

2-1-1 For Butte County?

A Report on Potential for a Comprehensive Information and Referral

Call Center for Butte County Health and Human Services

Prepared by staff of HelpCentral.org -
an online searchable database of health and human services available
in Butte County - located at www.helpcentral.org

January, 2006

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INTRODUCTION

When an emergency strikes – a fire, an automobile accident, a medical emergency – we dial 9-1-1 on our phones to get help. That phone call, regardless of where the emergency is located, connects us to a live operator trained to ask for information and dispatch the appropriate help. That help comes from an agency located near the emergency. It's an amazingly efficient process.

Sometimes emergencies arise that aren't life threatening. A need for shelter on a temporary basis. A need for help with finding a job. A need for help with a drug or alcohol problem. These are the types of needs that government and non-profit organizations cover. But how do we find the right help in an efficient way? It could be as simple as dialing 2-1-1.

2-1-1 currently serves approximately 137 million Americans - over 46% of the US population. There are 169 active 2-1-1 systems covering all or part of 32 states (including 14 states with 100% coverage) plus Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico. As of July 2005, approximately 18 million Californians (about half of the population) had access to 2-1-1 through services in six southern California counties. Nine more counties expect to begin 2-1-1 service in 2006 and 2007, bringing the total coverage to 78% of California's population – over 28 million people.

Is 2-1-1 for Butte County? A statewide business plan for 2-1-1 released in October, 2005 and updated in January, 2006 sets forth a goal of 100% coverage throughout California by 2010. The plan was prepared through a partnership of United Way of California and California Alliance of Information and Referral Services (CAIRS), with a grant from the Irvine Foundation. It adopts the concept of a statewide organization – the 2-1-1 California Partnership – to oversee various aspects of statewide 2-1-1 coverage.

The plan recognizes the need to maintain a close local connection in rural areas of the state through Local Call Centers, which can serve one or more counties, but also points out the benefits of Enhanced Call Centers – call centers that have the capacity to serve large geographic areas in the event of disasters and where Local Call Centers are not able to provide services around the clock and around the calendar.

2-1-1 is a proven benefit to all of the communities it serves (see summary of benefits attached). For the rural counties of northern California, the time is right to determine the best way to implement 2-1-1 services. The statewide plan and the 2-1-1 California Partnership may have significant influence on Federal, State and Nonprofit/Foundation funding to provide 2-1-1 services. Rural representatives need to be a part of the plan implementation.

Counties across the state are grappling with serious financial concerns, and for any new project or service, they are interested in concepts with a proven track record of making a real difference in their community. With 2-1-1 available in 31 states and now six California counties, we can see the impact of successful 2-1-1 programs and the benefits of supporting a statewide network. **Any time we can provide our residents with the information they need to improve their quality of life, we've provided a valuable public service.**

James Keene, Executive Director, California State Association of Counties

PART ONE – A LOOK AT THE 2-1-1 CALIFORNIA PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS PLAN

The 2-1-1 Plan is 102 pages in length and can be reviewed and/or downloaded from the internet by going to www.211california.org and clicking on 'Review The 2-1-1 State Plan'.

The 2-1-1 California Partnership Business Plan (the 2-1-1 Plan) is titled '2-1-1 Across California by 2010' and includes an extensive amount of information on a variety of topics:

- background of the 2-1-1 dialing designation both nationally and in California
- need for and benefits of statewide 2-1-1 coverage
- current information and referral resources throughout California, including existing and proposed 2-1-1 call centers
- creation of a network of local and regional call centers
- description of the proposed organizational structure of the 2-1-1 California Partnership
- technology needs for operation of local and regional call centers
- financial projections, including potential sources of funding and some anticipated costs
- sixteen appendices providing additional details and supporting material

Because the 2-1-1 Plan provides excellent detailed information, this report begins by providing excerpts from the 2-1-1 Plan in the following areas: (1) 'Innovative response' - what statewide 2-1-1 coverage will do; (2) Call centers; (3) Information and referral service; (4) The benefits of 2-1-1 in disaster situations; (5) Financial; and (6) Information on the 2-1-1 California Partnership.

