



Help starts here.
Solving problems
and changing lives
since 2007.

Rhode Island 
2-1-1TM
Get Connected. Get Answers.

**United
Way** 
United Way of Rhode Island

“I always tell people: I’m going to keep working with you and take you all the way through this process. I’m not going to leave you hanging.”

Jennifer Ortega-Perez
Bilingual Call Specialist, Certified Navigator/In-Person Assister

Ten years – three little numbers.

2-1-1’s START IN RHODE ISLAND begins much how you would expect – with a caring, human connection. Ten years ago, there was a helpline at Crossroads, the largest homeless service organization in Rhode Island, run by a small but dedicated team. At the same time, a new referral service – 2-1-1 – was gaining recognition across the country.

In 2004, hundreds of Rhode Islanders attended two summits led by United Way to identify and prioritize community challenges. The idea to bring 2-1-1 to Rhode Island emerged from the summits, and planning began. The helpline at Crossroads became

2-1-1 and joined United Way in 2007. Since then, United Way, in partnership with the nonprofit community, local businesses, and state agencies, have made sure that Rhode Islanders in need have access to help 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

So, who best to tell the story of 2-1-1, but the call specialists themselves? These dedicated, big-hearted helpers have answered more than 1.6 million calls over the course of ten years. On the other end of the phone are the people who are at the center of 2-1-1’s work. We all need help sometimes. Lucky for us, in Rhode Island, 2-1-1 is here to answer the call.



Courtney Smith
Assistant Director of 2-1-1 in RI

We do wrap-around service here. So, someone may call because they need their car fixed. Although there may not be assistance available for that, not having a working vehicle brings up a whole host of other problems. Even if we can’t help with the original problem, we find the areas where we can help the most.

Types of requests with highest call volume in 2016



Financial Assistance
159,597 calls



Housing/Shelter
112,563 calls



**Food (including SNAP/
Pantries/Meal Sites)**
94,258 calls



Health Information
92,660 calls

We're Rhode Islanders helping Rhode Islanders.



Cristina Amedeo
Managing Director of
2-1-1 and The POINT

I was contacted by a mom who had a child with special needs. They had recently moved to Rhode Island from out-of-state. She had registered her son for school and gotten an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in place, but within a week the school called. Her son was acting out too much, and they wanted him out of the school. They didn't give her any follow-up information or help. She was understandably upset when she called. I reassured her immediately that her child absolutely belonged in school and could receive other supports.

Training for call specialists now is completely different from what it once was. You were supposed to be completely separate and stay impartial. But now, we empathize. We encourage everyone to be human. We've all been there before.

I connected her with a social worker in that school's district. The social worker set up a meeting with the school. They were able to register her son in a center that takes care of all of his educational needs and afterschool care, and it's paid for.

Our work is about Rhode Islanders helping Rhode Islanders. We pride ourselves on really wanting to help and be here.

Basic Needs Requests 2008-2016

Number of requests	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Financial Assistance	71,040	94,370	170,031	151,378	183,413	193,367	181,122	180,442	159,597
Housing/Shelter	43,060	45,561	62,001	83,964	96,350	101,710	110,240	109,259	112,563
Foreclosure Prevention Information	596	1,002	5,952	9,794	16,087	11,266	8,570	7,140	3,644
Food (including SNAP/ Pantries/Meal Sites)	20,340	27,591	25,776	69,206	72,779	87,366	96,373	117,334	94,258
Health Information	14,154	21,544	24,724	36,741	52,464	60,552	70,6771	79,195	92,660

Notes on requests:

- Callers often present more than one request through contact to 2-1-1
- 2-1-1 requests include phone calls, email, web search, web chat and in-person through walk-in services and appointments in Olneyville, and through the 2-1-1 outreach RV.

Help on the move.



Jay Burdick
Program Outreach
Coordinator

Two and a half years ago, we received a gift from Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island of a 38-foot RV, and what's in there is my office. We schedule more than thirty events a month across the state. I'm out in the community visiting food pantries, homeless shelters, and community partners to get the word out about 2-1-1 and to help clients.

