

Pennsylvania 2-1-1 Regional Call Center Application

Background:

Pennsylvania is one of a handful of states that does not have a 2-1-1 system in place. As you know, 2-1-1 is the federally designated number to be used for information, referral and access to non-emergency health and human services.

Since May, 2007 United Way affiliates and representatives from the Pennsylvania Alliance of Information and Referral Services (AIRS) have been planning for the implementation of PA 2-1-1. Together they have formed a non-profit organization, "PA 2-1-1" (application has been filed with the Bureau of Charitable Organizations and the Internal Revenue Service).

The development of the Business Plan led to the conclusion that given the size and diversity of the Commonwealth, Pennsylvania should have a regional system rather than a single call center. The PA 2-1-1 plan calls for seven regional centers which when implemented will have connectivity to each other. The Business Plan is available on the website: www.pa211.org.

The PA 2-1-1 Board has filed an application with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission which is expected to designate the number "2-1-1" to the PA 2-1-1 organization. This process should be completed in December, 2009.

The next step toward implementing 2-1-1 included in this document is a selection process which will identify the entity in each region which will serve as the 211 Center for the region. The PA 2-1-1 Board anticipates that it will take several years before lead agencies are selected for all regions. Some regions have been planning for some time but others have not yet started. This process represents the first round of applications for centers whose start of operation will be sometime between February 11, 2010 and June 30, 2010. Additional rounds of selection will occur each fall until all regions are covered. If you'd like to know about the planning that has taken place thus far in your region, please contact your region's facilitator (contact information below).

PA 2-1-1 anticipates that only one or two regions will be ready for this initial round. There is no new money and very little technical assistance available; and setting up a 211 system is a complicated and expensive endeavor. Therefore only those organizations that have strong community connections, well developed systems and development capacity should apply this time around. We understand that some organizations may feel compelled to apply in this first round because of concerns about competition from others in the region. We want to be clear that the role of the regional facilitators is to ensure that both applying agencies and the region are ready for 211. Sooner is not better.

PA 2-1-1 anticipates Federal and State participation at some point but realistically does not expect funding in the next couple of years.

The successful Regional Center applicant(s) will enter into a three year contract with PA 2-1-1 with an option for two additional renewal years.

The seven regions are as follows:

- Region 1 – Erie, Warren, McKean, Potter, Cameron, Elk, Forest, Venango, Crawford, Mercer, Clarion, Jefferson and Clearfield
- Region 2 – Lawrence, Butler, Armstrong, Indiana, Westmoreland, Indiana, Westmoreland, Allegheny, Beaver, Washington, Greene and Fayette.
- Region 3 – Lycoming, Clinton, Centre, Snyder, Union, Montour, Columbia, Northumberland, Juniata, Mifflin, Huntingdon, Blair, Cambria, Somerset, Bedford and Fulton.
- Region 4 – Tioga, Bradford, Susquehanna, Wayne, Wyoming, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe and Pike.
- Region 5 – Carbon, Schuylkill, Northampton, Lehigh and Berks (**note-Lancaster, currently in region 6, may opt to move into region 5**)
- Region 6 – Dauphin, Perry, Cumberland, Lebanon, Lancaster, York, Adams and Franklin
- Region 7 – Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia.

Each region has a designated facilitator who will convene a team that will review letters of intent and applications and make recommendations to the PA 2-1-1 Board.

The facilitators are as follows:

- Region 1 – Debbie Liadis, Area Agency on Aging, P.O. Box 550, Clearfield, PA 16830 (814) 765-2696
- Region 2 – Nancy Kukovich, Westmoreland Co. United Way, 1011 Old Salem Road, Greensburg, PA 15601(724) 834-7170
- Region 3 – Ellie Beaver, Centre Co. United Way, 2790 W. College Ave. State College, PA. (814) 238-8283
- Region 4 – Sara Peperno, United Way of Wyoming Valley, 8 West Market St., Suite 450, Wilkes-Barre, PA. 570-829-6711 x 235
- Region 5 –Holly Bracken, United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley, 2200 Avenue A Third floor, Bethlehem, PA 18017 (610) 807-5722
- Region 6 – Tim Whelan, United Way of the Capital Region, 2235 Millennium Way, Enola, PA 170125 (717) 732-0700
- Region 7 - Bill Schofield, United Way of Bucks Co. 413 Hood Blvd. Fairless Hills, PA 19030 (215) 949-1660

Process:

The Board of PA 2-1-1 is committed to a developmental process for selecting and assisting Regional Centers to meet all the PA 2-1-1 and national Standards. At this time the PA 2-1-1 cannot fund the operational costs of the Regional Centers; however it is necessary to have each regional center use the same software. PA 2-1-1 will designate, purchase and provide software to successful respondents to the RFI. Regional Centers will be expected to pay for their own conversion to the selected software.