Area 1 – 'Innovative Response' - What Statewide 2-1-1 Coverage Will Do (p.19 of 2-1-1 Plan)

"2-1-1 significantly reduces the confusing maze of information and services that often overwhelms individuals who need help, and helps providers better serve these people. When fully in place, the 2-1-1 California Partnership statewide network will:

- Provide an easy-to-remember, highly accessible entry point to community Information and Referral services
- Provide comprehensive data on health and human services that is collected, maintained, and updated regularly and is easily accessible by both the public and by service providers
- Be positioned to serve as a key partner with the state and "first responder" agencies during times of local or national emergencies to provide information to the public, deliver quick access to crisis support services, and help manage the spontaneous response of citizens who want to help"

Area 2 - Call Centers (p. 34 of 2-1-1 Plan)

“The Partnership’s service approach creates a statewide information & referral network that can respond as a system and serves as a local community resource.

The network has three central components:

- Approximately 20 Local Call Centers that provide 2-1-1 services to one or more counties during the day five days a week, and are partnered with an Enhanced Call Center for after hours services and advanced technology needs
- Five to seven Enhanced Call Centers that have robust capacity to serve multiple counties with complete 24/7/365 services, backup capacity, and redundancy
- A statewide collaborative effort”

Note: Detailed descriptions of Local Call Centers and Enhanced Call Centers are attached.

Area 3 – Information and Referral Service (p.6 of 2-1-1 Plan)

“Telephone-based information and referral service [such as a 2-1-1 call center] consists of three core functions:

- Collecting current, accurate, and complete information on health and human services and organizing it in a way that it is most accessible and useful
- Assisting callers in defining both their immediate concerns and other life circumstances that may be contributing to those concerns
- Connecting callers with the services they need by making referrals to the specific public sector agencies, non-profit organizations, and private providers for those services

The *value-add* of I&R services for those in need is the *human* connection between the caller and a trained I&R specialist. By asking follow-up questions, the specialists are able to help callers define specific needs and refer them directly to the most appropriate service provider.”

Area 4 – The Benefits of 2-1-1 in Disaster Situations

(a) Impact - Hurricane Katrina 2005 (p.17 of 2-1-1 Plan)

“Louisiana’s statewide 2-1-1 service and the talents and infrastructure of 2-1-1s across the country made a tremendous difference.

- On August 30, United Way of America reported “In New Orleans, 9-1-1 is not operational, and 2-1-1 (operating out of United Way of Northeast Louisiana in Monroe) is assuming the role of an emergency phone number.”
- On August 31, the governor of Louisiana stated that anyone needing shelter, food or wanting to volunteer should call 2-1-1
- United Way of America put out a call for specialists from across the country to volunteer in one-week increments in the Gulf Coast area

- Over 200 responded within the first 3 days
- Several California 2-1-1 and I&R centers sent staff
- After the storm, some 2-1-1 calls were forwarded to the sophisticated Texas 2-1-1 system, which handled at peak over 18,000 calls a day statewide, serving over 230,000 evacuees
- 2-1-1s, Volunteer Centers, and United Ways worked together closely to manage volunteers and non-cash donations
- 2-1-1 centers across the country were able to distribute information on giving and getting help to dislocated families”

(b) Relieving calls to 9-1-1 (p.18 of 2-1-1 Plan)

“During an emergency, 2-1-1 can significantly reduce the calls to 911.

‘We estimated that 2-1-1 got 60,000 calls that normally would have gone to 911, freeing those operators to handle emergency calls.’

*Matt Recommier, 911 Coordinator for Lee County, Florida,
referring to 2004 hurricane season*

‘2-1-1 seems to be something that nobody hears about during non-disaster times, but when you have a disaster it is a godsend. In both Mississippi and Louisiana, the crush of calls to every emergency telephone number seeking information is why they love 2-1-1. They feel that they can get those callers calling 2-1-1 so they will have their lines free to do the work they need to do.’

*Peter Bishop, United Way of America, paraphrasing Mississippi Emergency Management
Agency manager after Hurricane Katrina*

A 911 telecommunicator who volunteered at 2-1-1 after Katrina learned that 2-1-1 can address questions that are not related to emergency services, including questions about hurricane relief. ‘2-1-1 was very effective for us in this situation... In the long run I can see where 2-1-1 will save 911 telecommunicators a lot of time.’