I'm out in the community visiting food pantries, homeless shelters, and community partners to get the word out about 2-1-1 and to help clients.

The van is big so I don't often go out by myself. The best part of my outreach job is to bring partners and their services to others. I have a list of 30 partners who rotate and travel with us: Blue Cross does blood pressure screenings, the AIDS Projects does HIV/AIDS testing, the Rhode Island Department of Human Services helps with SNAP benefits, and more.

No other 2-1-1 in the country has an RV. No other 2-1-1 has the reach that we have in the community, and it's made us a model for others.

2-1-1 Outreach for 2016

RV Events	504	Other Events	106
Total Attendees (est.)	76,614	Total Attendees (est.)	1,905
Direct Service	34,023	Direct Service	717
Health Screenings	2,728		



I want moms to be okay.



I told her, "I'm going to keep asking you questions until we find all of the resources available to you. I don't want to overwhelm you, so we're going to take it one step at a time."

– Jennifer Ortega-Perez, Bilingual Call Specialist, Certified Navigator/In-Person Assister

It's Friday morning, and the first call I get is from a young lady, 19-years-old. She just got kicked out of her house, and has a six-month-old baby. The parents took away her car insurance and health insurance, and told her that, basically, she was on her own. She was very sad and confused.

I kept asking, "Are you okay? How are you?" Once I learned she had housing, I scheduled an appointment to meet with her on Monday to see how we could help. That day, she came in with the baby, who only had a diaper on. She said, "I'm just very confused. This is the first time I've ever been on my own. I've never had to get assistance before."

We do wrap-around services here, so I told her, "I'm going to keep asking you questions to see whatever resources might be available to you. I don't want to overwhelm you with all these things, so we're going to take it one step at a time."

She had found a studio apartment and had a part-time job, but it was only 15 hours a week. Everything she made went toward paying

for the apartment. I wrote down everything she needed: food stamps, assistance with childcare, SNAP benefits, and more.

She had all of her documents so I was able to put this whole package together for her. I also reached out to one of our partners for clothing and milk for the baby. That same day, they made an appointment for her to come in and she was able to go in and get supplies.

She got my card, and I told her to call if she needed more help. I'm a mom, and I always make sure my kids are okay. And I take that motherly love and pay it forward. I want Moms to be okay.

She was very happy. She asked if she could hug me. And I said, "Sure! I'm a hugger."

Several months later, I ran into her in the community, working. She had taken my advice and gone to a job fair that I recommended. And now she's working full time.

And, it's just...wow: I helped this person.



52% of renters in Rhode Island are housing cost-burdened (meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on housing).

Median income for renters in Rhode Island: \$30,718

Income needed to afford a 2-bedroom apartment without being cost-burdened in Rhode Island: \$49,520

If a person earns less than \$30,000 a year, they cannot afford a 2-bedroom apartment anywhere in Rhode Island without becoming cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened (meaning they are spending 50% or more of their income on housing).

HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University's 2016 Fact Book

We're all problem solvers.



Tina Donate
Benefit Specialist, ADRC/
The POINT

As soon as the call started, he was clearly upset, distraught, and on the edge of crying. The call was from a disabled young man, who had just returned from the pharmacy. He didn't have insurance and couldn't afford his anti-seizure medication.

I quickly saw that he was the perfect candidate for a program that lets you get your medicine for thirty days while your insurance is in process. I did a three-way call with the young man and the pharmacy. It was successful and the young man was relieved. He thought he was going to have to go days or even months without his medicine.

He was actually eligible for Medicaid and Medicare, which meant he didn't have to wait for open enrollment so we helped him set up an appointment.

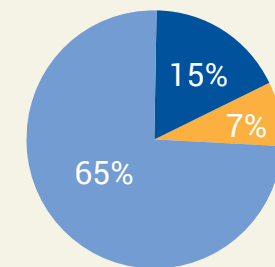
It's not always the case where there's a happy result and you immediately know that someone is helped. It's so nice when there is a solution. We can advise, we can refer, and give our best opinion, but when a particular program works, it's such a positive phone call and feeling. At the end of the call, he was so thankful. And was so happy that he had made the call.

