

# Help starts here, Rhode Island.

“It’s nice to hear that we made a difference in someone’s life. But it’s even better when we hear someone sharing their 2-1-1 story. Through their messages, we can keep making a difference in more lives.” – *Seileak Huoth*

A doctor in Maine sent a letter to THE POINT. He had called us a few weeks back, when he discovered (long distance) that his mother was the victim of elder abuse in Providence. He was grateful that we were able to quickly help his mother move into a safe place, and that her dignity and well-being were restored.

A middle-aged Dad called and shared that just a year ago, he had \$200,000 in the bank. After losing his job, and later taking a lower paying position, he’s fallen behind on the mortgage payments. He never needed help before and didn’t know where to turn.

**“I always try to assure callers: Seeking help isn’t a sign of weakness, but a sign of strength.”** – *Tony Medeiros*



A young man called from his car, parked in his parents' driveway. He was ashamed to go inside, they would be waiting for him. His gambling was way out of control. He needed help, now.

“Callers are amazed that they can actually call someone who has ‘been there, done that.’”

– *Marylillian Cartwright*

A single mom was on her way to her second job. She took a minute to drive through a local park and unexpectedly came upon the 2-1-1 Outreach RV.

Curious, she stopped in and then she began to share... she was surprised to learn that she qualified for SNAP, free tax preparation assistance and significant savings to her health plan. Now she can afford to get her car fixed and won't worry so much that car troubles might make her late for work.

“We're here to give people information and help but sometimes that's not what they need or what they want: sometimes, they just want to be heard. We're also here to listen.” – *Courtney Smith*



# 2-1-1.

# How three little numbers changed everything.

**In 2007, a partnership led by United Way and including the nonprofit community, corporate partners and state agencies changed the way people in need access help, and they did it with three little numbers.**

Establishing *United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island* brought a national model to our community, and for the first time gave people in crisis one number to call to connect with multiple human services. *2-1-1* became the statewide resource center for information and referrals, and it came with the support and expertise of a national network of referral experts behind it.

*2-1-1* provides a trained and caring human connection—a call specialist—who helps people find assistance on everything from childcare needs and mental health issues, food and heating assistance, to gambling problems and elder care

services. The call is free and confidential, and is available 24 hours a day, every day.

But our work doesn't end there. Insights gained from *2-1-1* help United Way of Rhode Island and its partners anticipate the changing needs of Rhode Islanders and develop responses that help people avoid crisis. Having handled more than 1.4 million calls since 2007— 200,000 calls a year—*2-1-1* has the pulse of Rhode Island's most pressing needs.

### *Total calls by year, 2008-2014*

	No. of calls	Notable Events
2008	79,734	Market crash
2009	115,125	Housing crisis
2010	182,780	Flood, THE POINT implementation
2011	205,674	Tropical Storm Irene
2012	208,806	Hurricane Sandy, Family Shelter
2013	213,595	Winter Storm Nemo
2014	197,365	HealthSourceRI implementation



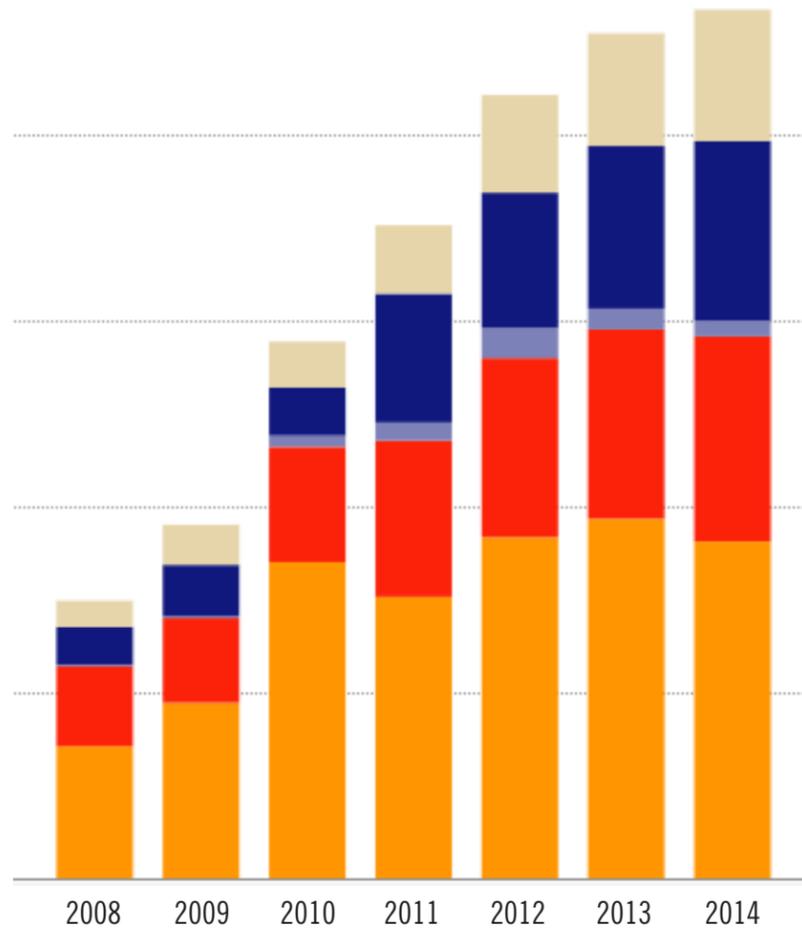
# 2008. When everything else changed, too.