*Yolanda Muhammad
Smith County 911 Communications District, Tyler, Texas”*

(c) Partner in Emergencies (p.19 of 2-1-1 Plan)

“2-1-1 has proven, in California and across the country, that it can be a powerful partner in emergencies. Through collaborative planning, 2-1-1 will be ready to:

- Connect people with the specific services they need, relieving first-responder organizations
- Help federal, state, and local government get accurate, current information to the public
- Provide reassurance to callers by responding to rumors and letting them know where they could call or go for support if they feel anxious or isolated
- Work directly with service providers to ensure that accurate information is given about the services that are available, hours of availability, etc.

- Channel the efforts of those who want to help – from spontaneous volunteers to people wishing to donate material goods or money – to the right places that can benefit most immediately and directly”

Area 5 – Financial

(a) Sources of Funding (p.61 of 2-1-1 Plan)

“California currently invests \$14 million annually in community-based comprehensive information & referral services in 23 counties with 28.5 million total residents. 2-1-1 and comprehensive I&Rs are funded by a wide variety of sources in California

- When all counties are included, 42% of total statewide funding comes from counties and 21% comes from First 5
- However, these data are heavily influenced by large counties
 - Los Angeles receives over \$5 million from the county
 - San Diego receives over \$1 million from First 5
- For mid-sized I&R/2-1-1s (with budgets between \$300,000 and \$700,000), United Way and private foundations each account for almost one-quarter of I&R funding
- Existing 2-1-1s have the funding necessary for their operations to meet CPUC requirements, with an overall mix dominated by county and First 5 funding (driven again by Los Angeles and San Diego)”

(b) Ideal Funding Mix (p.69 of 2-1-1 Plan)

“Recognizing the benefits of 2-1-1 services, funding of local operations will continue to come from a mix of sources, most importantly:

- Calls for public services – county and city funding
- Calls for services to young children – First 5 funding
- Calls for services provided by nonprofit organizations – private foundations and United Ways

By developing support from a diverse mix of funding sources that realize the benefits of 2-1-1, local Centers will enhance their sustainability.

Possible sources may include: *(italicized sources currently fund 2-1-1 in California)*

Local: *United Ways, First 5, cities, counties, utilities, hospitals, health care districts, corporations, community foundations*

State: *Area Agency on Aging, public health, Community Technology Foundation, California Teleconnect Fund, homeland security/ OES, mental health (Prop 63), Bureau of Indian Affairs, SBC/AT&T merger public benefit, rural transportation, rural telecommunications infrastructure*

National: *CDBG, health department and bioterrorism, HUD, homeland security, National Library of Medicine, Department of Commerce Technical Opportunity*

Program, Health Resources & Services Administration, Centers for Disease Control, Medicaid, FEMA, foundations, United Way of America”

(c) Calling for 2-1-1 Act (p.71 of 2-1-1 Plan)

“United Way of America is working with CAIRS and the entire I&R community in support of the Calling for 2-1-1 Act. This legislation, currently active in the House and Senate, would require an equal local match of funding.

Efforts are focused on generating co-sponsors for the bills. Progress is being made, with hopes of achieving hearings this year.

Funding from the Calling for 2-1-1 Act would be substantial. The 2-1-1 California Partnership, anticipated to be identified as the lead entity in California, would provide leadership to the allocation of these funds.

It may take up to 30 months after passage for funds to be available to the states.

‘As we have seen in the devastated areas of our Gulf Coast, efficient communication is critical to overcoming a crisis,’ said U.S. Senator Elizabeth Dole and former president of the American Red Cross, calling for swift passage of the Calling for 2-1-1 Act. ‘Installing 2-1-1 nationally would project just that – a well-organized service where anyone offering volunteer assistance or in need of community services can turn, where they can find the answers they need.’”