I think we're all caregivers and helpers. We're all problem-solvers.

Many retired and elderly Rhode Islanders frequently call 2-1-1 for help negotiating issues with health insurance carriers, finding community care waivers that allow them to stay in their own homes, and applying for subsidies to help them afford the rising costs of prescriptions.

Health Insurance for Rhode Island adults ages 19-64

65% Employer
15% Medicaid
7% Uninsured



Kaiser Family Foundation, kff.org, 2015

Number of requests for Health Information	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
	14,154	21,544	24,724	36,741	52,464	60,552	70,677	79,195	92,660



2-1-1 operates THE POINT, Rhode Island's Aging and Disability Resource Center, in partnership with the Rhode Island Division of Elderly Affairs. THE POINT takes 40,000 calls annually and helps people enroll in Medicare and Medicaid.

We teach people how to navigate the system.



Lucious Murchison
After-Hours Manager

Calls are one thing. But when someone walks in, looks you in the face, and tells you that they just lost their home, and need your help. *Your* help. It's hard.

One family showed up at our office with a U-Haul full of their belongings—everything they owned. There was a mom, her mother-in-law, and six kids.

Everything was in disarray, and they were all still in their pajamas. She needed shelter.

They were evicted from their apartment two nights prior because the place they were living in was condemned. She had had enough money for a hotel for those nights, but that morning, her funds ran out. As soon as they checked out, they came directly to 2-1-1. She was crying. She didn't know what she was going to do. When someone mentioned school, she cried even harder, and asked, "How can I think about their school when I don't know where I'm going in the next hour? The kids haven't even eaten."

I took her into a room to discuss the options. She had never been homeless, never received any type of government assistance, had no family support, and no idea what she was going to do.

It was a week before Christmas.

Unfortunately, there's a waitlist for families for housing. Can you imagine? You have your whole world in a U-Haul, and all I can do to help you is add you to a database. And you have to call me back next week and every week after that until a spot becomes available.

So, her next option is a shelter. Many people don't want to take their children to a shelter. But, you have to be in the shelter system to get housing or rental assistance, which is what she really needed. She had an adequate income. She just didn't have enough funds for a security deposit.

If I'm becoming homeless, I can't go in and say I need \$500 this month to stay in my home. You have to be evicted then move on to shelter then to assistance. And that's just one of the barriers faced by Rhode Islanders.

I explained our current system: the approach with other agencies across the state that we've developed, what I saw four years ago compared to what I see now, how it's worked, and families going into the shelter, getting services, getting out of the shelter system in a few months as opposed to 4-6 years. She became hopeful. She went to a shelter, was placed in a hotel for three days, and then went on to housing.

People come to 2-1-1 and we give them all of their options and show them how to navigate the system, whatever that system might be, so they can then navigate the system themselves.



In 2015, there were 8,806 residential eviction case filings in Rhode Island Judiciary, resulting in 5,873 eviction orders (RI Judiciary via Providence Journal, fall 2016). These are only legal evictions.

Scholars, lawyers, and practitioners suggest that eviction numbers are much higher when including extra-legal evictions that involve intimidation, utility cuts, etc. Matthew Desmond, author of *Evicted*, writes that millions of people are being evicted each year.

She said, "You changed my life."



Anne Quintero
Economic Security and Labor Relations, with
Jay Burdick, Program Outreach Coordinator

Last spring, a single mother with two young teenage sons made an appointment through 2-1-1 to meet up with the Outreach RV for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program to have her taxes completed. This was the first time she used VITA.

She lived in public housing and was already involved in a lot of programs. Her part-time job (25-30 hours a week) helped her earn a little over \$13,000. We really work to make sure everyone who has earned it receives the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). A lot of other places don't encourage people to claim it because it's a lot of work.

