

CAIRS

NEWSLETTER

Volume 17 • Number 2

Spring 2004

CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE OF INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

Now Celebrating 25 Years of Service

Conference overview:

A good time was had by all who attended the CAIRS Northern Regional Conference in Chico on Monday, April 19.

Held at the Leland Stratford Masonic Family Center, the conference was attended by I&R specialists from 17 California counties. Attendees were offered the opportunity to attend courses in Information and Referral, Information and Assistance, Web-based I&R, Family Resource Centers' role in I&R, and Crisis Intervention presented by specialists currently working in these fields. In the afternoon a lively panel discussion featured 2-1-1



Jeannine Olsen, Luke Bebicke — I&A 102.

thank you to HelpCentral.org and Strategies, Region 1 - Youth for Change for their co-sponsorship of this fun and informative conference.

Southern Regional Preview:

CAIRS southern regional training conference will be held at the California State University Channel Islands,



Lynn Peseley, Anne Stundahl, Angie Baur, Nancy Findeisen, Rick Sakamoto, Ed Schoenberger (L-R), part of CAIRS boards.

planning leaders from Sacramento and San Francisco. The session, facilitated by Lynn Pesely, 2-1-1 California, and Bill Hubbard, HelpCentral.org, included information on 2-1-1 planning and implementation models in the state and planning for 2-1-1 in Northern California. Some thoughts from the attendees: "The whole day was great"; "Liked the networking and information shared amongst those in attendance"; "Great information."

CAIRS would like to offer a special



Crisis Intervention — Role playing.

Center for Excellence, One University Drive, Camarillo, CA 93012 on June 14. In addition to training, AIRS certification testing will be offered at the conference. Look for specific course offerings and registration information on the CAIRS website at:

www.CAIRS.org. To apply for AIRS certification, go to www.airs.org to download an application. □

Got some time on your hands?



As our professional statewide I&R Association celebrates its 25th Anniversary we are in need of a volunteer historian to review and organize boxes of CAIRS literature. We already have a volunteer who will transport the boxes, which are currently stored at INFO LINE of Los Angeles, to any other part of the State. If you are able to assist, please call Maribel Marin, INFO LINE's Executive Director, at 626-350-1841, ext. 2100.

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Letter from the President...



Dear CAIRS Members,
2004 marks CAIRS 25th anniversary of representing and supporting a network of caring and knowledgeable professionals whose primary purpose is to help people find the help they need. CAIRS' volunteer Board is working hard to enhance membership benefits such as bringing training conferences closer to you via multiple regional events in addition to our statewide conference. New training topics and management level workshops have been introduced to supplement our basic I&R offerings. We have successfully established strategic partnerships with other statewide networks including the Strategies Family Resource Centers, United Ways, and local First 5 Commissions strengthening our overall ability to better serve our communities.

We continue to move 2-1-1 implementation forward in 2004 by assisting four (4) additional agencies to secure 2-1-1 provider status from the California Public Utilities Commission bringing the total such designated agencies in the State to six (6). Furthermore, we have introduced AB 2283 with the support of Assembly Member Judy Chu for purposes of elevating the comprehensive implementation of 2-1-1 as a state priority and positioning California to receive federal funds that may become available in the near future. United Ways in the State are working alongside to support CAIRS in this effort including helping us to secure a lobbyist to ensure the bill's passage.

The CAIRS Board is committed to drawing diverse and strong leadership to its ranks, most recently being joined by Allan Friedman, Information Technology Manager for the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC) and former 2-1-1 Statewide Steering Committee Chair (see his biography in another section of this newsletter).

We look forward to seeing all of you at the CAIRS Southern California Regional Training being held this year in Ventura County on Monday, 14 June 2004 at the California State University, Channel Islands Center for Excellence, One University Drive, Camarillo, CA 93012. See our website www.CAIRS.org for more detailed information regarding workshops and registration.

Help CAIRS continue to bring you valuable membership benefits and networking opportunities by participating in our training conferences and supporting state and federal 2-1-1 legislation. Introduce CAIRS to potential new members by sharing this newsletter or bringing them to one of our training conferences. Thanks for 25 years of support.

