and request they enter “2-1-1” into their NPA & NXX database. This allows your telephone system to recognize “2-1-1” as a legitimate dialing code. They should know what to do!

Will there be other features of the 2-1-1 program? Yes, there is a searchable online database available so individuals can look up services 24 hours a day. You can access this feature from the web site: www.idahocareline.org. The Volunteer Center, developed by United Way of Treasure Valley is the “Give Help” component of 2-1-1. The Volunteer Center includes a web based tool that allows individuals wishing to volunteer easy access to agencies needing volunteers or to make donations. They can access this feature at www.unitedwaytv.org/volunteercenter.asp.

Who are the partners? The effort to launch 2-1-1 has taken more than five years and includes the persistent support and collaboration of various public and private entities, including the Junior League of Boise, United Way of Treasure Valley, Mountain States Group, Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, and the Governor's Coordinating Council for Families and Children. In November 2001, a two-year start-up grant from M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust was awarded which provided the critical funds needed for the project to move forward. In September 2004 the fiduciary oversight for the 211 partnership (beyond Idaho CareLine) was transitioned from Mountain States Group, Inc. to United Way of Treasure Valley.

In April 2006 a memorandum of understanding between United Way of Treasure Valley and Idaho CareLine recognized the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare as the lead agency responsible for 2-1-1 development in Idaho. United Way of Treasure Valley continues in the partnership providing essential funding in support of 2-1-1 activities and by providing the statewide “Give Help” element of Idaho's 2-1-1 program through its statewide Volunteer Center web site.

If you have additional questions, contact Nina Dillon, Program Supervisor, 2-1-1 Idaho CareLine, 208-287-1020 or email at dillonnn@dhw.idaho.gov.