



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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211 Helpline Looks to Expand Across Oregon

PORTLAND, OR April 27, 2009—Calls to 2-1-1 have increased 47% over the past six months as requests for rent assistance, food, utility assistance and low-cost health care are on the rise in the Portland metro area. More than 62,000 calls for basic needs were answered by the 211info call center in Portland between October 2008 and March 2009.

211info and OR 211, two previously separate nonprofit organizations, integrated operations effective April 1, 2009, in response to growing demand for information resources and a recognized need to build 2-1-1 capacity for the state. The two Boards of Directors recognized the opportunity to leverage their common purposes and strengths at a time when financial resources are tight. The integrated organization will retain the name 211info and have an expanded purpose: to provide people throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington with comprehensive information and referral to human and community services, both in non-emergencies and intermittently in times of emergency.

With unemployment over 12% and more families facing financial insecurity, the 2-1-1 community information and referral helpline can be the first line of defense. 2-1-1 is a three-digit phone number that links the newly needy to food boxes, low-cost health care and foreclosure prevention counseling. “For those unfamiliar and intimidated by the social service system, 2-1-1 is an easy way to get connected,” said Victor Merced, Director of Oregon Housing and Community Services. “2-1-1 creates opportunities for low-income Oregonians to not only locate resources but also provides trouble-shooting assistance many people need to navigate the complex social services in our communities.”

Launched in May 2004 by the United Way of the Columbia Willamette, 2-1-1 service is currently available from 211info in six Oregon counties (Clackamas, Washington, Multnomah, Deschutes, Crook and Jefferson) and four Washington counties (Clark, Cowlitz, Skamania and Wahkiakum). “Community services are difficult to access anywhere, and the absence of a central number in rural parts of the state makes the challenge even greater. 211info has experience operating a call center supported by quality, professional staff. With additional resources, 2-1-1 can be provided so all Oregonians have access to localized health and human service information,” said Vic Falgout, Program Director, United Community Action Network.

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211info is funded through public and private partnerships including United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, local governments and specialized hotlines such as 1-800-SAFENET, a service for maternal and child health information statewide.

“We are proud to continue our support for 2-1-1 and look forward to working with United Ways across Oregon to ensure 2-1-1 is available statewide as quickly as possible,” said Marc Levy, CEO of United Way of the Columbia Willamette.

211info provides health and human service information at no cost to anyone who dials 2-1-1 or 503-222-5555 if 2-1-1 is not available on the caller’s phone. Search the 2-1-1 database of community services at: www.211info.org

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Need Help Finding Help? Dial 2-1-1

Serving NW Oregon and SW Washington

211info • 621 SW Alder, Suite 810 • Portland, OR 97205 • 503.226.3099 • www.211info.org

A United Way Community Impact Partner

2-1-1 is the three-digit number set aside by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in July 2000 for the sole purpose of providing health and human service information and referral (I&R). 2-1-1 is available for 78% of the United State’s population through a network of over 200 non-profit call centers.

211info, a nonprofit agency based in Portland, OR, is built on a 25-year history of providing comprehensive information and referral in the Portland-Vancouver metro region. In 2008, 108,035 calls were handled. There are 4,000 resources in the agency’s database, also available at www.211info.org.