There are several steps and due dates in the process.

1. Letters of Intent to Submit Full Application - **Due to Regional Facilitator by October 16, 2009.**

The Letter of Intent must include at a minimum the following:

- Capacity to provide coverage 24hours/day and 7 days/week
- Ability to have one AIRS certified staff person on first day of operation.
- Community support as evidenced by letters of support, memorandums of understanding, capacity for regional collaboration, access to regional and local data, funding and staffing for the project and ability/commitment to work collaboratively with other regional call centers, including technological and data requirements as they are developed.
- Description of current telephone system with capacity for regional population and call volume.
- Current capacity and plan to upgrade capacity – if needed – to meet all standards.
- Anticipated timeframe for full regional implementation in keeping with the standards before June 30, 2010.
- Geographic coverage of entire region.

2. Entities with acceptable Letters of Intent will be notified **by October 30, 2009** that they are invited to submit a full application.

3. A **mandatory bidder's conference** for applicants with acceptable Letters of Intent will be held on **Nov 3, 2009** by phone or in person at 1:00 p.m. at the United Way of PA office: 17 S. Market Street, Harrisburg, PA.

4. Full applications are **due to the Regional Facilitator by November 20, 2009.**

5. PA 2-1-1 board will make decisions on regional selections by **December 8, 2009.**

Requirements for Full Applications:

Applicants are asked to submit one signed application form as well as three complete copies of all materials to the regional facilitator.

PA 2-1-1 does not return materials that are submitted as part of an application. Please do not send originals or your only copy of a document.

Application packets are evaluated by the 2-1-1 Regional Review Team. Some members of the review team may have relationships with some applicants and therefore will recue themselves from voting.

A member of the Regional Review Team might telephone or write your designated contact person about questions the team identifies regarding your application before submitting their recommendations to the full board. If you receive a call, please try to respond promptly to the questions, as your answers could help improve our understanding of your application.

FULL APPLICATION

Cover/Signature Page

Region:

Name of Organization:

Mailing Address:

Physical Address:

Contact Name and Title:

Phone:

Fax:

E-Mail

Website:

Year Organization was established:

Primary Geographic Service Area You Intend to Serve:

Federal ID Number:

PA State Charitable Registration Number:

Expiration Date:

I certify that the information included in this application is true and accurate.

Signature Chief Volunteer Officer

Signature Chief Professional Officer

Printed Name and Title

Printed Name and Title

Applicant Program Information Pages

Agency Mission Statement:

Provide a brief history of your organization including involvement with information and referral services and other services provided by your organization.

Launching Regional Call Center Statement:

Describe your plan for launching a Regional PA 2-1-1 Center including launch date, hours of operation and plans for operating the center. Include details on plans for housing the center budget and staffing plans...

AIRS Membership Information:

Are you a member of AIRS? Yes ____ No ____ For how many years? ____
Membership Number _____

Calls Handled Information and Tracking:

Describe the total number of inquiries handled in the most recent year. Explain how number is counted (incoming calls, duplicated calls, contact calls, etc)

Describe how the calls are tracked. (Include screen shots.)

Standards Compliance Information

The following is a list of Standards that a prospective agency must meet in order to be considered for a Regional 2-1-1 Center designation in Pennsylvania. If an agency does not yet fully meet the Standard, the agency must submit a plan for compliance with the goal for consideration by PA 2-1-1 Board of Directors along with an expected date for compliance with the standard. Any standard marked "In Place When Applied" must be met prior to application.

In a narrative form, please address each Standard and the agency's ability to meet the performance expectations. The applicant should indicate if the agency currently can meet the Standard and demonstrate how the Standard is being met, and if not, submit a plan for compliance.

Applications will be scored based on the following standards:

Standard 1: Information Provision

- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will provide live information and referral services 24 hours/7 days a week/365 days a year by information and referral specialists. Must be in place at time regional operations begin.
- After-hours coverage may be provided by a partner agency through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as long as the partner agency also meets the AIRS Service Delivery and Resource Database standards.

Standard 2: Compliance with Current Version of AIRS Standards

- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will comply with the current version of the *AIRS Standards for Professional Information & Referral*. The standards must address all aspects of an I&R service's operation. They define the information and referral process in concrete terms, establish criteria for database development, mandate support for community planning activities, incorporate a broad view of collaboration at the local, state or provincial, regional and national levels, include provisions for the socially responsible use of technology and describe the role of information and referral services in times of disaster. (For a copy of the standards, go to www.airs.org.)

