



Frequently Asked Questions

What is 2-1-1?

2-1-1 is an easy to remember, FREE 24-hour telephone number that connects people with important community services ranging from accessing physical and mental health resources to discovering opportunities to make donations and to volunteer.

2-1-1 makes the process simple. It is the one central phone number available every day of the year that helps people get in touch with health and human service agencies, including:

- **Basic Human Needs Resources** - food banks, clothing closets, shelters, rent assistance, utility assistance
- **Physical and Mental Health Resources** - health insurance programs, Medicaid and Medicare, maternal health, Children's Health Insurance Program, medical information lines, crisis intervention services, support groups, counseling, drug and alcohol intervention and rehabilitation
- **Employment Supports** - financial assistance, job training, transportation assistance, education programs
- **Support for Older Americans and Persons with Disabilities** - adult day care, congregate meals, Meals on Wheels, respite care, home health care, transportation, homemaker services
- **Support for Children, Youth and Families** – child care, after school programs, Head Start, family resource centers, summer camps and recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring, protective services

How is 2-1-1 Funded?

2-1-1 operates in local communities with support from private and public sources. 2-1-1 is not supported by a phone surcharge like 9-1-1. Counties throughout Oklahoma are developing funding partnerships with stake-holders including local and state government, the business community, United Ways, and charitable foundations. The funding picture for each county is unique. Oklahoma 2-1-1 has developed a public-private partnership with the Oklahoma State Legislature. The state's on-going operational cost is about \$5 million per year.

Efficient and cost effective, a statewide 2-1-1 system will serve many purposes, including:

- Empowering the nation to better respond to large-scale emergencies and homeland security needs
- Increasing the number of people and families who achieve self-sufficiency
- Providing relied-upon aggregated state and national data from 2-1-1 Systems to better assess gaps in service and the needs of our communities

Is 2-1-1 in Operation in Oklahoma?

2-1-1 is operational in 58 counties covering more than 90% of our state's population! In 2007, the Oklahoma 2-1-1 Advisory Collaborative seeks to establish additional rural 2-1-1 Call Centers, covering the remaining North Western Oklahoma counties. These centers will provide a single central repository for individuals needing assistance to all community services, both public and private, available to assist them in their time of need. For a map of the areas covered, please visit 211oklahoma.org.

The Oklahoma 2-1-1 Advisory Collaborative has a vision – that 2-1-1 should be available locally statewide. Several Oklahoma United Ways, along with a consortium of state and local health & human service and governmental agencies, meet together monthly working to bring 2-1-1 into operation.

How Does 2-1-1 Work in Oklahoma?

The Oklahoma 2-1-1 vision includes designated 2-1-1 Call Centers serving specific geographical areas of the state.

A person in need is able to reach their 2-1-1 Call Center by dialing **2-1-1** on any telephone in the service area, at no cost to the caller. Large agency phone systems must be programmed by the agency administrator to “unblock” 2-1-1 dialing.

The Call Center ensures coverage **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**.

A trained Call Service Specialist at the Call Center assesses the caller’s needs and determines which service providers are best equipped to help using the center’s health & human service database, then making the necessary referrals.

Once the caller’s needs are determined, the Service Specialist refers the caller directly to appropriate service providers.

What Are the Benefits?

- **Demand on the 9-1-1 emergency system had been reduced.** Many non-emergency calls now received by 9-1-1 for community information and human service assistance can be handled by 2-1-1 Call Centers, freeing 9-1-1 to respond to police, fire, and medical emergencies.
- **Searches for assistance are easier and more efficient.** Police officers, teachers, counselors, nurses, and others frequently help citizens locate human services. The only number they need to remember is **2-1-1**.
- **Our area is better prepared to respond to needs during a disaster.** 2-1-1 can be used by anyone to seek services that relate to any crisis need. For example, in Connecticut, 2-1-1 was used widely by those affected by the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center. They sought counseling, grief support, and other services in the days after the attack and long after the immediate crisis. Similarly, 2-1-1 in Florida connected thousands of volunteers with people in need of food, shelter, water and other services after the devastating hurricanes. Part of the OK 2-1-1 strategy includes relationships with the state’s Emergency Management Department and Office of Homeland Security to get 2-1-1 integrated into the state’s disaster planning efforts.
- **Better-prepared callers use services more efficiently.** 2-1-1 Call Centers maintain current information on area health & human service agencies including office hours, eligibility requirements, and the correct documents to bring when seeking help. Callers arrive better prepared for their first appointment with health and human service organizations, saving interviewing time and achieving better results.

Can I Charge a Fee for Providing 2-1-1 Service?

No. The Oklahoma Corporation Commission and the Federal Communications Commission have made it clear that a 2-1-1 Call Center must provide information and referral service to a caller without charging a fee on either a per-call or per-use basis.

Where Can I Find More Information?

Oklahoma 2-1-1 Collaborative

www.211oklahoma.org

2-1-1 Nationwide

www.211.org

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