Area 6 – Information on the 2-1-1 California Partnership

(a) Mission (p.4 of 2-1-1 Plan)

“To create and sustain a statewide network that brings together high-quality local and regional 2-1-1 call centers and provides benefits beyond what is possible independently”

(b) Lead Entity (p.11 of 2-1-1 Plan)

“A primary objective of the 2-1-1 California Partnership is to establish itself as the lead entity for 2-1-1 services in the state

- If federal funding becomes available, a lead entity will distribute funds to the highest priority 2-1-1 uses
- Federal legislation indicates two ways to name a lead entity: through executive order or state legislation”

(c) Activities (p.44 of 2-1-1 Plan)

“The 2-1-1 California Partnership will focus on those activities that best leverage the resources of the I&R/2-1-1 sector, develop statewide resources and opportunities and ensure 100% statewide 2-1-1 coverage

- Plan and set priorities at the statewide level
- Develop and distribute grant and public funding, including allocation of funds from the Calling for 2-1-1 Act
- Advocate with state and federal governments for support of 2-1-1 (in partnership with locals)

- Negotiate and manage statewide service agreements
- Interface and negotiate with telecoms and vendors
- Liaison with CPUC (together with CAIRS)
- Conduct extensive relationship building, technical assistance, and capacity building (including an extensive library of 2-1-1 materials and practices)
- Work with call centers to ensure quality
- Coordinate communication among all 2-1-1 providers
- Compile and report state-wide data on gaps in services
- Support local and regional marketing and public education; create a common message”

(d) Funding Partnership Activities (p.67 of 2-1-1 Plan)

“All 2-1-1 Centers across the state will contribute to the operating costs of the centralized operations based on the portion of statewide population within their service area. The target is for active 2-1-1s to provide 20% of the annual statewide operating budget.

For example, if the total statewide operating budget is \$314,000, together all of the active 2-1-1s would contribute approximately \$63,000.

United Ways of California have set a target to match the amount of 2-1-1 center contributions.

For each of the first two years, the net to be raised in each year to support the statewide collaborative effort is approximately \$135,000.”

PART TWO – WORKING TOWARD 2-1-1 IN BUTTE COUNTY

HelpCentral.org - Where we are with 2-1-1

1. Staff has participated in several meetings over the past 2 years with various agency representatives in Butte County. The primary focus has been on education regarding various aspects of 2-1-1. A variety of educational sheets have been prepared. Primary participants have included representatives from elder services and children services, including agencies that are mandated to provide specialized I&R telephone service during working hours.
2. HelpCentral.org hosted the regional CAIRS conference in Chico in April, 2004. A special afternoon session on 2-1-1 attracted about 40 participants, some of which were from outside Butte County. Surveys indicate an interest in 2-1-1 but also expressed concerns with funding issues and turf issues. No clear picture has emerged of how counties might cooperate in a regional call center, but there is general agreement that counties in our region are too small to have individual county centers.
3. Subsequent small meetings in Butte County have focused on ideas regarding regional meetings, and looking at possible grants for survey work and planning for the region. When it became clear that a statewide 2-1-1 plan would be created, local and regional meetings were put on hold. However, we have a good list of people interested in the 2-1-1 concept both within Butte County and in other surrounding rural counties.
4. We have gathered a variety of information from resources on the internet, including business plans for 2-1-1 centers, technology research papers, national cost/benefit analyses and a variety of promotional information.
5. Bill Hubbard, project coordinator for HelpCentral.org, participated in one of six regional meetings held as part of the planning process for the statewide 2-1-1 Plan. He also provided extensive comments and suggestions to the draft of the 2-1-1 Plan, most of which were subsequently addressed and adopted.
6. Tara Sullivan-Hames, resource and database coordinator for HelpCentral.org, has become a member of the CAIRS Board of Directors and recently participated in the annual Board retreat. Detailed discussions regarding the 2-1-1 Plan were held with other Board members from across the state, where she emphasized the position and needs of small rural counties.

Some Observations (Assumptions?)

1. The positive impact of 2-1-1, especially during disasters, is slowly being discovered. Statewide 2-1-1 in Louisiana and Texas demonstrated the value of such systems during the Katrina disaster.
2. Two strong statewide organizations, United Ways of California and California Alliance

of Information and Referral Services (CAIRS), have teamed up with other key statewide and local representatives to establish a framework for 2-1-1 service in all counties of California. The resulting 2-1-1 California Partnership is positioned to have significant influence in areas of funding, standards, and other aspects of 2-1-1 call centers.

3. Authorization of 2-1-1 call centers is currently governed by rules of the California Public Utilities Commission. The requirements are based on county wide service around the clock, and compliance with national information and referral standards. Rural counties may not be able to individually fund a call center meeting the requirements. However, cooperative arrangements among multiple counties could provide the services required and reduce costs.

