

CAI&RS

NEWSLETTER

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CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE OF INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

San Diego Firestorms Provide Opportunity for 2-1-1 Services

San Diego's recent firestorms provided the perfect opportunity to put the many newly developed response systems in place, like reverse 911, the 511 dialing code for road information, and 2-1-1. As some of you may know, 2-1-1 San Diego is a nonprofit organization that provides the easy 2-1-1 dialing code for 24-hour information service and referral line for non-life threatening emergencies year round like where to find volunteer opportunities, affordable health care, utility assistance, and much more. Just as important, 2-1-1 also functions as the County's identified communication source to the public during local disaster. During the last month's devastation, 2-1-1 answered 120,000 calls from San Diegans looking for evacuation information, shelter assistance, and, most currently, recovery information. Normally 2-1-1 answers the same amount of calls in an entire year.

"2-1-1 has had the unique opportunity to gather information directly from those primarily affected by the fires. 2-1-1 call operators and volunteers answered about 120,000 calls between October 21 and October 31. We found that callers were primarily seeking information on evacuation notices, fire status, road closures, evacuation sites and volunteer opportunities," said John Ohanian, CEO for 2-1-1 San Diego. "In many situations, it became apparent that often what our callers needed more than anything was to talk to a live person that could help them through this difficult time by walking them through the process of finding the proper information they needed and, most importantly, encouraging them to cooperate with emergency services."

Because both the news and community officials referred those with disaster-related questions to 2-1-1, the organization saw an exponential growth in call volume during and after the disaster. Call operators filled an important void in the disaster response efforts by providing up-to-date information to individuals throughout San Diego County. The 2-1-1 call volume ballooned to a 7,000% increase in business within four days. Due to 2-1-1's partnership with Volunteer San Diego, 2-1-1 was able to staff phone lines with more than 1,200 volunteers at nearly a moment's notice in order to meet that increase. Volunteers donated nearly 7,000 hours – saving the community more than \$200,000 in

personnel costs in addition to channeling non-emergency calls away from County and City of San Diego's operated emergency lines. Ohanian says, "More than ever, the 2007 wildfires validated the importance of creating a strong coordinated disaster response network within the community that utilizes a wide range of existing services and reduces the strain on already over-extended resources. That's what 2-1-1 is all about — providing individuals and fellow agencies with easy access, 24 hours a day for needed information about community, health and disaster resources."

As a partner of the County, 2-1-1 believes that immediate access to a large population of volunteers is critical to the County's ability to act as efficient first responders in times of crisis and disaster. Expanding on that partnership, 2-1-1 has created a permanent volunteer program and plans to continue building on its partnership with Volunteer San Diego to ensure staffing at 2-1-1 is maximized during such times to meet the needs of the community. "At 2-1-1, information is our business. The need for reliable and quick information has never been more apparent than in the last few weeks when we saw how a single call to 2-1-1 literally



Volunteers answer disaster-related calls

Continued on Page 3

Letter from the President . . .

Dear CAIRS members,

I want to start off by acknowledging the retirement of Sara Matta, Executive Director of 2-1-1 San Diego and I&R and 2-1-1 pioneer. For over two decades, Sara was a leader in the field and served on both the AIRS and CAIRS Boards advancing the professionalization of I&R. She was instrumental in bringing 2-1-1 to California, and her wisdom and good humor will be missed at the CAIRS meetings! We also bid farewell from the CAIRS Board to Angie Baur, Executive Director of 2-1-1 Orange County; Tes Ayenew, Director of I&R for 2-1-1 Riverside County; and Marta Florez from the Center for Independence of the Disabled.



Congratulations are in order for our newly elected CAIRS Board members including John Ohanian, 2-1-1 San Diego's new Chief Executive Officer; Kirstin Hofmann, 2-1-1 Santa Clara County Manager; Gary Madden, Director of 2-1-1 San Bernardino County, and Bill Batty, Executive Director of the Family Service Agency of Santa Barbara. They each bring a wealth of talent and experience that will strengthen and invigorate the CAIRS Board mission to advance the AIRS standards and provide training and networking opportunities to I&Rs in the state. We all had a chance to meet and plan for 2008 activities at our annual Board retreat held this year at the Asilomar retreat center in beautiful Pacific Grove.