## United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island Basic Needs Requests 2008-2014

Economic recovery following 2008 has stalled for thousands of Rhode Islanders. Requests for financial assistance, including help with utilities, housing and food, top the list of requests to 2-1-1, as people continue to struggle to meet their basic needs.

### Top Needs:

- Financial Assistance
- Housing/Shelter
- Foreclosure Prevention Information
- Food (including SNAP/ Pantries/Meal Sites)
- Health Information



### Basic Needs Requests 2008-2014

Number of requests	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Financial Assistance</b>	71,040	94,370	170,031	151,378	183,413	193,367	181,122
<b>Housing/Shelter</b>	43,060	45,561	62,001	83,964	96,350	101,710	110,240
<b>Foreclosure Prevention Information</b>	596	1,002	5,952	9,794	16,087	11,266	8,570
<b>Food (including SNAP/Pantries/Meal Sites)</b>	20,340	27,591	25,776	69,206	72,779	87,366	96,373
<b>Health Information</b>	14,154	21,544	24,724	36,741	52,464	60,552	70,677

#### 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.

## Top Unmet Needs in Rhode Island 2007-2014

	2007-08	2009-10	2011-12	2013-14
#1 Need				
#2 Need				
#3 Need				
#4 Need				
#5 Need				

United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island offers information and referral for available resources, including programs offered through state and local agencies. While our database of potential resources is comprehensive and is updated regularly, a need can be categorized as unmet when the call specialist can't match a caller to a resource. Unmet needs occur when circumstances such as eligibility guidelines, transportation, or associated costs prevent access to the resource, or when resources that were once available are no longer available through state or local agencies.

With information gained through 2-1-1, United Way focuses its investment and policy work on the issues that are of the most concern to Rhode Islanders, including those needs that go unmet.

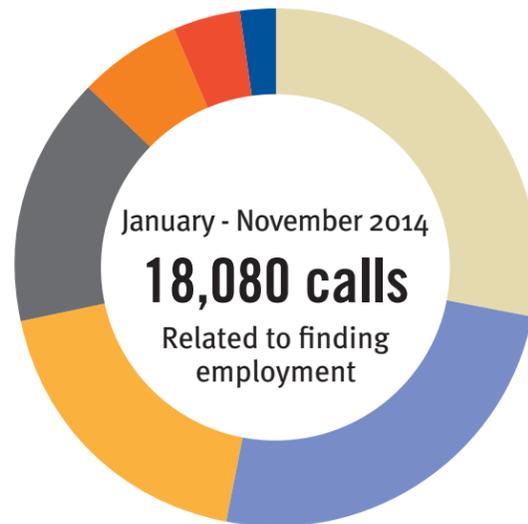
- Healthcare Services
- Financial Assistance/Unemployment
- Utility/Rent Assistance
- Food
- Housing
- Transportation
- Emergency Shelter
- Healthcare Enrollment

# When a down economy hits *home*.

Few states have been hit harder by the 2008 recession than Rhode Island. Based on calls to *United Way 2-1-1* we saw this wave coming, the effects of which are lingering as many Rhode Islanders are still struggling to regain their economic security. Many people are seeking help for the first time and require more guidance as they struggle to find gainful employment, jobs that can support a family and pay for basic needs.

