

CAI&RS

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CALIFORNIA ALLIANCE OF INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES

Public Utilities Commission Hosts Post-Firestorm Workshop

Representatives of telecommunications companies, city and government officials, and 2-1-1 systems gathered on January 9 in San Diego for a California Public Utilities Commission-sponsored workshop. This proceeding, an element of Order Instituting Rulemaking (OIR) 07-04-015, focused on best practices and lessons learned from the 2007 Southern California firestorms.

“As the Commissioner assigned to the proceeding in which we are addressing standards for telecommunications backup power systems and emergency notification systems, I want to ensure that we are even more prepared in the event of another disaster,” said CPUC Commissioner Timothy Alan Simon who, with Commissioner Rachelle Chong, chaired the well attended session.

During the day-long event, five panels covered a series of topics ranging from how various entities responded to ways of improving the State’s interoperability of emergency communications and notification systems. One panel, consisting of Ron Lane, Director, San Diego County Office of Emergency Services; Maribel Marin, Executive Director 211 LA County; John Ohanian, Chief Executive Officer, 2-1-1 San Diego; and the University of San Diego reviewed communications issues including interoperability, reverse 911/ emergency notification systems, and 2-1-1.

Ohanian, who began his presentation by thanking the CPUC for inviting 2-1-1 San Diego to participate, recalled how during Firestorm 2003, many different numbers were given out to the public for information. During the recent disaster, there was only one number – 2-1-1 – due to the official partnership and designation of the 2-1-1 organizations in San Diego and LA as the central source of emergency information for the public by the County’s Office of Emergency Services.

“Because this was the first use of the Reverse 911 system, many residents had questions and they turned to 2-1-1 for answers,” noted Ohanian. “People called for general information on ‘where was the fire’ and whether or not they should evacuate, and for details about road closures and traffic conditions. Later, many called again to ask if it was safe to return home.”

With the support of more than 1,200 volunteers, who augmented regular staff, answering calls around the clock for a week and donating 7,000 hours of time, 2-1-1 San Diego answered 120,000 calls, an amount equivalent to an entire year of normal business. For the entire Southern California region, where dozens of wildfires raged, more than 130,000 calls were answered in a 5-day period, 764% greater than the baseline of the previous week.

“The existing regional collaborative proved extremely valuable,” Ohanian said. “2-1-1 providers demonstrated the powerful role we can play in emergency communications and community support.” However, the recent disaster also highlighted the importance of developing an integrated state-wide system.

As Ohanian explained, “Disasters are regional – it is critical to operate in an integrated way. The regional impact of disasters requires preparation and response at broader levels. Incredible amounts of data with wide-ranging reliability become available, creating opportunities for increased efficiency by sharing data roles across bordering systems.”

Explaining the value of a 2-1-1 statewide network in disaster response, Maribel Marin noted that an integrated system could provide a single point of coordination and provision for two-way communication with the public on disaster related information; provide timely, emergency public information support from unaffected regions to impacted regions; and reduce pressure on critical operational communications systems such as 911, law enforcement and other emergency first responders.

In addition, an integrated system would offer higher levels of cost effective capacity at local and regional levels through technology-based shifting of calls to 2-1-1 providers in unaffected regions within the state and coordination with 2-1-1 providers in neighboring states when needed; provide data about unmet community needs through call analysis during response and recovery, and establish standardized data formats, protocols, telephony and redundant data storage to support data sharing, and remote access/and use of resource data from impacted regions.

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Letter from the President . . .

Dear CAIRS members,

There has been a lot of activity since our last newsletter starting with 211's involvement in the October 2007 wildfires in Southern California, new grants for continuing our statewide deployment efforts, opportunities to participate in state agency emergency preparedness efforts, and the seven-county launch of 2-1-1 in the Bay Area. All of these items reflect the growing role and visibility of 2-1-1 in the state and demonstrate the value of the 2-1-1 CA partnership with the United Ways of California and the Governor's Office of Emergency Services.



Regrettably, we must say farewell to two individuals who deserve recognition for having been key in elevating the profile of 2-1-1 in their respective agencies and who are leaving the partnership to move on to new opportunities.

Mark Walker, former CEO of United Way Silicon Valley and past President of the United Ways of California, was instrumental in cementing the partnership between CAIRS and the UWs that led to the creation of 2-1-1 CA. He further provided leadership in building the resource base for the organization by securing agreements for annual financial contributions from the UWs and 2-1-1s. Finally, as a member of the leadership team, he helped to set the agenda that now guides the plan for 2-1-1 statewide coverage by 2010.