Congratulations also go out to United Way of Stanislaus County and Hotline of San Luis Obispo for launching their 2-1-1 services in October and November respectively! Anticipated 2-1-1 launches for 2008 include **Sacramento County** by the Community Services Planning Council – InfoLine Sacramento; **Fresno County** by the United Way of Fresno County; **Kern County** via the Community Action Partnership of Kern; and **Solano and Napa Counties** by the United Way of the Bay Area – Helplink.

In closing, I want to acknowledge the laudable efforts of all the 2-1-1's in Southern California who came together to support each other in response to the recent wildfires and the generous support provided by the local United Ways, the 2-1-1's in Northern California, and the AIRS/United Way of America Disaster Response Team who extended staffing support. Special recognition should be given to John Ohanian and the 2-1-1 San Diego team for the tremendous demonstration, from the epicenter of the fire storm, of just how valuable and capable 2-1-1's are in responding to disaster. Their awesome story is shared elsewhere in this edition of the CAIRS newsletter.

Maribel Marin

Online Training for AIRS Members — Available now

Check out the site and the all the courses on www.airs.org. Training courses include:

- ♦ An Overview for Resource Specialists
- ♦ Disaster Preparation and Staff/Volunteer Management
- ♦ Introduction to I & R
- ♦ The Information and Referral Process
- ♦ Introduction to Taxonomy and Indexing
- ♦ Serving People with Mental Health Issues
- ♦ Working with Challenging Clients
- ♦ Inclusions and Exclusions
- ♦ Customer Relations (Social Services)
- ♦ Managing Teams
- ♦ Supervision 101
- ♦ Hiring and Developing Your Staff



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Sara Matta Retires as Executive Director of 2-1-1 San Diego

After 21 years of extraordinary leadership and service, the San Diego community celebrated the career and retirement of Sara Matta, Executive Director of 2-1-1 San Diego, on October 18 with a farewell party hosted by the 2-1-1 Board of Directors.



Ten years ago Sara joined with other national leaders in her field in envisioning and promoting a service that coordinated access to all health and human services programs through one simple network, making anyone's search for help as easy as dialing 2-1-1.

Throughout her career Sara has been guided by the belief that community involvement and collaboration are essential to the provision of effective services to the community. Starting in 1972, Sara worked in

Los Angeles, helping to build a system of childcare resource and referral services throughout California and was a pioneer in starting the information and

referral program at the United Way of Los Angeles, the forerunner of today's 2-1-1 Los Angeles.

When she came to San Diego, Sara took charge of a small division of United Way, then called Guideline, which in 2003 separated from United Way and became INFO LINE of San Diego County, an independent nonprofit organization. Subsequently, INFO LINE was designated by the California Public Utilities Commission as the 2-1-1 service provider for the San Diego region. The 2-1-1 service was launched here in July 2005. Under Sara's leadership the number of callers guided by 2-1-1's referral specialists has grown eight-fold. 2-1-1 San Diego was recently honored by the national association by providing a record number of "best practices" for the profession.

Sara's collaborative and innovative approach to bringing 2-1-1 to life in San Diego County demonstrates the qualities of her leadership; and she continues to pursue her vision on the state level by helping to create a 2-1-1 umbrella association comprised of diverse organizations. Because of her vision, courage, and patient persistence, Sara has realized much of her dream of community collaboration in meeting the needs of the community. *Meg Storer, 2-1-1 San Diego*

Continued from Page 1

directed people to safety. This experience has truly taught us the value of the information that we provide and receive from our callers. We are currently working to develop the capability of sharing the trends of caller needs with community leaders, lawmakers, health and human service agencies and philanthropists, so that they can better evaluate and provide services to our community," Ohanian stated.