Safe and affordable housing, good health care and food are the building blocks of a stable life. Government programs like the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) help families close the gap between their income and the cost of living in Rhode Island. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a refundable federal income tax credit for working families and individuals provided a lift for 6.2 million people living in poverty in 2013, putting money back into local economies.

In 2014, *United Way 2-1-1* received 18,080 calls related to finding employment. Rhode Islanders are anxious to get back to work and *2-1-1* is helping individuals get connected with job training programs, unemployment supports and government assistance programs to help them avoid homelessness and get back on the path to financial stability.



#### Issue Presented

- 16,272 Staffing Agencies *Looking for Temp Agencies*
- 14,464 Job Search/Placement *Individuals looking for employment and placement*
- 10,848 Unemployment *Looking to apply for unemployment, having trouble applying, benefits have not arrived*
- 9,040 Job Training *Looking for job training programs*
- 3,616 TDI *Out of work, need to apply for TDI*
- 2,424 Senior Employment *Looking for senior employment programs*
- 1,242 Sheltered Employment *Looking for employment with an aide or disability worker protection*

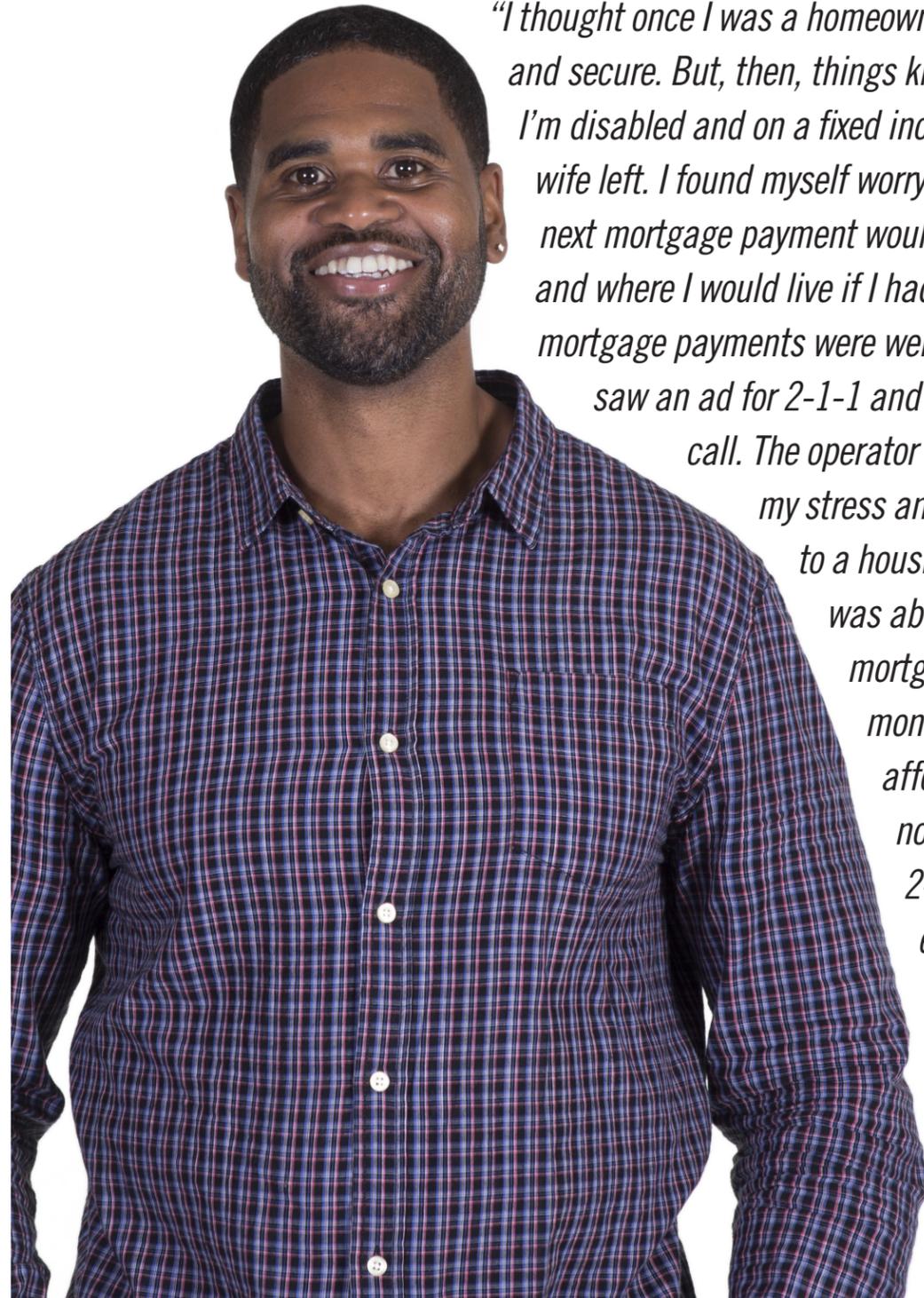
*Callers shared these barriers to employment: transportation, child care, lack of training or skills, language, immigration status, special needs, job location, age, lack of computer skills, career change.*

