



# News Release

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## **Lifeline Celebrates National 2-1-1 Day on February 11 February 10, 2021**

**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 94.6% 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 34,232 requests for assistance in 2020. Those 34,232 requests included 22,490 phone calls and 11,742 requests made through the 2-1-1 online resource database. The top needs demonstrated in 2020 include food assistance at 39.3% of requests, followed by housing/emergency shelter with 18.1% of requests and utilities assistance at 13.9% of requests.

"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 our current COVID-19 pandemic or 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.

At this time there is no federal funding for 2-1-1, though legislation has recently been introduced for the first time. In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, 2-1-1s in Ohio received their first state funding through the Ohio Department of Health, but all 13 of Ohio's 2-1-1's are nearly 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 Lake County Board of Commissioners through CDBG funding and senior levy dollars. We also have several fee-for-service agreements with our partners for specialized services that 2-1-1 provides.”

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. Lifeline received interim designation as Geauga County’s community action agency in 2020.

Today Lifeline continues with the same mission of helping Lake County’s 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, guardianship, 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, Lake County Department of Job & Family Services, the City of Mentor, the Western Reserve Junior Service League, the Lake County Board of Developmental Disabilities, Lake Health and through private donors.