Paul Jacks, former Deputy Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services was a tremendous advocate for 2-1-1 and helped 2-1-1 CA by ensuring that we were invited to participate in important OES planning activities such as the Governor's Emergency Partnership Advisory Workgroup (building public-private partnerships for disaster response) and the State Emergency Plan Update process. He further supported an award to 2-1-1 CA from the OES/Homeland Security Planning Grant Program that will be used in developing a statewide 2-1-1 emergency response plan and technology infrastructure.

Heartfelt thanks to both gentlemen for their enormous contributions to our campaigns.

In addition to the OES grant, 2-1-1 CA received funding for its statewide coverage by 2010 efforts from Kaiser Permanente Foundation. Kaiser also provided financial support to the six 2-1-1s in Southern California that handled over 130,000 fire-related calls in five days and had staff and volunteers working extended shifts to cover the call surges. United Way of America also came to the aid of the fire-impacted areas by sending its disaster response team to help in San Diego, the epicenter of the firestorms. UWA has further assisted in preparing "Trial by Fire," an account of 2-1-1's role in wildfire response that is due out sometime in March.

As a follow-up to the firestorms and because of concern over the vulnerability of telecommunications infrastructure, the California Public Utilities Commission held a workshop in San Diego to which John Ohanian, CEO of 211 San Diego, and I were invited to present. As indicated in the lead article, we spoke to the commission about the vital role that 2-1-1 played in aiding evacuees and victims of the fires and the importance of ensuring that all Californians have access to 2-1-1 services in the event of a disaster. The commission invited CAIRS representatives to discuss these issues further in future meetings.

Finally, join me in congratulating the Bay Area 2-1-1 Collaborative in celebrating its seven-county launch of 2-1-1 services on February 11, 2008. The region-wide launch was announced amidst media fanfare and with various local and state officials in tow. The Bay Area network includes the following: Eden I&R for Alameda County; Contra Costa Crisis Center; United Way Silicon Valley for Santa Clara County; the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County; and United Way of the Bay Area for Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo and Solano Counties.

- Maribel Marin

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2-1-1 Launches throughout San Francisco Bay Area on "2-1-1 Day"

On February 11, 2008 – "2-1-1 Day" – United Way of the Bay Area (UWBA), United Way Silicon Valley (UWSV), Contra Costa Crisis Center and Eden I&R announced the launch of 2-1-1 Bay Area in the San Francisco Bay Area (see photos on following page).

The 2-1-1 Bay Area launch, hosted by a Committee of some 25 government, business, civic and non-profit leaders, was celebrated at The City Club in San Francisco. The event marked the region-wide expansion of 2-1-1 service from three to seven Bay Area counties -- UWBA introduced 2-1-1 in San Francisco County in early 2006; UWSV launched 2-1-1 in Santa Clara County in early 2007; and Eden I&R went live with 2-1-1 in Alameda County in mid 2007. On February 11, 2-1-1 Bay Area expanded throughout Contra Costa, Napa, Marin and Solano Counties.

The celebration kicked-off with a lively performance of the "2-1-1 Song" written and performed by Los Gatos songwriter and music teacher Jim Fowler. Speakers included:

- Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, who emphasized that 2-1-1 would mean "lives would be saved." He reported that Alameda County and every city government in the County is committed to using the 2-1-1 system and providing yearly financial support.
- Pacific Gas and Electric Company Vice President Ophelia Basgal, in explaining her company's multi-year financial investment, spoke about the importance of 2-1-1 in reaching vulnerable populations and augmenting the 9-1-1 system in a disaster.
- United Way's 2-1-1 Resource Specialist Betty Creary, who shared stories about 2-1-1 callers who turned to 2-1-1 "for assistance at every challenging stage of their journey toward self-sufficiency and stability."
- Regional Administrator of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services John Anderson, who described the importance of 2-1-1 to the state's disaster response system. He also reported on his office's recommendation to grant \$177,000 to the 2-1-1 California Partnership to plan for statewide coverage.

The celebration culminated with a "Launching the Region" ceremony, which brought the entire room to its feet, as each 2-1-1 Bay Area county was illuminated on a giant map of the region.

The event concluded with a thought-provoking poem by Eden I&R Phone Line Resource Specialist Anthony Jackson, "2-1-1 In the Face of Disasters."