Jay made sure she had copies of everything for every social service she might need and helped her complete her taxes. After she was done, she cried. She said, "You changed my life. I'm getting back over \$8,200. That's more money than I've ever had in my entire life. I'm going to pay my bills, fix my car so I can have a more reliable vehicle, and I'm going to open a savings account. Then, I'm going to buy my boys brand new name brand sneakers, instead of used, and get each one of them a glove or ball."

She was so grateful and happy. And she wanted to know if she could come back the next year.



38.7% of Rhode Islanders are liquid asset poor. Liquid asset poverty is a measure of the liquid savings households hold to cover basic expenses for three months if they experienced a sudden job loss, a medical emergency or another financial crisis leading to a loss of stable income.

Nearly half (43.5%) of households in the United States do not have a basic safety net to weather emergencies or prepare for future needs, such as a child's college education or homeownership.

(CFED Assets and Opportunity Scorecard)



2-1-1 RV Providence VITA Coalition income tax preparation team members.

Getting rid of the waitlist.

I take family shelter calls. Four years ago, the state approached us to keep track of families within Rhode Island who are homeless. We use a database called the Homeless Management Information System.

We have developed a consolidated approach, and have worked with our partners in the shelters, mental health programs, rental assistance programs, and substance abuse programs. We continually meet to work on ways that we can support people so that they either never have to enter the system, or if they do, they are moved along quickly.

At 2-1-1, we are responsible for the diversion piece, which means we basically try to keep people from needing to go into the shelter system in the first place.

In the past if someone called needing shelter, they would get a number for the shelters across the state. Now, we figure out their situation first. Is there something else we can offer them or some

other program that might be able to help keep them in a more permanent, comfortable situation?

For instance, maybe you're staying with a family member but they can no longer afford to feed you. If we can find a program that can offer you help with food, you wouldn't have to go into the shelter system.

This is our community trying to bring homelessness in the state to a functional level, get it down to a minimum, and get rid of the waitlist.

– **Lucious Murchison**, After-Hours Manager

The state of Rhode Island recently announced that 2-1-1 would be the recipient of its \$135,000 Consolidation and Diversion Grant. These funds will help 2-1-1 focus more fully on diversion strategies by allowing us to add three Diversion Specialists to our staff. Their sole priority will be helping Rhode Islanders avoid homelessness.

“Policymakers must understand the interconnectedness of urban spaces: housing matters for education, and what is good for citizens in housing is generally good for students in schools too. Without addressing the issue of housing, any educational reforms will be considerably less effective. Only when we understand and invest in these real solutions will urban schools improve and the potential of their students be realized.”

– **Dr. Megan Sandel**, Pediatrician at Boston Medical Center & Principal Investigator at Children's HealthWatch

(<https://www.eiuperspectives.economist.com/infrastructure-cities/tomorrows-cities/blog/housing-and-education>)



2-1-1 housing calls increased by over 9,000 in 2016.

2-1-1 received 42,473 calls for shelter in 2016.

4,263 Rhode Islanders are homeless.

35.9% of the homeless population in Rhode Island are families.

HousingWorks RI at Roger Williams University's 2016 Fact Book

After ten years...

One of the most frustrating things is to have someone on the other end of the phone, and you're not able to help them.

– **Jay Burdick**, Program Outreach Coordinator

2-1-1 is in a unique position to know firsthand what Rhode Islanders need most.

And after ten years of answering more than 1.6 million calls, it's the calls that don't always have a solution that stay with our call specialists. And one need continues to stand above the rest: housing.

At United Way of Rhode Island, we believe that Rhode Islanders should have access to stable, affordable housing.

We voted Yes on 7.

- Only 1 in 4 households that need and qualify for affordable housing in Rhode Island can find it.
- Half of renters cannot afford an average-priced two-bedroom apartment in any city or town in our state.