4. The 2-1-1 Plan contemplates that Local Call Centers may serve more than one county. Rural area counties should at least explore the multi-county call center potential to be in a position to benefit from possible financial support through the 2-1-1 California Partnership.

5. A key component of the statewide plan is the creation of databases of health and human services in each county that are both comprehensive and searchable. These databases are most accurate when created and maintained by people familiar with services available in each county. However, to be utilized at call centers that serve more than one county, the databases need to be created through use of common software programs that can be easily accessed.

Key Steps to 2-1-1

1. Now that the 2-1-1 Plan is completed, meetings of interested individuals in Butte County should resume. A discussion of plan details should take place, along with expression of opinions on how Butte County might proceed to take advantage of benefits under the plan. A determination of key people to engage should be made.

2. An information awareness campaign should be conducted to inform key individuals (heads of county departments and major nonprofit service providers, Butte County Children and Families Commission, various collaboratives such as Children Services Coordinating Council and Elder Services Coordinating Council, etc.) of the potential for a 2-1-1 call center.

3. The Butte County 2-1-1 Team should host a regional meeting to begin discussions on possible multi-county approaches. Once the 2-1-1 Plan is understood, steps can be taken to facilitate creation of databases for counties without them, and lay the groundwork for creation of a Local Call Center. If there is sufficient multi-county interest, a planning grant should be pursued to fund a 2-1-1 development coordinator to provide outreach and assist a coalition of rural counties to participate in the 2-1-1 California Partnership.

4. Communications with 2-1-1 California Partnership leaders should be maintained so that they can understand our planning process and issues, and we can know (and possibly influence) the next steps being taken toward statewide coverage. In addition, we should make sure individuals from rural areas are represented on various 2-1-1 California Partnership committees.

Benefits of a Statewide 2-1-1 Network (from p.20 of 2-1-1 Plan)

Significant Net Benefit at a National Level

In December 2004 the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources at the University of Texas released a study of the benefits and costs of a national 2-1-1 system. They found:

“The mixed model scenario – which most closely conforms to the current distribution of approaches among states – produces an estimated **net value to society of over \$530 million over ten years** in net present value.”

Based on the areas identified in this study and others, it is possible to recognize benefits of a California state-wide network for community members, tax payers, and service organizations.

Community Members Benefit from Local 2-1-1 Services

Community members benefit from simple access to services

- One-number access to wide range of service information; less confusion on what number to dial for social services results in a greater likelihood of seeking help
- Service from a live person who is trained to help people reduces frustration and fear
- After-hours access recognizes that needs emerge outside office hours
- Disabled residents who have a harder time getting out into the community have increased access to information and services
- 2-1-1 is free and confidential for everyone, so stigma related to accessing services can be reduced
- Quality referrals eliminate the need for multiple calls, unnecessary trips, and frustration; fewer people who need services quit after a number of unsuccessful calls
- Simple-to-remember number multiplies the opportunities for family, friends and neighbors to help each other and offer a resource when there is a need
- Employers benefit from decreased absences and increased productivity

And receive additional benefits from a statewide network

- ☞ Confidence that help will be available, even during times of disaster or emergency
- ☞ Expanded coverage, particularly in counties not currently served by comprehensive I&R services, and to services across the state that residents may not currently know about
- ☞ Easier expansion of services statewide and a more timely response
- ☞ Standardization of access and quality of services across the state
- ☞ Consistent number across the state helps residents solve distant problems and reduces stress during relocation

Taxpayers Benefit from Local 2-1-1 Services

Taxpayers benefit from more effective access to information

- Improved human services as professionals use 2-1-1 to connect clients to needed services
- Reduces use of 9-1-1 for non-emergency situations
- Provides value to all taxpayers (not just the poor)

And receive additional benefits from a statewide network

- ☞ Better planning, assessment, and policy making based on valuable information on community needs
- ☞ Less duplication as 2-1-1 reduces the need for other entities to develop, maintain, and operate new I&R services or 800 numbers, resulting in cost efficiencies
- ☞ Statewide PR and marketing is efficient and effective