Over the last three decades, five organizations have provided Information & Referral (I&R) service in the San Francisco Bay Area: Eden I&R for Alameda County; Contra Costa Crisis Center; United Way Silicon Valley for Santa Clara County; the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County;

and United Way of the Bay Area for Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo and Solano Counties.

Based on current daily call volume, the 2-1-1 Bay Area collaborative anticipates over 150,000 calls in the region this year – up by 78% over the number of Information & Referral calls handled by the four agencies in the second half of 2007.

These designated 2-1-1 providers will continue to build on their long history to integrate the 2-1-1 Bay Area system to ensure the most effective and efficient delivery of community information. Collectively, they focus on streamlining data sharing and collection, utilizing common protocols for calls, developing joint disaster-action plans, and implementing mutually supportive marketing and public-education strategies. Plans to bring 2-1-1 to Sonoma and San Mateo counties in 2008 are currently underway.

Ed Schoenberger, Executive Director of United Way's 2-1-1 said, "This is an historic Bay Area moment. First, because this event brought together all of the people and organizations who worked so hard to bring 2-1-1 to all seven Bay Area counties serving the region's seven million residents; second, because it marks each county's commitment to work together to serve the region. We know that people who call 2-1-1 in need of help may live in one county and work in another – and perhaps have a concern for family members, who live in yet another county."

Eden I&R Executive Director Barbara Bernstein said, "Alameda County is proud to be a model 2-1-1 service area that is financially supported by *all* 14 cities, as well as the county and the private sector. This leveraged public-private partnership is based on the knowledge that 2-1-1 is a vital public communication vehicle through which individuals, families and whole communities gain access to comprehensive and up-to-date health, housing and human service information."

Contra Costa Crisis Center Executive Director John Bateson said, "2-1-1 is simple, easy-to-remember, toll-free, and 24-7. Both on a daily basis and in times of disaster, 2-1-1 is the one number people need to know to get help and information."

The event concluded with an affirmation to continue work on achieving:

- Long-term sustainability for the 2-1-1 system.
- National and state public funding streams for 2-1-1
- Region wide data-sharing, disaster planning and public education efforts.

The event also helped to reinvigorate discussions between CPUC Commissioner Rachelle Chong and the 2-1-1 Bay Area collaborative, who met shortly after the event to address key issues such as phantom calls, sustainable revenue, improving relationships with telephone companies, and disaster planning.

- Maria. Stokes



Jim Fowler opens the celebration with the "2-1-1 Song"



United Way's 2-1-1 Resource Specialist Betty Creary shares client stories



United Way Board Member and ABC7-TV General Manager Valari Staab with United Way's 2-1-1 Executive Director Ed Schoenberger



PG&E's Ophelia Basgal and Eden I&R/2-1-1 Alameda Executive Director Barbara Bernstein



Eden I&R Resource Specialist Anthony Jackson shares his "2-1-1: In the Face of Disaster" poem



"Launching the Region" ceremony brought the crowd to its feet!



Handling Suicide Calls

There's a myth that people who talk about suicide won't really do it. This is wrong. Before attempting suicide, many people make direct statements about their intention to end their lives or less direct comments about how they might as well be dead or that their friends and family will be better off without them. Any reference to suicide should be taken seriously.

People who have tried to kill themselves before are especially at risk, even if their previous attempts didn't seem serious. Eighty percent of people who die by suicide have attempted it before. Unless they're helped, they may try again and the next time could be fatal.

If someone says that he or she is contemplating suicide, don't be afraid to talk about it. Your willingness to discuss suicide shows the person that you care. Ask questions about how the person feels. "You seem really down. Is there a reason?" Ask questions about suicide itself. "Do you know how you'd do it?" Determine whether the person has the means to carry out the plan, such as access to a gun or pills. The more specific the plan, the higher the risk.

Discuss suicide as you would any other topic of concern. Don't offer advice such as, "Think how much better off

you are than most people. You should appreciate how lucky you are." Comments like this only increase feelings of guilt and make the suicidal person feel worse. Instead, convey hope. With time, things probably will get better.

If the caller isn't at immediate risk, he or she can be encouraged to phone one of the two national suicide hotlines: 800-273-TALK or 800-SUICIDE. Calls are routed to the suicide prevention center closest to the caller, where trained phone counselors are ready to listen.