The truth is, we could give even more startling stats about why it made sense for us to back Yes on 7 in this past November's election. The good news is: it passed! The \$50 million Housing Opportunity Bond was designed to tackle Rhode Island's lack of available affordable homes and apartments. The money will

also help produce 800 housing units and create 1,700 good-paying jobs.

We're thankful for everyone who moved the bond forward. But our work is not done.

We support Housing First.

With Housing First, a person is placed as quickly as possible in a safe, stable home and then offered voluntary supportive services to help them avoid returning to homelessness. We fund and support non-profits that base their services on Housing First and encourage others to adopt this model.

We're asking Rhode Island legislators to say yes at the 2017 General Assembly,

- To creating a permanent funding stream to provide capital for long-term housing development.
- To protecting the dedicated funding stream for housing rental vouchers. This funding supports the implementation of Opening Doors, the state's plan to end chronic homelessness.

Ten years – 1,640,950 calls.

2007: 39,000 calls

United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island launches in June

2008: 79,734 calls

Major worldwide economic downturn begins

2009: 115,125 calls

Housing crisis devastates Rhode Island's economy

2010: 182,780 calls

Historic flooding; The POINT launches

2011: 205,674 calls

Tropical Storm Irene

2012: 208,806 calls

Foreclosure prevention assistance calls double

2013: 213,595 calls

Winter Storm Nemo; 2-1-1 introduces its community outreach RV

2014: 197,365 calls

HealthSource RI is implemented and enrollment calls soar

2015: 203,527 calls

2-1-1 Connects tour launches and help via text is introduced

2016: 195,344 calls

Outreach RV partners with local agencies to provide direct services

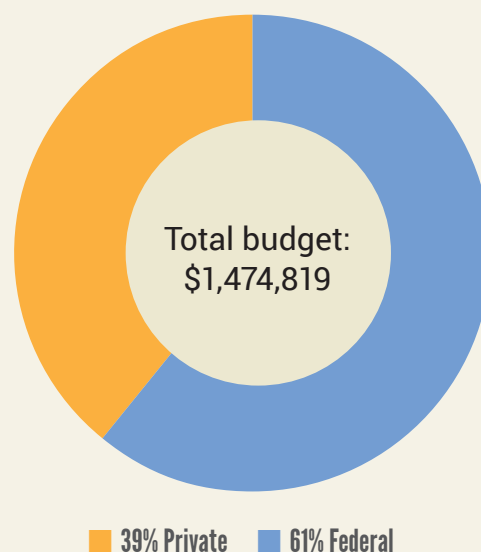
Who pays for 2-1-1?

United Way of Rhode Island works to bring together the nonprofit community, local businesses, and state agencies. The result? Together, we've transformed how Rhode Islanders find help in times of crisis. Twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year, 2-1-1 is there to answer the call – even during natural disasters.

Funding for 2-1-1 comes through public, private, and corporate donations. From generous corporate donors like Citizens Bank to individuals, every gift goes toward keeping our resource line open and helping us grow. We've recently been able to expand the 2-1-1 service to include on-location visits with our outreach van as well as provide text and online chat options.

With your continued partnership, we can do even more.

2-1-1 and THE POINT Funding Sources



What you can do.

Join us in our advocacy work and help us share the insights gained from 2-1-1's first ten years. Our legislative priorities for 2017 reflect the needs we hear about most often, including financial security, housing, and lifelong learning. Use the data in this report to write or call your legislator, or use social media to share.

Visit our website today – www.uwri.org.

Make a gift to 2-1-1. Our call center relies on private donors for 39% of its funding. Every dollar donated goes directly to the program, thanks to a trust that pays for our fundraising activities.

Be informed. Join our mailing list and receive a monthly update, *The Latest*.

We're working to change the lives of 250,000 Rhode Islanders by 2020. Join us.

Chat at www.211ri.org
Call 2-1-1 now and we'll connect you to a call specialist.
TDD/TTY: 519-0374
Out-of-State callers: 1-800-367-2700
For police, fire, or medical emergencies: Call 9-1-1



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Data as of February 1, 2017