In order for 2-1-1 to truly be an effective and strong information source, a reliable communication network must be in place 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. 2-1-1 believes that it is critical to invest in technology upgrades now to ensure that information can be dispensed quickly and accurately every day of the year, disaster or no disaster. In meeting that mission, one of 2-1-1's goals is to work with community agencies to create a real-time communication system to improve their ability to provide those in need with the most relevant information possible to enhance the ability of the hard-working County emergency responders. 2-1-1, as a nonprofit with 35 staff members, is also working to build

financial sustainability through corporation and foundation partnerships to guarantee that this critical resource remains a part of the community infrastructure for years to come.

In addition, 2-1-1 is working with the Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) and the Coordinated Assistance Network (CAN) to ensure effective collaboration to better meet the needs of those affected by the wildfires. VOAD is a coordinating organization of non-profit agencies, faith-based and community groups, which is forming San Diego's long-term recovery operation. "This disaster certainly opened my eyes – it is apparent that this community needs 2-1-1. I'm committed to letting the San Diego community know how dedicated we are to maintaining and enhancing 2-1-1's ability to serve as our region's source for information. Not only during and following a disaster but for everyday health and community resources," said Ohanian.

Meg Storer, 2-1-1 San Diego

Reach a Statewide Audience with CAIRS

Have a conference, service or product you want to promote statewide? Consider purchasing ads in the CAIRS Newsletter. The current circulation is over 200, with membership in CAIRS continuing to grow. We are offering very low advertising rates:

For-Profit rate = \$400 for 4 quarter page ads (\$100 per ad)

Non-Profit rate = \$200 for 4 quarter page ads (\$50 per ad)

If you are interested contact Barbara Bernstein at (510) 537-2710, ext. 8; or by email: bbernstein@edenir.org





Alameda County's 2-1-1 is Launched

After months of testing and several years of fundraising, Eden I&R launched Alameda County's 2-1-1 phone service on July 1, 2007. In the first four months of service 2-1-1 Alameda County handled over 11,800 calls during which over 17,200 human service referrals were made. In addition, because Eden I&R has a separate database of over 59,000 housing units, over 4,280 housing referrals were also distributed to 2-1-1 callers.

The types of calls received ranged from a single mom who is part of the Victim Witness Protection Program who needed immediate shelter, to a disabled woman whose utilities were about to be shut off due to non-payment, to a man who needed emergency dental services, to a school that wanted information about winter coat donations. In most cases, multiple referrals were provided so that callers had comprehensive and accurate options. In some cases, Eden I&R's Resource Specialists acted as advocates for the callers, resulting in more immediate and personalized assistance (e.g., several callers were assisted in negotiating with PG&E so that their power was kept on and a payment plan was created that met the needs of both the caller as well as the utility company). In all cases, callers were assisted by Resource Specialists who are provided intensive orientation and ongoing training that includes bi-weekly in-service workshops, role playing, and disaster drills.

Shortly after the October 20th Southern California wildfires began, Eden I&R offered to send two highly experienced Resource Specialists to help the various 2-1-1 centers that were impacted with thousands of additional disaster-related calls. San Bernardino's 2-1-1 call center requested Eden I&R's assistance which resulted in the dispatching of Ollie Arnold, Eden I&R's Housing Outreach Coordinator and Silvana Hackett, an Eden I&R 2-1-1

Resource Specialist, who assisted with disaster data collection and answering 2-1-1 calls.

In the Bay Area, several current and potential 2-1-1 call centers (including Eden I&R, the United Way of the Bay Area, the Contra Costa Crisis Center and the United Way of Silicon Valley) are meeting on a regular basis to formalize disaster-related back-up systems whereby calls and data would be automatically switched to another location if one or more of the 2-1-1 call centers become non-operational or overwhelmed by excessive call volume.