When someone is in the midst of a suicide attempt or such an attempt is imminent, emergency intervention is necessary. Every agency should have policies in place regarding when confidentiality is broken and police are summoned to save a life.

Many suicidal people have given up hope, believing that they can't be helped. With time, though, most suicidal people can be restored to lead happy, healthy lives. Their current feelings of hopelessness exist because their judgment is impaired. It's up to everyone who has contact with them to see that they get the help they need.

- John Bateson

Continued from Page 1

System design is critical. As Marin explained, simply achieving 100% statewide coverage without developing a network of shared access, capacity backup, and multi-layered redundancies will not achieve the full potential of 2-1-1 – or meet the state's needs in an emergency. Participation of 2-1-1 in statewide, regional, and local disaster planning is absolutely critical.

Commissioners Simon and Chong were encouraged to support the following requests:

- Designate 2-1-1 CA as the state's lead entity for purposes of planning, implementation and coordination of a statewide 2-1-1 service network
- Act to list 2-1-1s as organizations/entities eligible for Cal Net contract services (similar to eligibility extended to the Red Cross) for purposes of enabling 2-1-1 access to lower phone rates, networking, and routing solutions that will connect all 2-1-1 centers.
- Work with 2-1-1 CA to develop guidelines for expanding 2-1-1 services to all un-serviced regions of the state for emergency/disaster response capability.
- Make 2-1-1 operations eligible for teleconnect, lifeline or other existing CPUC controlled funds and encourage the exploration of a new utility or other phone fees because 2-1-1 is a primary telecommunications re-

source for low-income, vulnerable individuals and families who don't have access to technology such as the Internet or even their own transportation.

Next steps include a meeting with Commissioners Chong and Simon in San Francisco to address recommendations made at the workshop, additional data collection, and further joint action with the OES.

- John Ohanian



* Includes Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange, San Bernardino, San Diego, Ventura

Dear Friends of 2-1-1:

After 35 years in the information and referral field, 21 years running the program that ultimately became 2-1-1 San Diego, and a long-held passionate belief in the potential of 2-1-1 to revolutionize the way people seek and receive help, I dialed 2-1-1 in late October. It wasn't to check the functionality of the system, nor to connect with a particular 2-1-1 specialist, nor to be sure my cell phone had access to 2-1-1 service. It was to secure information on how best to clear the debris from my Starvation Mountain home, which burned to the ground on October 22, 2007 — the same day that had long been planned as my official retirement as CEO of 2-1-1 San Diego.

I remember feeling very proud as a volunteer — one of more than 1,200 volunteers that came to 2-1-1 San Diego's aid — worked with me, despite a dearth of specific information on available resources to clear our property. As she guided me to some web sites that we reviewed together, I remember thinking, "She's working with me. Beside me."

And that is the whole point of 2-1-1, which was designated in 2000 by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) as the national telephone number for information and referral and is now available to approximately 75 percent of Americans and 76 percent of Californians.

As wonderful as it is to contemplate that 2-1-1 is available to over 27 million Californians, the lessons of the wildfires must not go unheeded: we must achieve 100 percent coverage with an integrated network that can function optimally in future disasters; and we must develop a sustainable funding model in partnership with stakeholders from every sector.

In addition, even as we tackle the work ahead in California, we must continue to advocate for a truly national 2-1-1 system with consistent, stringent quality assurance standards; large-scale visibility of 2-1-1's benefits; and federal support for the Calling for 2-1-1 Act, which, if passed, will assist communities with the costs of operating their 2-1-1 systems. As an upcoming wildfire report will detail — and many other post-disaster reports have also quantified over the past several years — the value of 2-1-1 is no longer in question.

Now it is incumbent upon all of us — as community leaders, citizens, legislators and funders — to understand the lessons learned and translate them into a strong commitment to 2-1-1 ubiquity.

Our communities deserve no less.

Sincerely,

Sara Matta

January, 2008



In honor of 2-1-1 Day (February 11), 2-1-1 San Diego held a press conference in partnership with the cities and the County of San Diego at the Copter 1 Base. The goal of the press conference was to increase the awareness of 2-1-1 and to show the community that new support is needed to sustain 2-1-1 San Diego's current and contin-

ued growth. Speakers included County Supervisor Greg Cox; Cheryl Cox, City of Chula Vista Mayor; County of San Diego Undersheriff Bill Gore; and San Diego Fire Chief Tracy Jarman. For news coverage and press kit materials, please check the 2-1-1 San Diego website's <http://www.211sandiego.org/211/index.asp>.