— By Maribel Marin, CAIRS President

Don't forget to renew your domain names before they expire. If you do not renew on time someone else can register your domain names and take them from you. Just a friendly reminder!

Letters to the Editor

As always, the Board of Directors is looking for your input. You can provide yours by contacting the Editor, Barbara Bernstein [contact information on page 2 and on page 7].

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The CAIRS Newsletter is published quarterly by the California Alliance of Information and Referral Services.

The CAIRS Newsletter is provided as a benefit to all CAIRS members. Please contact CAIRS if you wish to reprint any part of this newsletter.

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California Alliance of Information
and Referral Services



Vision Statement

A strong network of organizations that ensures everyone can easily access high quality information and referral for health and human services.

Mission Statement

To enhance the effectiveness of Information and Referral services through leadership, education and support.

Goals

In order to achieve the Mission and Vision, the following goals have been established:

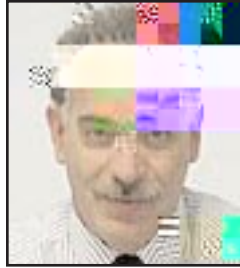
To *provide* training and support to enhance professional skills;

To *facilitate* the exchange of information among the membership and others within the helping professions;

To *promote* awareness of Information and Referral services;

To *advocate* for the interests of the profession and the public it serves.

Welcome New CAIRS Board Member



Allan Friedman was born and raised in New York and attended Beloit College in Wisconsin. He has lived in California for over 30 years, working in sales and management for a couple of well known California corporations before joining the non-profit world as the Information Technology Manager for the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers (CFILC).

He supervises the AT Network Information and referral service, which helps persons with a disability find the assistive devices and services they need for daily living. Allan is also webmaster for three websites run by CFILC and is currently developing a fourth website for a special project that will provide information on accessibility for persons with a disability. He is also responsible for the foundation's electronic communications network, which is used to coordinate advocacy efforts on disability issues.

Allan is also active in his community, participating on a county advisory council on land use and planning issues. In 2002 he helped write a master plan for development of the Dry Creek Parkway Watershed as community representative on the master plan taskforce. He was also a leader in a successful effort to prevent the building of a commercial power plant on land reserved for agricultural development.

A member of CAIRS since 2000, Allan chaired the California 2-1-1 statewide steering committee, helping to develop the successful petition of the California Public Utilities Commission, which resulted in rules for 2-1-1 implementation.

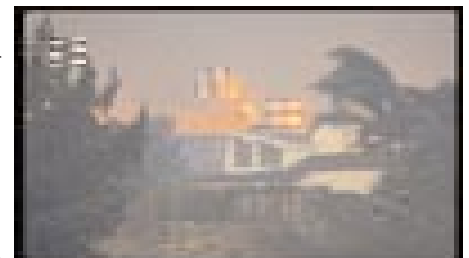
Allan strongly believes that information technology can be harnessed for social good. "During the 90's American business realized great efficiencies as a result of advances in communications and information technology" he says. "Now its time for the non-profit sector to realize those same kinds of efficiencies to better serve those in need and get the most from the limited resources that are available to us." Implementation of 2-1-1 dialing is just one of the many ways we can make the delivery of services more efficient. Allan sees his expertise in database and internet technologies as an asset that will be useful to the CAIRS board. □

INFO LINE of San Diego HELPS WILD FIRE RECOVERY – 6 Months Later

Six months after the wild fires ravaged San Diego County, INFO LINE is finally able to contribute to the recovery effort.

When the fires broke out on October 25, 2003 there was little INFO LINE could do. Our office was evacuated on Sunday the 26th — the fires were within four blocks, and we had no back-up plan for an alternate location. The next day supervisory staff only came to work and we were able to open up for calls with basic information on where the evacuation shelters were located.

But people were not calling INFO LINE for information. Call volume was actually very low because most people were staying home for most of that first week. The City and County both mobilized special numbers to call, neither of which had any experience working with INFO LINE. The information flow was chaotic and continued that way as the Local Assistance



continued on page 6 . . .