Number of requests	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Financial Assistance – Utilities	20,513	32,254	85,531	64,738	71,504	77,522	69,241
Financial Assistance – Rent	29,068	29,532	42,894	58,001	68,824	65,829	59,278
Financial Assistance – Other	21,459	32,584	41,606	28,639	43,085	50,016	52,603

*“I’m married with two kids in college and an 85-year-old mother living at home, who requires round-the-clock care. I was recently injured at work and had to cut down to part-time. My husband was laid off. Our income dropped by \$40,000. I’ve donated to United Way before but didn’t think I would ever need 2-1-1. But I needed help. Expenses were piling up—education, housing, healthcare—so I called. It was the best thing I could have done for my family. The operator referred me to college planning center for my kids, THE POINT for my mother, a housing service to lower our mortgage, and temp agencies and work programs to get my husband back up on his feet. We can start living again.”*



# When housing isn't a safe bet.



*"I thought once I was a homeowner, I'd feel safe and secure. But, then, things kind of fell apart. I'm disabled and on a fixed income, and my wife left. I found myself worrying where my next mortgage payment would come from and where I would live if I had to foreclose. My mortgage payments were well over \$2,200. I saw an ad for 2-1-1 and knew I needed to call. The operator instantly eased my stress and referred me to a housing service that was able to lower my mortgage to \$900 a month! I can actually afford to buy food now. That call to 2-1-1 changed everything."*

According to the HousingWorks RI 2014 Fact Book, between 2000 and 2012 the percentage of homeowners and renters who are cost burdened (spending more than 30% of their income on housing) increased for every income group. In 2012, 91% of low-income homeowner households and 84% of low income renter households were housing-cost burdened. As families and individuals struggle to afford housing many are one financial crisis away from homelessness.

2-1-1 receives thousands of calls every year from individuals and families seeking emergency shelter, unfortunately the options are limited. Shelters are meant to be a temporary solution, but many homeless individuals find themselves living in them for years. In 2012 the state created a strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness, Opening Doors Rhode Island.

The plan made goals of ending chronic and veteran homelessness in 5 years and ending homelessness for families and youth in 10 years.

The challenge of ending homelessness may seem overwhelming but by committing the appropriate resources to funding supportive housing programs and rental vouchers we can help Rhode Islanders avoid homelessness. The first step is to create a coordinated system so families and individuals can find shelter in times of emergency and then quickly move out of temporary shelters and into stable housing.

Number of requests	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Housing</b>	22,899	25,696	38,078	51,560	60,446	61,771	62,249
<b>Foreclosure Prevention Information</b>	596	1,002	5,952	9,794	16,087	11,266	8,570
<b>Emergency Shelter</b>	20,161	19,865	23,923	32,404	35,904	39,939	47,991



United Way of Rhode Island has worked with partners statewide to change the housing focus from shelters to permanent supportive housing. The model has a 90% success rate. Our goal is to help eliminate long-term homelessness in Rhode Island.

# When disaster knocks.

In the event of a significant storm or natural disaster, *United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island* supports state agencies, including the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA), Department of Transportation and Department of Health. United Way provides 2-1-1 assistance during a storm as a public service. 2-1-1 works through significant storms and disasters to connect people to critical services, and to share updates with the media and the public.

In 2013, Winter Storm Nemo put 2-1-1 to the test: call specialists answered more than 18,000 calls, including 8,000 calls in one day. **In comparison, a typical winter day in February averages 500-600 calls.** Staff worked an average of 172 hours in 10 days.