County of San Diego Supervisor and Chair of the Board of Supervisors, Greg Cox, speaks at the 2-1-1 Day Press Conference about 2-1-1 San Diego's services



John Ohanian, CEO of 2-1-1 San Diego, speaks at the 2-1-1 Day Press Conference

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Become a California Leader in the Information and Referral Field. Explore Joining the CAIRS Board!

CAIRS is looking for new leadership, new ideas and fresh energy on the Board.

Like any other professional association CAIRS does not run itself. It takes the leadership, hard work and cooperation of its members to simply survive, much less flourish, prosper and succeed. Because we do not have paid staff, it has taken the participation, planning and implementation efforts of Board members and other individual CAIRS members for our conferences, training, newsletters and advocacy to succeed.

Right now, making 2-1-1 a reality in every California community is our priority! This is a remarkable opportunity and challenge to us as the premier Information and Referral organization in the State. This is the moment for increased involvement from more of you in the field.

If you are interested in being on the Board or would like to nominate someone, please send the appropriate information to Ed Schoenberger, Nominations Committee, CAIRS at eschoenberger@uwba.org.

Write *CAIRS BOARD* in the subject line.

—Ed Schoenberger

CAIRS/AIRS Membership Provides Many Benefits for I&R Agencies

Renewing a joint membership in CAIRS and AIRS has many benefits, including reduced prices for on-line training and AIRS training products, reduced fees for conferences, and, at the Enhanced and Premium levels, *The ABC's of I&R* (updated 2008) at no cost.

There are four membership levels – Basic (\$50), Standard (\$250 for agencies with budgets below \$75,000; \$350 for agencies with budgets over \$75,000), Enhanced (\$500) and Premium (\$750). If you want to learn the most cost-effective level for your agency, www.airs.org links to a worksheet that will help you calculate the membership level that provides the optimal cost-benefit for your organization. For a full detailed description of CAIRS and AIRS membership benefits at each level, please visit the CAIRS website at www.cairs.org.

To join or renew a membership, download the application from www.airs.org. Renew soon to receive the special membership discount on registration fees for the AIRS Annual Conference, May 18-21, 2008, in Houston, Texas.

SAVE THE DATE – CAIRS ANNUAL CONFERENCE Sacramento, September 19, 2008

CAIRS is committed to advance the development of I&R/A professionals as well as the field of information and referral/advocacy. Our annual conference provides participants training opportunities. Workshops are designed to provide the tools necessary to strengthen your I&R/A service and your community. We invited all I&R/A management and staff to attend. It is a great opportunity for all to enjoy a day of meeting peers, exchanging stories, learn new tools and networking.

CAIRS will host this one-day annual conference for service providers in SACRAMENTO. Numerous workshops are held throughout the day featuring current topics of interest in the field of I&R/A. Some of the workshop hot topics we have identified to date include sustainability, management, lessons learned in disasters, working with volunteers, CRS management, working with vulnerable populations and ramping up for 211. If you have specific topics you would like included or would like to present on a specific topic, please email us with your suggestions at curryelm@verizon.net. Keep an eye on our website for more conference information www.cairs.org.

Additionally, AIRS Certification Exam will be offered at the annual conference for CIRS — Certification for I&R Specialists, CIRS-A — Certification for I&R Specialists in Aging, CRS — Certification for Resource Specialists. So start studying the ABC's of I&R and take online AIRS training courses. Visit www.airs.org for information on certification and online training.

2008 AIRS CONFERENCE

Deep in the Heart of Texas – Exploring New Frontiers of I&R, May 18-21, 2008

The Westin Galleria & Westin Oaks, Houston, Texas, 30th I&R Training and Education Conference.

Each spring, AIRS conducts a four-day national conference. This conference is held in conjunction with the National Aging I&R Center (NASUA) and also includes military personnel. Over 600 participants from around the country come together with other providers and advance their effectiveness as I&R/A professionals. The annual AIRS Conference is a must attend event for I&R professionals. Visit www.airs.org for conference information and registration.

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For-Profit rate = \$400 for 4 quarter page ads (\$100 per ad)

Non-Profit rate = \$200 for 4 quarter page ads (\$50 per ad)

If you are interested contact Barbara Bernstein at (510) 537-2710, ext. 8; or by email: bbernstein@edenir.org