EITC — the biggest federal anti-poverty program — I&Rs in California help spread the word

The Earned Income Tax Credit is now the largest federal aid program targeted to the working poor. Nationally, for tax year 2002, the EITC delivered \$36 billion in benefits to 20 million working families and individuals, helping lift more working families out of poverty than any other federal program (per the Census Bureau, the EITC lifts over 4.7 million families out of poverty annually, including over 2.7 million children). The impact of the EITC on working families cannot be ignored – for tax year 2002, the total benefits of the EITC were larger than the benefits of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Food Stamps programs combined.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT?

Single or married taxpayers who worked full time or part time at some point in calendar year 2003 can qualify for the EITC under the following guidelines:

- Workers who were raising one “qualifying” child in their home and had family earned income of less than \$29,666 (or less than \$30,666 for married workers) are eligible for an Earned Income Tax Credit of up to \$2,547.
- Workers who were raising more than one “qualifying” child in their home and had family earned income of less than \$33,692 (or less than \$34,692 for married workers) are eligible for an Earned Income Tax Credit of up to \$4,204.
- Workers who were not raising children in their home during 2003, but were between the ages of 25 and 64 on December 31, 2003 and had family earned income of less than \$11,230 (or less than \$12,230 for married workers) are eligible for an Earned Income Tax Credit of up to \$382.

For a more complete description of the EITC Program and information on initiatives across the country check out the AIRS.org website, click on Affiliate News or copy and paste this link - <http://www.airs.org/downloads/2004%20eitc%20summary%20document.doc>

Despite the significance of the Earned Income Tax Credit as a critical economic empowerment tool for working families, national studies have indicated that up to 25% of eligible families and individuals fail to claim the EITC to which they are entitled. The studies show that families with very low incomes, former welfare recipients, recently unemployed workers and those with language and/or education barriers are among the eligible families failing to receive the benefits of the EITC. Furthermore, a recent study showed that minorities, particularly low-income Hispanic families, are less likely to know about the EITC than low-income non-Hispanic families of any race. Also, 70% of those who file for EITC use the services of paid tax preparers, while Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) is available to help at no cost.

Across the country there are over 150 community initiatives aimed at ensuring that more of those eligible for this tax credit file to receive it, and that they take advantage of free tax preparation services so that they get the full benefit of their refund. This is also seen as an entry point for developing financial literacy and asset building among the eligible population. The Annie E. Casey Foundation is supporting a number of these initiatives. Several communities in California are actively promoting the EITC program and CAIRS members are providing the information and referral entry point and also educating callers about the availability of this opportunity.

Eden I&R in Alameda County, Los Angeles INFO LINE and San Diego INFO LINE have been working with their community coalitions over the past two or three years. The results of this year’s outreach in terms of returns filed and the dollar value are not yet available in most areas, but in terms of the referrals made, all indicate that the critical factor is the publicity and targeted outreach that is conducted by the members of the community collaborative mostly in the early part of the year. Here are the most recent results:

- Los Angeles INFO LINE -14,127 calls in 2004, up from less than 6,000 in 2002 and 2003;
- San Diego INFO LINE – 1,570 calls in 2004, down from 2,499 in 2003;

- Eden I&R, for Alameda County – 6,311 calls, down from 7,548 in 2003, though additional service was provided in 2004 to Contra Costa County.

The refund results for the Bay Area (Alameda, Contra Costa and San Francisco counties) were just published. They include the following:

- Total Tax Returns 8,500
- Total EITC Returns \$4.5 million
- Total Tax Refunds \$9,766,904

To find out about additional community initiatives contact Don Dill of the IRS at 404-338-7792 or by e-mail at donald.dill@irs.gov. □

Membership Renewals Due July 1, 2004

Renew your CAIRS membership today. Membership dues for the coming year, July 2004 through June 2005, are due on July 1st. Enjoy for another year the benefits of CAIRS membership, including newsletter subscription, California I&R Directory, discounts on conferences and voting rights for the board of directors.

Renewal is easy. Download the renewal form from the CAIRS website, <http://www.cairs.org/docs/MemberApp.doc>, and mail the form with your check to the address listed. If you have questions about membership, contact Nancy Findeisen, Membership Vice President, nfind-eisen@communitycouncil.org.

