

Finding Solutions to Problems

Register

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You break out in a cold sweat, your heart starts beating in your throat, and your insides seem to be alternating between stress-induced knots and waves of nausea. We all experience it, those panicky moments between the time you realize you have a problem and the time you've figured out a solution. Some of these moments are more intense than others. For example, realizing you left your wallet at home just as you wheel the full cart of groceries into the checkout line will produce a much more mild reaction than realizing your utility bill has gone up so much this month that you have no money left to purchase groceries. It is relatively easy to sheepishly beg the cashier to hold your grocery cart while you make the trip home and back, compared to not having the money to buy groceries in the first place. What is your solution then? What if you couldn't buy groceries or you needed clothes to wear, or glasses to see, or even a place to live and you couldn't afford it? Who would you call?

Don't worry, I have good news for people, like me, who can't remember their wallets let alone remember the solutions to the big problems. When emergency services are needed we call 9-1-1. When directory assistance is needed we call 4-1-1. When information and referral services are needed we can call 2-1-1.

2-1-1 is an easy to remember telephone number that connects people with important services and volunteer opportunities in their own communities. People calling 2-1-1 can discuss their specific situation with the trained operator and will be put in touch with available services in their own community. 2-1-1 maintains a comprehensive health and human services database for all communities served, including information about basic human needs programs, physical and mental health resources, employment support, and support for seniors and persons with disabilities. They can even provide information for people who would like to volunteer or make a donation to a local organization. 2-1-1 is accredited by AIRS (Accredited Information and Referral Systems) to help ensure the most accurate and up-to-date information is available when you call. According to 211us.org, "2-1-1 reaches approximately 270 million people (90% of the total U.S. population) covering all 50 states (including 41 states with 90%+ coverage), the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico." At this time 80 % of Ohio is covered by a 2-1-1 service. Locally, 2-1-1 is made possible by the Erie County Health Department, the United Way of Erie County, Community Development Block Grant funds, the Mental Health and Recovery Board of Erie and Ottawa Counties and individual donors.

Most importantly, 2-1-1 makes sure the people in our communities who are dealing with problems, have help to quickly find a solution.