Standard 3: Certification of Staff

- Staff and/or volunteers of the PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will seek certification status through the AIRS Certification Program (CIRS and CRS). 25% of eligible staff (including part-time staff and volunteers) must be certified within one year of becoming eligible. The 25% refers to FTE, full time equivalency staff hours. It is expected that the PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will launch with at least one staff person certified by AIRS.

Standard 4: Accreditation

- PA 2-1-1 Regional Centers that have been in operation for a year or more must be accredited by AIRS or have a written plan in place that will lead to accreditation by AIRS within 2 years of 2-1-1 designation. For centers in operation for less than one year, the timeline is three years.

Standard 5: Staffing

- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will utilize trained staff and volunteers dedicated specifically to responding to 2-1-1 calls.
- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will employ staff dedicated to maintaining the information and referral database in a manner consistent with AIRS standards and according to PA 2-1-1 Data Protocols, including but not limited to written inclusion/exclusion criteria, style manual and indexing of the database according to the taxonomy level coding agreement within the region/state.

Standard 6: Quality Assurance

- During hours of operation, the PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will provide timely access to an I&R specialist and shall have a written policy regarding acceptable waiting times and abandoned call rates.
- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center must have a written plan in place to monitor call response time and to increase staff when needed to meet response time goals.
- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will use telephone technology that allows the tracking of performance measures such as call volume, calls going to voice mail, number of abandoned calls, average speed of answering, average call length and service level percentage (self-defined for year one; a reasonable ballpark is: we will answer 80% of calls within three minutes and have an abandonment rate of no more than 15%). An ACD or equivalent measuring system should be used. Centers are expected to respond in a timely fashion to requests for electronic data reports made by PA 2-1-1.
- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will use information and referral software that allows the sharing of resource data with other PA 2-1-1 regions, and other partners as requested by PA 2-1-1, in a format compliant with the AIRS XML Schema (See www.airs.org for more information.) Note that all PA 2-1-1 Regional Centers should expect to migrate to standardized software within 24 months of beginning operations. Any interim software arrangements must be reviewed and approved by the PA 2-1-1 Board.
- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will use information and referral software that allows comprehensive caller and service (i.e., a resource database) data collection and reporting. Reports must be generated and forwarded electronically to the PA 2-1-1 Office on a regular and ad-hoc basis. Centers must be able to report caller data according to the AIRS Problem/Needs Categories. (More information is available from AIRS.) Regional Centers are expected to respond in a timely fashion to requests for electronic data requests made by PA 2-1-1. Note that all PA 2-1-1 Regional Centers should expect to migrate to standardized software within 24 months of beginning operations.
- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will have a written quality assurance (QA) plan for monitoring calls to ensure that calls are being handled according to policies and procedures. Each information and referral specialist must be monitored at least quarterly. QA is critical to an effective 2-1-1 system so centers are encouraged to measure their center using internal (caller satisfaction surveys) and external measures (secret shopper calls, formal surveys).
- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center must have a written policy that addresses the conditions under which follow-up must be conducted. The agency must conduct follow-up with inquirers in endangerment situations and in situations where the specialist believes that the inquirer does not have the necessary capacity to follow through and resolve his or her problem. The follow-up policy must specify a percentage of other inquiries for which follow-up is required. Electronic results of follow-up must be furnished to PA 2-1-1.

Standard 7: Staff Training

The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will provide a structured, ongoing training program and curricula that prepares staff to handle I&R, crisis and disaster calls. The recommended course is the ABCs of I&R. (See www.airs.org for more information).

- The I&R specialists (paid and volunteer) shall have the skills to meet the needs of people who are angry and hostile, are manipulative, call frequently with the same problem or are otherwise difficult to serve. The I&R specialists (paid and volunteer) shall have the skills to meet the needs of special populations (e.g., older adults, people with disabilities, sexual minorities). All calls are confidential and information will only be shared in accordance with established protocols.
- Annual training must teach staff about special safeguards for endangerment situations, i.e. domestic violence, mental health crises, etc.
- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will ensure that staff members are trained to assess and meet the immediate, short-term needs of inquirers who are experiencing a crisis and contact the I&R service for assistance. Most I&R services receive occasional requests for assistance from people in crisis and must equip their staff to handle them appropriately. Included is assistance for individuals threatening suicide, homicide or assault; suicide survivors; victims of domestic abuse or other forms of violence, child abuse/neglect or elder/dependent adult abuse/neglect; sexual assault survivors; runaway youth; people experiencing a psychiatric emergency; chemically dependent people in crisis; survivors of a traumatic death; and others in distress. If the I&R service does not itself provide a formal crisis intervention service, it shall have prearranged protocols for warm transfers with an appropriate crisis center that does. The arrangements must be documented in a written MOU, MOA or SLA.