CAIRS website:
www.cairs.org



e-mail:
cairs@hotmail.org

2-1-1 Action Update

Info Link Orange County Authorized to Utilize 2-1-1 Dialing Code

Congratulations to Info Link Orange County on the April 1, 2004 CPUC decision to authorize them to utilize the 2-1-1 dialing code. Way to go! INFO LINE of Los Angeles, Eden I&R in Alameda County, Contra Costa Crisis Center and now Info Link have made it through the CPUC review process. Northern California Council for the Community HELPLINK in San Francisco, Interface Children Family Services - Helpline in Ventura County, Volunteer Center of Riverside County and INFO LINE of San Diego County currently have applications in the review process at the CPUC. More applications will be submitted shortly.

CAIRS Sponsors CA 2-1-1 Legislation

CAIRS is proud to announce CA 2-1-1 legislation AB2288 which was introduced on April 19th by author Assembly Member Chu and principal co-author Assembly Member Ridley-Thomas. The legislation will authorize the CPUC to designate a lead entity for 2-1-1 in California which will strengthen the 2-1-1 system throughout the State and provide a mechanism for allocation of Federal funds. For more information on the legislation, go to www.caairs.org.

2-1-1 – The National Status

There are currently one-hundred-twenty two 2-1-1 service providers across the nation located in 25 states. Eighty-five million people are now served by 2-1-1 across the nation. That's about 30% of the U.S. population!

2-1-1 No. CA Planning Meeting Held at CAIRS Conference in Chico

Thanks to all who attended the CAIRS No. CA Regional conference on April 19th. 17 counties were represented at the conference and 2-1-1 planning meeting. The next CAIRS conference will be in Ventura County on June 14th. For more information watch the CAIRS website at www.caairs.org.

United Way of America Re-launches 888-PASS-2-1-1

Call your Members of Congress today and urge them to "Co-sponsor the Calling for 2-1-1 Act." The bipartisan Calling for 2-1-1 Act (S. 1630 and H.R. 3111), introduced by Senators Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) and Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) and Representatives Richard Burr (R-NC-5) and Anna Eshoo (D-CA-14) has picked up the support of over 89 House sponsors and 26 Senate sponsors. While these numbers are a good base, this is not anywhere close to the co-sponsors necessary to move Congressional leadership and the key committees to action. We need to at least double these numbers of sponsors, with a focus on more Republicans. In particular, we need to target the following Republican members of **House Energy and Commerce Committee**: Christopher Cox, George Radanovich, Mary Bono, and Darrell Issa. We also need to

garner the support of **Senate Commerce Committee Democrat, Barbara Boxer**.

If there is any hope of this legislation passing before the November election, we must generate more grassroots support and calls to Congress urging co-sponsorship of the legislation. The toll free phone number 888-PASS-211 will be operational beginning Friday, April 30 and continue until the end of this Congress (projected to be mid-October). This easy to use service will identify the Members of Congress from your state/community; connect you to their offices free of charge; and explain what to say to them.

Call 888-PASS-211 today! Who should call? Everyone should call this phone number. All citizens will benefit from nationwide 2-1-1 service, so all citizens should call Congress and urge co-sponsorship of the legislation. Congress will not take action unless it hears from its constituents that 2-1-1 matters. □



Current Calling for 2-1-1 Act Co-Sponsors from California

Senate Co-Sponsors for The Calling for 2-1-1 Act (S 1630)

Feinstein, Dianne (D-CA)

House Co-Sponsors for The Calling for 2-1-1 Act (HR 3111)

Berman, Howard L. (D-CA-28)

Cardoza, Dennis A. (D-CA-18)

Davis, Susan A. (D-CA-53)

Eshoo, Anna G. (D-CA-14)

Filner, Bob (D-CA-51)

Harman, Jane (D-CA-36)

Honda, Michael M. (D-CA-15)

Lantos, Tom (D-CA-12)

Lee, Barbara (D-CA-9)

Lofgren, Zoe (D-CA-16)

Matsui, Robert T. (D-CA-5)

Millender-McDonald, Juanita (D-CA-37)

Miller, George (D-CA-7)

Sanchez, Loretta (D-CA-47)

Schiff, Adam B. (D-CA-29)

Sherman, Brad (D-CA-27)

Watson, Diane (D-CA-33)

Waxman, Henry A. (D-CA-30)

Spotlight on . . .

