

NEWS RELEASE

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2-1-1 Calling Arizona for Help

Phoenix, Arizona - Community Information and Referral Services (CIR), provider of *2-1-1 Arizona* is hoping the third time is a charm in going to the Arizona State Legislature for funding of the statewide program. 2-1-1 is the easy to remember three-digit dialing number designated for easy access to information and referrals to health, community, government, veterans and human services. Just as 911 is available for life threatening emergencies, 211 is available for vital health and human services. Arizona, as the last state to have a full-service 2-1-1 call center, finally activated in 2011 and has been struggling to expand services statewide since its designation by the Arizona Corporation Commission in 2010. But, because there has been no statewide backing, the program has not been promoted, pending adequate funding to handle increased demand. Benefits of having 211 availability in Arizona include:

- Easy access to vital community, health, faith-based, government and human service programs available throughout Arizona.
- Coordination of volunteer needs and opportunities.
- Demographic feedback and data on trends in needs and services available for program areas.
- Acts as a support system for emergency 911 operatives and disaster relief efforts.

With over 1.3 million service requests fulfilled last year, Catherine Rea, CEO of CIR is taking this opportunity to go directly to the public to help get funding for 2-1-1 Arizona services. “We are hoping this will be the year the Arizona legislature recognizes the great service 2-1-1 Arizona provides for the state and appropriate funding to support it.” Since starting the program in late 2011, Rea stated the program has seen tremendous increase in use, despite minimal promotion, coupled with decreases in grant funding. “Having a small nonprofit charged to operate a statewide 211 service on less than \$500,000 a year is unrealistic”. Rea states they have been forced to compete with their own referral programs that operate over 37,000 services for the same dwindling grant funds. 2-1-1 Arizona is currently not able to operate at full capacity as their 25% call abandonment rate shows, as well as not able to provide 24/7 service availability. “2-1-1 Arizona needs to be funded and we’re calling the public for help. We have been meeting with legislators for the past

several years, and it is frustrating when State Senators, Representatives, and staffers praise our work, promise funding, and even download our free 2-1-1 Arizona app in a meeting, but have yet to fund the program.” Rea is urging the public and users of the service to please contact Arizona State Legislators at <http://azleg.gov/> and Governor Ducey at <http://azgovernor.gov/governor/engage> to voice their support in the upcoming Arizona State Legislative session.

Community Information and Referral Services (CIR) was founded in 1964 and incorporated in 1979 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and provides 2-1-1 human services information and referrals for the State of Arizona. CIR currently refers to over 37,000 services provided by participating agencies and community programs, and fulfilled over 1.3 million service requests in FY 2015 for Arizona residents. CIR programs include the 2-1-1 Arizona, Arizona Mortgage Foreclosure Hotline, and the Maricopa and Balance of State HMIS Project. Donations to CIR can be made at <https://www.211arizona.org/secure/donate.html> and are tax deductible.

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Our Mission: CIR transforms lives by linking individuals and families to vital community services throughout Arizona.

Our Vision: All Arizonans are easily connected to available health and human services in their communities.