Since July 2007 thousands of 2-1-1 Alameda County outreach materials have been distributed throughout the county in multiple languages including Spanish, Vietnamese and Chinese. In addition, on October 22, 2007, Pacific Gas and Electric Company sponsored an "ethnic media" press conference at the United Way of the Bay Area that highlighted the multilingual aspects of the region's 2-1-1 call centers.

Alameda County's 2-1-1 service has a unique funding base. All 14 cities and the county agreed to leverage their funds to support Eden I&R's \$1.3 million annual 2-1-1 budget. The private sector is also a financial partner and includes such current supporters as the United Way of the Bay Area, Pacific Gas and Electric Company, AT&T Real Yellow Pages, the San Francisco Foundation, and Eden Township Healthcare District.

If potential 2-1-1 directors throughout the state would like to get more information about Alameda County's private/public leveraged funding structure that includes all cities contracting on a per capita basis, please call Barbara Bernstein, Eden I&R's Executive Director, at 510.537.2710, ext. 8.

Barbara Bernstein

Free Phones

Free phones? Yes, free phones. The California Telephone Access Program (CTAP) provides **free** specialized telephone equipment to California residents who are deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or have low vision, speech disabilities, cognitive disabilities or mobility impairments.

How can we provide free phones? CTAP is funded through a small surcharge that appears on each Californian's monthly telephone bill. The surcharge ranges anywhere from \$0.02 to \$0.10, depending on the percentage of telephone usage. These funds pay for the program.

To qualify for the program you must: 1) reside in California, 2) have telephone service in your home, and 3) have your doctor or other qualified agent certify that you have a disability that makes using a standard phone difficult. It's easy and it's really free!

For more information on the program, you can contact CTAP at (800) 806-1191. To schedule a group presentation, please contact Pa Kou Cha at (559) 477-4674 or email pakoucha@ddtp.org.



Reverse Mortgages and Refinancing

When making a decision about your financial future a person must have a well thought out plan. Reverse mortgages or refinancing may seem the best way to go if you find yourself in financial problems. Not being able to pay for home repairs, mortgage payments, food, medicines, insurance premiums, car payments, etc. can overwhelm a person. Planning ahead can prevent costly mistakes.

In the past year predatory lenders have entered the reverse mortgage and refinancing arena. They often view seniors as "easy targets" due to the complicated processes and the Greatest Generation's willingness to take a person for their word. Predatory lenders have been known to charge outlandish fees, set impossibly high rates of interest and embark on dubious lending practices that can lead the way to bankruptcy.

If you or someone you know is considering reverse mortgages or refinancing to help make ends meet please contact your local Agency on Aging (1-800-510-2020) for information on financial programs that may be able to assist you with specific financial needs.

If you are still considering a reverse mortgage, shop around to compare options and terms. Learn as much as you can so you can ask questions when you speak to a lender. Counseling prior to entering into a reverse mortgage is mandated. It is recommended that a counselor independent of the lending institution be used to ensure a non-biased opinion. Web sites that have good information on this subject are:

Federal Trade Commission – www.ftc.gov

U.S. Department of Housing – www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hecm/rmtopten.cfm

If you feel that you have been taken advantage of by one of these predatory lenders you can speak to an elder abuse detective via email at www.scamnot.org by using the Quick Contact Form.

Cory R. Scholtes

Phone-based Food Stamp Outreach Opportunities for 2-1-1's and other Information and Referral Agencies

In the State of California, funding is available for organizations to conduct food stamp outreach. Food Stamp Outreach services Information and Referral Agencies can offer include:

- Providing information about food stamps including where and how to apply
- Prescreening callers for potential food stamp eligibility
- Promoting the food stamp program to callers inquiring about other forms of assistance, such as food banks, WIC, or rent assistance
- Playing ads promoting food stamps while callers are on hold.

Funding for Food Stamp Outreach

The California Association of Food Banks (CAFB) funds their Food Stamp Outreach and Access Program through a contract with the California Department of Public Health's Network for a Healthy California (Network), The Network receives funding through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Stamp Program.