Crisis Lines and 2-1-1

By John Bateson
Executive Director, Contra Costa Crisis Center

Recently I returned from the national conference of crisis centers, held this year in Miami. Interspersed with workshops and research papers on suicide, depression, grief, mental illness and post traumatic stress—the subjects most often associated with crisis counseling—were discussions on information and referral and, more specifically, 2-1-1.

Today, in many parts of the country, 2-1-1 service is provided by a crisis center. Answering calls, assessing a caller's needs, and helping meet those needs is the heart of a crisis center's work. Also, our agencies operate 24-7; our staff and volunteers are highly trained and often licensed; we have teleinterpretation services to translate calls from people who don't speak English and TDD equipment to communicate with people who are hearing impaired; and we maintain or have access to databases of community resources.

Another reason why crisis lines and 2-1-1 fit together is less obvious: crisis centers have a lot of experience providing information and referral. While most people call our hotlines because they have a serious problem, don't know how to deal with it, and don't have anyone to talk to about it, one outcome is that we refer them to additional resources in their community. In the course of providing counseling and emotional support, we explore options and offer resource information so that they receive longer-term assistance.

That said, there's a lot of work that crisis centers must do to prepare for 2-1-1. Our staffs and volunteers need training to meet CAIRS certification standards. New resources need to be added to our databases and classified according to the AIRS taxonomy. New partnerships need to be developed with other agencies so that 2-1-1 calls can be handed off seamlessly when appropriate.



Then there's the issue of funding. Agencies that plan to blend their crisis lines and 2-1-1 face the same challenges raising money today that most I&Rs face. Agencies like mine, though, that plan to run parallel 24-hour operations, a crisis line room and 2-1-1 room, have the added challenge of starting and funding a whole new service. We receive financial support from various entities for our crisis counseling, yet often have no funding in place for information and referral. It's not a matter of adding to our core support, but rather fundraising from scratch.

Why do it? Most crisis centers have a mission similar to my agency's: To keep people alive and safe, help them through crises, and connect them with additional resources in the community. 2-1-1 fits this mission well. Moreover, oftentimes we're the only agency able to operate 2-1-1 locally. We can deliver the service efficiently and effectively when no one else can.

In Miami, I made a point of asking crisis center directors whether 2-1-1 exists in their area. Without exception, those who said yes also said that their agency provides the service. This isn't to say that crisis centers are the only agencies answering 2-1-1. It does mean, though, that there's a natural relationship between crisis lines and 2-1-1. May that relationship grow. □

INFO LINE Helps Wildfire Recovery *...from page 2*

Centers got organized in the dozen separate communities which together suffered the worst fire disaster in San Diego history.

Despite efforts to act more quickly, it was March before INFO LINE was finally able to secure special grants (from Bioterrorism funding and a private foundation) to develop a detailed data base of recovery efforts. A 40 page directory and trifold quick reference have been developed and distributed

and the data base will be accessible on the web within a couple of weeks. This may seem too little too late, but in the



context of recovery efforts which are going to take years, it is of great value. The Disaster Data Base will be updated constantly as the stages of recovery progress and this is now seen as an ongoing aspect of INFO LINE's service package.

The chaos of this disaster has led to widespread realization that information and referral plays a crucial role in the response and recovery effort and INFO LINE/2-1-1 is being built into the official disaster plans going forward. □

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CAIRS Membership Application

YES! I want to be a CAIRS member. Please sign me up.

- Agency membership \$100 (please enter two names for multiple memberships)
- Individual membership \$50
- Associate membership \$25
- I *will* permit my name to be placed on a mailing list that will be offered for sale.

Name: _____

Agency: _____ Title: _____

Address: _____

City / State / Zip: _____

Telephone: (_____) _____ Fax: (_____) _____

E-mail _____ Referred by: _____

Mail this form along with your check (payable to CAIRS) to:
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Contact cairs@hotmail.org or any CAIRS board member if you have questions regarding CAIRS membership.



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Address Correction Requested