Service Organizations Benefit from Local 2-1-1 Services

Service organizations can focus on providing direct service

- Single comprehensive resource for referrals in any area
- Reduces the number of inappropriate calls, as residents seek the help they need
- Specialized I&R providers can focus on those who need their services, and have a reliable alternative for others
- Higher confidence that people will get to the service they need without the challenges of finding it themselves
- Organizations can let 2-1-1 know when they are at capacity (have no available beds, food, child care slots) and avoid getting referrals they cannot help
- Shelter and food programs can share updated information on availability of services

And receive additional benefits from a statewide network

- ↳ Statewide organizations can update their information with all comprehensive information & referral providers statewide with a single contact
- ↳ Statewide agencies know that there is 24 hour access to services, even when their specialized services are not available
- ↳ Ability to patch calls from different parts of the state to local 2-1-1 service or access information from other counties
- ↳ Updated public information can be disseminated to 100% of Californians quickly and consistently through a single contact, such as for public health concerns

Achieving Incremental Benefits

Without the 2-1-1 California Partnership, the full benefit of 2-1-1 will not be achieved

- It is possible that 80% of residents will receive local service
- County-by-county providers will not be able to leverage opportunities for sustainable, long-term service agreements with statewide organizations
- Other incremental benefits of the statewide network, articulated above, will not be achieved

Local Call Centers (LCCs) (from p.35 of 2-1-1 Plan)

Characteristics and Role

- Local Call Centers** provide comprehensive I&R to their capacity
- Are CPUC approved for one or more counties
 - Reduce their costs for nights/weekend service and technology by partnering with their ECC
 - Are encouraged to meet the needs of statewide service agreements¹ locally, or to turn to the ECC for support and backup
 - May have the flexibility to allow remote call handling from multiple locations
 - May opt for the ECC to monitor and maintain their resource database

Required Functionality

Local Call Centers Will:

- Route and queue incoming calls
- Track basic call data
- Answer teletypewriter (TTY) calls that dial 2-1-1
- Quickly access a current resource database
- Protect from viruses
- Compile statistics across all call specialists
- Communicate with service providers, partners
- Update database and generate reports; troubleshoot technology issues

Through their relationships with an ECC, the LCCs will:

- Achieve acceptable hold time during spikes in calls
- Ensure that calls are answered 24 hours every day
- Continue to provide services during power outage, telephone outage, or disaster that damages the call center

Phased Approach

This plan assumes that LCCs will emerge out of existing comprehensive I&R providers where they exist, and from specialized I&R providers in some cases. Since the current capacity of the I&R providers varies widely, and investments will be made with long-term technology goals in mind, the LCCs may not all achieve full functionality immediately upon rolling out as a 2-1-1.

¹ For example, an agreement through which a statewide organization pays 2-1-1s to respond to calls and disseminate information in lieu of a new 800 number

Enhanced Call Centers (ECCs) (from p.35 of 2-1-1 Plan)

Characteristics and Role

Enhanced Call Centers have robust capacity to serve multiple counties with complete 24/7/365 services and sophisticated technology

- Are CPUC-approved for one or more counties
- Provide complete, comprehensive I&R services 24/7/365
- To optimize cost effectiveness, may be designed to serve a combined population of 4 million people or more
- For themselves and the local call centers in their region, invest in staff, training, and technology to provide:
 - Live services during nights and weekends
 - Capacity to handle spikes in call volume
 - Power backup in case of outage
 - Ability to answer calls with the name of the originating county
 - Data tracking based on standards
 - Maintain maximum disaster response technology with the ability to re-route calls, and investment in redundant technology
- Are hubs for staff training, data collection, information sharing, and program improvement
- Provide leadership to achieving 100% coverage in the region

Required Functionality

Enhanced Call Centers will be able to:

- Route and queue a large volume of calls
- Answer a call with a greeting that reflects where it originated
- Achieve acceptable hold times during regional or local spikes in call volume
- Track incoming and outgoing calls and related data
- Answer 2-1-1 TTY calls from large number of stations
- Quickly access current resource databases
- Protect from viruses
- Compile statistics and manage information across a larger number of stations and staff
- Continue to provide services during telephone outage, power outage or disaster that damages the call center
- Communicate with service providers and community partners
- Manage telephone and database changes and issues