This cost reimbursement program is administered by the Network. For every \$1,000 in **non-federal money** spent and billed by a partner organization, such as a 2-1-1, on allowable food stamp outreach activities, \$333.33 is reimbursed to the partnering organization by CAFB. This reimbursed amount is called "federal share." To be eligible for reimbursement, partnering organizations must submit an approved budget and scope of work, be able to certify that no funds are from a federal source or are used to match other federal funds, and assure that activities funded through this program do not supplant existing efforts or funding.

Apply for Funding: Applications for the next funding cycle, beginning October 1, 2008, will be due in February 2008. To receive an application packet, please contact Rachel Winch at rwinch@hungercenter.org or 510-285-5690 or Jessica Bartholow at Jessica@cafoodbanks.org or 510-272-4435 by January 15, 2008. To fill out an on-line pre-application form, please visit <http://www.myfoodstamps.org/MatchFundingAppFFY07-08.html>.

Training and Outreach Assistance

Training materials and Food Stamp Outreach materials are available, including a computer-based prescreening tool and prescreening manual, at no cost. Please contact Rachel Winch for information on how to download these materials.

New CAIRS Board Members

Bill Batty is the Executive Director of the Family Service Agency of Santa Barbara, a multi-service agency serving children, families and older adults. Family Service Agency is the 2-1-1 provider in Santa Barbara County. Bill graduated from Providence College in 1970 with a BA in Sociology. His graduate work was completed in 1975 when he graduated with an MSW from SUNY Albany. Bill began his career in Child Welfare with the Massachusetts Division of Child Guardianship. Since then Bill has served as the Executive Director of the following non-profit organizations: Vermont Children's Aid Society; Family Service of Providence, Rhode Island; Children's Aid and Family Service in Northampton, Massachusetts; and Concord Family Service in Massachusetts. Bill has 30 years experience as an Executive within the non-profit sector with the last 15 years spent at FSA in Santa Barbara. Although Bill loves California he remains a die-hard Boston sports fan. Bill and his wife Claudia have three grown children, a granddaughter, a grandson due in December and a Border Collie!



John Ohanian is the Chief Executive Officer, 2-1-1 San Diego. With a collaborative spirit, Mr. Ohanian brings strong experience in business, non-profit management, and fund-raising to his position as Chief Executive Officer of 2-1-1 San Diego. He is a graduate of the University of San Diego and earned his CPA while working at KPMG Peat Marwick in San Diego. Previous to his appointment as CEO of 2-1-1 San Diego, Mr. Ohanian worked at the Alzheimer's Association, serving as the Vice President of Finance, Operations and Planned Giving. Before joining the Alzheimer's Association, Mr. Ohanian worked with the San Diego Jewish Community Foundation in several capacities, including Systems Consultant and Associate Director. During his tenure, the Jewish Community Foundation's assets grew from \$14 million to over \$200



million, during which time he was able to make several significant contributions, including implementing the foundation's "online" donor advised fund system, innovative investment platform, and constituent database system.

Gary Madden is the Director for 2-1-1 San Bernardino County, a program of Inland Empire United Way (IEUW) in California. When he took the position in February of 2005, the program consisted of a single desk and phone that was used for part-time Information & Referral services. The center is now the professional, fully funded and well staffed, continuously operating 2-1-1 San Bernardino Call Center, the eighth 2-1-1 service to operate in California. The call center responds to over 60,000 calls annually.



Mr. Madden lives in Banning, California with his wife of 36 years and the youngest of their six children.

Kirstin Hofmann is the United Way Silicon Valley, 2-1-1 Santa Clara County Manager who oversees the daily operations of 2-1-1 Santa Clara County. She brings with her a wealth of knowledge about disaster preparedness and United Way. Kirstin previously served as Emergency Preparedness Manager for Community Health Partnership of Santa Clara County. Before that, she worked at United Way of King County in Seattle, where she was responsible for increasing volunteerism and the capacity for volunteerism throughout King County. Kirstin began her career with the American Red Cross of Seattle-King County where she coordinated the outreach program in Health and Safety Services. Kirstin received her Bachelor of Arts Degree from the University of Washington and her Masters Degree in Not for Profit Leadership from Seattle University.



