



UNITED WAY 2-1-1 CONNECTS YOU TO INFORMATION ABOUT...

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Food Pantries
Day Care
Rent/Utility Assistance
Elderly Care
Mental Health Services
Employment Services
Health Resources
Educational Training
Vocational Training
Disability Resources
Drug Rehabilitation
Alcohol Rehabilitation
Domestic Abuse
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United Way of
Greater McHenry County

Residents can now use 2-1-1 Number connects McHenry County callers with basic human needs

MCHENRY - McHenry County residents now can dial 2-1-1 for human service needs, health resources and other support.

The United Way of Greater McHenry County has worked for nine years to bring the service to the area, and on Thursday they announced that McHenry County will be the 19th county in Illinois to offer 2-1-1.

2-1-1 is a 24/7, non-emergency number that connects callers with basic human needs such as food, shelter, rent and utility assistance. It also provides information on Medicare and Medicaid, medical information and other physical and mental health resources. The service is also available for job support and for people with disabilities.

"It gives you a live body to talk to to get questions answered on where you can go to get help," said Dave Barber, retired executive director of United Way of Greater McHenry County. "It's something that's really going to be a bonus to the community."

The announcement comes as Illinois remains one of the least covered 2-1-1 states in the county. Illinois and Arkansas are the only two states where 2-1-1 reaches less than 20 percent of the population.

In 2003 legislation passed in Springfield to implement 2-1-1 in the state, but it was vetoed by then Gov. Rod Blagoevich and put on hold in 2004. It wasn't until 2009 that three pilot sites - Bloomington, Greater St. Louis, and the Quad Cities - were chosen to begin implementing the service.

Several counties in central Illinois have since acquired the service, and United Way in Kane, Kendall and Lake counties are expected to begin using 2-1-1 in the near future.

"The greatest thing that 2-1-1 can do is track unmet needs," said Karen Zangerle, executive director of PATH Crisis, which provides 2-1-1 service to central and northern Illinois. "So often unmet needs are anecdotal in nature. Our sophisticated system allows us to track the unmet needs and track the reason of the unmet need."

2-1-1 will cost United Way roughly \$66,000 a year for service in McHenry County. The McHenry County Community Foundation also contributed \$7,300, which covered the additional costs.

"2-1-1, I think, in 10 years will be as well known as 9-1-1," said Zangerle. "It will provide a new social utility by being able to access a live voice and a human heart."

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