## Disaster Preparedness

The Department of Health refers elderly and disabled residents to 2-1-1 for help enrolling in the Special Needs Registry. Relied upon by 9-1-1, the registry includes people who will need special assistance if they lose power or utilities during a storm, fire, or other disaster.

## When the Storm Clears

After the flood of 2010 and Hurricane Sandy, 2-1-1 was instrumental in helping people complete the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) damage assessment forms, the first step to federal assistance following a natural disaster.

Disaster Calls	2010	2011	2012	2013
	Flood	Tropical Storm Irene	Hurricane Sandy	Winter Storm Nemo
	38,380	26,954	6,682	18,512



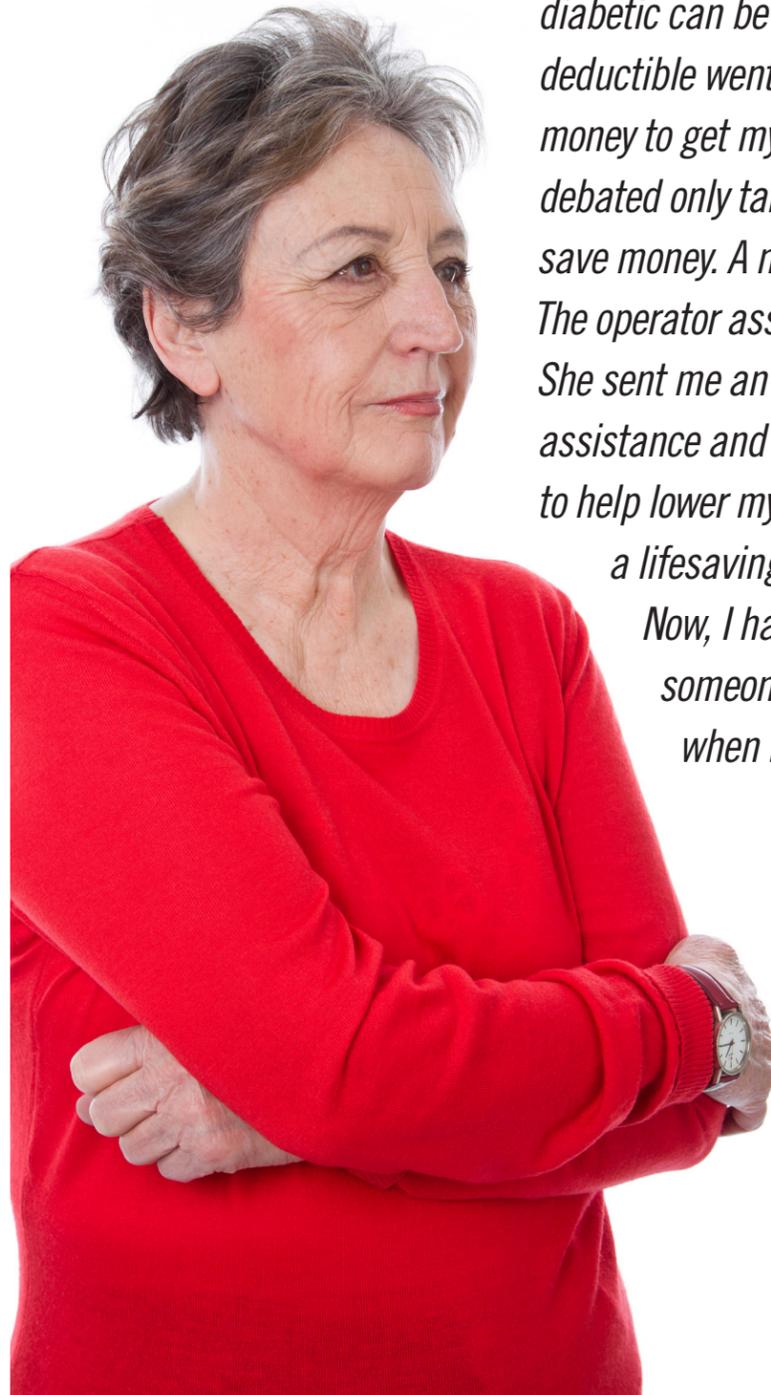
Through four major events, 2-1-1 has become a trusted partner in times of crisis.