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Become a California Leader in the Information and Referral Field. Explore Joining the CAIRS Board!

CAIRS is looking for new leadership, new ideas and fresh energy on the Board.

Like any other professional association CAIRS does not run itself. It takes the leadership, hard work and cooperation of its members to simply survive, much less flourish, prosper and succeed. Because we do not have paid staff, it has taken the participation, planning and implementation efforts of Board members and other individual CAIRS members for our conferences, training, newsletters and advocacy to succeed.

Right now, making 2-1-1 a reality in every California community is our priority! This is a remarkable opportunity and challenge to us as the premier Information and Referral organization in the State. This is the moment for increased involvement from more of you in the field.

If you are interested in being on the Board or would like to nominate someone, please send the appropriate information to Ed Schoenberger, Nominations Committee, CAIRS at eschoenberger@uwba.org.

Write *CAIRS BOARD* in the subject line.

—Ed Schoenberger

Annual CAIRS/AIRS Membership Renewal

It's time to renew your CAIRS/AIRS Membership for 2008 and we hope you will consider upgrading your membership level to take advantage of some new membership benefits. This single integrated membership structure provides benefits at the national level as well as additional member advantages through your California connection, CAIRS!

For 2008, there are again four membership levels – Basic (\$50), Standard (\$250 for agencies with budgets below \$75,000; \$350 for agencies with budgets over \$75,000), Enhanced (\$500) and Premium (\$750). If you want to learn the most cost-effective level for your agency, www.airs.org links to a worksheet that will help you calculate the membership level that provides the optimal cost-benefit for your organization.

The big news this year for all renewing CAIRS/AIRS members is the expansion of online training and an update of the *ABC's of I&R*.

Online training allows staff to take courses at their own pace – and at the times most convenient to agency workload. AIRS online courses include a Resource Specialist Overview, The I&R Process, Handling Difficult Callers, Introduction to I&R for New Staff, and Introduction to Taxonomy. Online training will be available to all CAIRS/AIRS members with Enhanced and Premium Members receiving the higher discounts. CAIRS will also continue to provide on site training at the annual CAIRS conference and will host AIRS certification tests throughout the year.

The other major benefit is a free update of the *The ABC's of I&R* for all CAIRS/AIRS members at the Enhanced and Premium Levels. This includes revisions to the existing material as well as addition of a **Call Center Management Module**. *The ABC's of I&R* is free as a download to CAIRS/AIRS Enhanced and Premium members. The price for *ABC's of I&R* for CAIRS/AIRS members at the Basic and Standard Levels is \$450.

For a full detailed description of CAIRS and AIRS membership benefits at each level, please visit the CAIRS website at www.cairs.org. If you did not receive a membership renewal form, you can download the application from www.airs.org.

CAIRS Calendar 2008

Feb. 19 AIRS Certification Testing - San Gabriel

Certification for I&R Specialists in Aging (CIRS) and Certification for Resource Specialists (CRS) will be held at 211 LA County, 526 W. Las Tunas Drive, San Gabriel, CA.

Testing application and study materials are available on www.airs.org for download.

Applications for this test date are due in to the AIRS office January 19, 2008, thirty days prior to the test. The basic cost of the AIRS application (payable to AIRS) is listed on the AIRS website. A separate \$25.00 administration fee is due on the day of the exam. A receipt will be provided.

Contact: Laura Mejia 626/350-1841 x 2156 lauram@211LA.org

May 18-21 2008 AIRS Conference - Houston, Texas

Deep in the Heart of Texas - Exploring New Frontiers of I&R.

30th I&R Training and Education Conference

Westin Galleria & Westin Oaks, Houston, Texas

Sep. 19 2008 CAIRS Annual Conference

The CAIRS Conference brings together California's I&R professionals.

Visit www.cairs.org/conferences.htm for more information