



# News Release

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## **Lifeline Celebrates National 2-1-1 Day on February 11 February 6, 2020**

**PAINESVILLE, Ohio**— February 11 is National 2-1-1 Day, in recognition of the free, 24/7, user-friendly phone and online system that serves 90% of America's population. First launched nationally in 1997 by the United Way of Atlanta and locally in 2004 by the United Way of Lake County in partnership with the late Congressman Steven C. LaTourette, 2-1-1 worldwide connects some 12 million people a year to critical resources, information and services.

In the United States, over 12.8 million callers turned to 2-1-1 for help in 2018 via phone calls and web queries from people seeking resources. People call or search 2-1-1 looking for resources to meet basic needs, like heating or utility assistance, shelter, emergency help, or to find the closest food bank. They also called for everyday important non-emergency needs, such as developmental screening for a child, home health care for a relative, job training or free tax filing support.

Locally, Lake County's 2-1-1 information and referral hotline, housed at Lifeline, assisted 40,497 requests for assistance in 2019—an increase of over 4,000 requests from 2018 and the highest volume of ever recorded in Lake County in a non-disaster year. Those 40,497 requests included 27,010 phone calls and 13,487 requests made through the 2-1-1 online resource database. The top needs demonstrated in 2019 include food assistance at 24% of requests, followed by housing/emergency shelter with 23.5% of requests and utilities assistance at 16.5% of requests. A fact sheet with additional call statistics and data for 2019 is attached.

"2-1-1 is an essential tool for helping people take better care of their families, and also for making more efficient use of a community's nonprofit and public resources," said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director of Lifeline and Secretary of the Ohio AIRS Board. "Over the years we have seen the call volume demonstrate that Lake County residents are really utilizing this tool to connect to resources for help with the most basic needs. We've also seen how 2-1-1 can really impact our community's ability to respond in times of disaster, like during the 2013 floods."

So what happens with a 2-1-1 call? When you dial 2-1-1 (at no cost), the call is routed to a trained information and referral specialist, who helps identify your need(s), then refers you to relevant human services, health or education resources from a comprehensive resource database. For example, in the case of a worker who has recently been laid off or whose hours have been reduced, the 2-1-1 specialist may share information about unemployment benefits, job search options, food stamps, food pantries, mortgage or rent help, utility assistance, counseling and other available resources.

There is no federal funding for 2-1-1, and at this time no state funding is available to 2-1-1s in Ohio, making all Ohio 2-1-1's completely locally funded.

"We are fortunate in Lake County that we have strong local support for our 2-1-1," said Dotson. "Currently our 2-1-1 is funded by a mix of funding led by the Lake County ADAMHS Board, but also supported by the Lake County Department of Job & Family Services, the City of Mentor and the United Way of Lake County."

Despite that support, changes may be coming for our local Lake County 2-1-1 due to upcoming funding cuts.

“Much to our dismay and disappointment, our local United Way of Lake County has made the decision to cease funding for the 2-1-1 program at the end of their fiscal year,” said Dotson. “It’s particularly sad because 2-1-1 is a worldwide United Way initiative and was first launched in our community by the United Way of Lake County. Over 40,000 of our community’s most vulnerable residents relied on 2-1-1 last year to help connect them with agencies and programs that could help them meet an urgent need. Our Board, staff and other funders know the need is there and we will collectively work hard to continue to provide a high quality I&R service for those folks.”

Lifeline’s 2-1-1 is a member of Ohio AIRS. Ohio AIRS is a private, non-profit membership organization dedicated to ensuring quality information and referral (I&R) services throughout Ohio. Information and referral, commonly referred to as I&R, is a unique process of assessment and information-giving that enables people to make informed decisions about accessing community resources.

Information and referral services have been available in Ohio since 1963. Many I&R services were started in the early 1970s as grass roots efforts to connect citizens with the various human services available and to assist citizens in navigating the often confusing and complex choices.

Ohio AIRS was formed in 1978 to promote professionalism in the delivery of I&R services; enhance the collective influence of the field of information and referral in Ohio; provide support to members in such areas as technology, training, funding and policy development; provide professional development opportunities for members; enhance and support the goals of AIRS.

For more information on 2-1-1, visit <https://www.lclifeline.org/2-1-1/2-1-1-database/> or <http://ohioairs.org/211-ohio/>

Lifeline for the Empowerment and Development of Consumers was founded in 1973 with the mission of helping Lake County residents by providing them assistance and life skills programming that is designed to increase self-sufficiency. In 1980 Lifeline became a participating agency of the United Way of Lake County, UWLC, and in 1987 was designated a Community Action Agency by the Ohio Development Services Agency, ODSA. In 2008, Lifeline was designated as a mental health agency by the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. In 2020, Lifeline received interim designation as Geauga County’s Community Action Agency.

Today Lifeline continues with the same mission of helping low-income residents break the cycle of poverty and make the transition from agency-dependency to self-sufficiency. Lifeline’s current programming includes services in the healthcare, housing & energy assistance, information & referral services and consumer education & job training areas. Our motto is ‘helping people, changing lives.’ Lifeline is currently funded by the UWLC and by grants through the ODSA, the Lake County Board of Commissioners, the Lake County ADAMHS Board, the Lake County Senior Services Levy, Lake County Department of Job & Family Services, the City of Mentor, the Lake County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Lake Health, the Western Reserve Junior Service League and through private donors.