*“I live near the Warwick Mall. In the flood of 2010, my basement flooded and I didn’t know what to do. I am on my own as a homeowner and mom, and nothing quite like this had ever happened to me before. A coworker told me about 2-1-1 and I called. The operator was very understanding and was able to connect me quickly with a group of volunteers who could help me. I was lucky, the volunteers – who came from a Mennonite organization – were at my home the next day. They spent the afternoon working in my basement, helping me with the first steps to repairing my home.”*

Several years after the flood, Tina came to work at United Way of Rhode Island as a workplace campaign ambassador. She now works full time at United Way, as a benefit specialist for THE POINT where she helps connect Rhode Islanders to resources every day.



# When everything we thought we knew about healthcare, changed.



*“I’m 72 and a diabetic. The costs of being a diabetic can be unbearable at times. Recently, my deductible went up. I knew I’d only have enough money to get my insulin three times a day. I debated only taking my insulin twice a day to save money. A neighbor suggested I call 2-1-1. The operator assured me that I was not alone. She sent me an application for prescription assistance and gave me several other resources to help lower my bills. I was going to deny myself a lifesaving medication because of money. Now, I have options, hope, and the name of someone who I can trust, and call again when I need help.”*

A changing landscape for healthcare in Rhode Island drove 2-1-1 to play a central role in helping people navigate an increasingly complex system.

Throughout the fall of 2014, 2-1-1 and THE POINT assisted more than 4,000 people with questions about their health insurance options. Through outreach events and walk-in services, call specialists helped 2,000 Rhode Islanders complete enrollments in HealthSourceRI, Medicare Part D and Medicaid.

A new focus on educating callers about their health care options is only part of the story. The Department of Health partnered with 2-1-1 in 2013 and 2014 with a series of powerful public service announcements that urge addicts to seek treatment. The ads refer people with addiction to 2-1-1 as the first step in finding treatment options.



Number of requests	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Health Information	14,154	21,544	24,724	36,741	52,464	60,552	70,677



At 2-1-1, the calls for health-related advice and assistance have nearly doubled since 2011 and call specialists are quickly becoming experts in understanding the options.

# Who pays for 2-1-1?

*"I saw the ads on TV for 2-1-1. I was ready to talk to someone about my son's drug problem. The 2-1-1 operator gave me the names and numbers of detox and in-patient services that would work for us. I guess I really needed someone to talk to because I kept the operator on the line a bit. He listened. He understood. He didn't judge. When I was finished, he gave me the number of a local counseling agency, for me. I made an appointment. My son refused help, but with a little encouragement, I took a step forward for me."*

Funding for *United Way 2-1-1 in Rhode Island* comes from public, private and corporate support. Gifts come from all levels—from the \$25-a-week donor who gives through workplace giving to a generous corporate gift from Citizens Bank.

Examples of state funding include a Rhode Island Lottery contract with 2-1-1 to manage the state's Gambler's Hotline, which took nearly 2,400 calls in 2014, and a new program with the Division of Elderly Affairs that counts on THE POINT to handle after-hours emergencies for seniors.

Help during a storm or disaster is provided as a public service by United Way of Rhode Island.

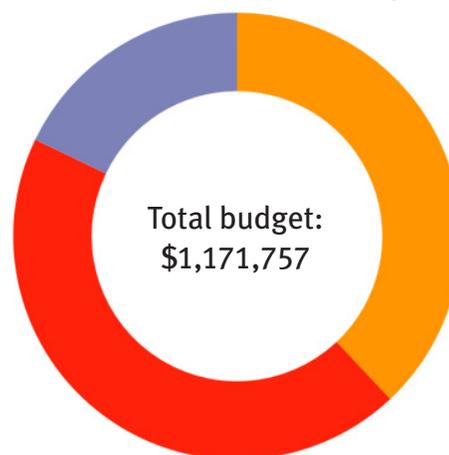
2-1-1 provides answers to approximately 200,000 requests each year.

Callers can contact 2-1-1 by phone 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, even in a snowstorm!

Help is also available Monday through Friday at United Way's office at 50 Valley Street in Olneyville, where 2-1-1 and THE POINT provide walk-in services and appointments.

Online chat and the 2-1-1 Outreach RV were introduced in 2014. The Outreach RV travels to community centers, soup kitchens and special events statewide.

*2-1-1 and THE POINT Funding Sources*



Total budget:  
\$1,171,757

- 38% Federal
- 44% Private (United Way and Bright Stars)
- 18% State

Chat at [www.211ri.org](http://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.