Standard 8: Confidentiality

- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Call Center must have a written policy which ensures that the confidentiality of inquirers is preserved including agreement forms that staff and others with access to confidential information sign to document their intent to comply. The identity of inquirers, their requests and the information given to them shall not be communicated to others unless: Release of information is required by law (e.g., child abuse reporting); Careful consideration indicates the presence or risk of serious harm to the inquirer or another person, and then communication may be only to those who must be informed in order to reduce harm or risk; or The inquirer has given explicit permission for the information to be disclosed to another person or agency. The inquirer should specify what information may be given and to whom. If permission is required, the agency must have a policy in place regarding when such permission needs to be in writing and when it can be verbal.
- If the PA 2-1-1 Regional center uses telephone technology that allows for the collection of identifying information about an inquirer without his or her explicit permission, it shall develop policies and procedures that protect the inquirer's right to privacy and anonymity while preserving the I&R specialist's ability to

provide for the individual's safety should personal identification become necessary.

Standard 9: Access to All

- The PA 2-1-1 Regional center must provide barrier-free access to its services for individuals and groups who have special needs, e.g., access for people with hearing impairments; language access for inquirers who speak languages other than English.

Standard 10: Use of Taxonomy

- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center must utilize the AIRS/InfoLine Taxonomy for indexing and database searching. The I&R service has procedures in place to update and integrate taxonomy additions and changes according to a regular schedule and completely updates its version of the taxonomy every 18 months.)

Standard 11: Marketing and Outreach

- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will actively market the 2-1-1 service, educate the public about it on an on-going basis and participate in statewide and national efforts to promote 2-1-1.
- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will maintain an interactive web site. Possibilities include: live chat, instant messaging, e-mail and other electronic communication methods. The center must have procedures in place for responding to these inquiries in a timely manner.

Standard 12: Technology

- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center may utilize a variety of means to support their ability to conduct rescue services including Caller ID or a call tracing arrangement with the telephone company or the appropriate 911 service. At a minimum, there must be a separate telephone or a separate external line that is available for initiating rescue procedures without interrupting the crisis call. The specialist shall follow the I&R service's protocol for addressing callers who wish to remain anonymous yet require rescue.

Standard 13: Cooperative Relationships

- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center must work cooperatively with other PA 2-1-1 Regional Centers, specialized I&R providers, and PA 2-1-1 to ensure a seamless and uniform 2-1-1 system in Pennsylvania. Participation in regional meetings, PAIR and AIRS activities and conferences, VOAD meetings is mandatory. Staffing must be adjusted to allow staff to participate in training opportunities.
- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center applicant must demonstrate cooperative relationships with specialized I&Rs, crisis centers, 9-1-1s, 3-1-1s, volunteer management and or management agencies. Formal agreements (MOU, MOA, SLA) shall be in place within six months of the 2-1-1 designation.

Standard 14: Disaster Preparedness

- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center must have a written emergency operations and business continuity plan that specifically addresses disasters common to your area, but one that also prepares for emergencies in general. Have a MOU with disaster partners with local and regional levels.
- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will document its plans/ability to provide information and referral services to the community during (when appropriate) and following a disaster or other emergency.

Standard 15: Volunteer Clearinghouse Functions

- The PA 2-1-1 Regional Center will document its ability to handle volunteer/in-kind request calls directly or through a MOU with the local Volunteer Center or other appropriate agency. Appropriate electronic reports must be furnished upon request.

Regional Collaborative Support Letter

Submit a Support Letter from the Chair of the Regional Collaborative endorsing the agency’s application as the PA 2-1-1 Regional Call Center.

Regional Relationships:

For each county that you will serve, please describe and list the agencies with which you have working relationships

Current Staffing:

We want to know about your current staffing levels. This will help us to understand how many staff you need to answer your current call volume. Describe your plan for increasing staff to meet demand as the number of calls increase.

Position	Degree	Certifications	Full-time	Part-time	Volunteer

Attachments

Please submit the following documents to your application:

1. Board of Directors List
2. Copy of 501-c-3 Determination Letter

3. Copy of Registration Certificate with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations
4. Most Recent Certified Financial Audit
5. Most Recent 990 Filing with the Internal Revenue Service
6. Most Recent Agency Budget (list funding sources)
7. Most Recent Program Budget
8. Most Recent Annual Report and Service Provision Data