Need help? Dial 2-1-1 or text your zip code to 898-211.
Or contact us via chat on pa211sw.org
DEAR FRIENDS

Over the past year, PA 2-1-1 Southwest has reached even more of our community members, connecting veterans, women, families and more with the resources they need to continue a path to self-sufficiency. This year, 76,000 contacts came in to PA 2-1-1 Southwest. In 2015, PA 2-1-1 Southwest initiated and improved several efforts to enhance the 2-1-1 experience:

Connecting more people to resources via text and chat – In 2015, we saw a substantial increase in text and chat contacts since launching these contact options midyear of 2014. These new options allow us to connect callers more efficiently to needed resources.

Increasing agency partnerships – We continuously work to increase collaboration in our region, state and throughout the U.S. and Canada. We are grateful for the members of the Regional Advisory Committee who support 2-1-1 at the local level. We partner with local agencies to grow our database to reach more people with helpful resources.

Aligning efforts across borders – PA 2-1-1 Southwest is working with United Way Worldwide to establish a consistent, high-quality 2-1-1 experience for people in need across the nation and world. In 2015, we linked to the Center for Disease Control’s Flu & Cold emergency services and provided resources for victims of human trafficking.

We are grateful to our funders - People’s Natural Gas, Duquesne Light Company, PNC Charitable Trust, and Electrical Workers and Employers of IBEW Local Union No. 5 – as well as many individual donors, county governments and foundations who support our operation and improvements. Thank you for supporting the great work PA 2-1-1 Southwest is doing throughout the southwestern PA region.

Angela Reynolds
Director, PA 2-1-1 Southwest
RESULTS START HERE

75,975
Total Contacts

43,943
Basic Needs Assistance

Majority of Callers
Were between the age of 26-54

337
Calls for Summer Food
(215 in Q4)

115
Calls for Youth Programs
(40 in Q4)

2015-16 at a glance

Whether you need help finding child care, food assistance, care for an aging parent or utility assistance, 2-1-1 is the number to call. Our expert Resource Navigators are trained and specialize in finding you the help you need, for any of life’s tough situations, from our comprehensive (and ever-growing) directory of social services.
Help for those who Served

Judy’s health problems started during Operation Desert Storm when she was deployed to the front with a US Marine supply platoon. She had difficulty coping with the stress of being in an active combat zone, and her symptoms worsened after she returned to civilian life. After struggling on her own for a long time, Judy started treatment for Post Traumatic War Syndrome. She returned to Pittsburgh sick, homeless, jobless, but resolved to rebuild her life.

Judy found hope when she called **PA 2-1-1 Southwest**. A United Way-supported agency that serves Veterans helped her find housing and a job, and United Way’s Veterans Transportation Assistance Campaign gave her a bus pass. “That bus pass got me out of a financial bind,” she says. “Having that bus pass meant I didn’t have to choose between getting to work and buying groceries until I got back on my feet again.”

Now Judy has a position with a great company in the hospitality industry and is saving for her first house.
Call volume reached a total of **75,975** calls.

**Growth of 2-1-1**

Since 2011, *PA 2-1-1 Southwest* has continued to expand its database of services and increased specialization of its resource navigators, which leads to a more consistent and high quality experience for our callers.

In 2015-16, *PA 2-1-1 Southwest* scheduled 19,115 free tax preparation appointments for low-income families in Allegheny, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Washington and Westmoreland counties. This is a 67% increase from 2014, which means many more families in the region will be able to keep more of the money they earned to keep their family from financial crisis.
“When I get a call from a senior, I know that it was not easy for them to pick up the phone and admit that they are out of options. My first job is to make sure they are safe and warm, particularly in the winter.”

**PA 2-1-1 Southwest** Resource Navigator

“Big emergency repairs are too much for us. **PA 2-1-1 Southwest** told us where to turn for help.” Jim and Dorothy are retired and their modest fixed income doesn’t stretch far. They texted **PA 2-1-1 Southwest** when their furnace stopped working and they’d been without heat for two days. The weather was about to turn colder and they couldn’t afford to have the furnace repaired.

The Resource Navigator made sure that the couple was safe and not too uncomfortable. Then he referred them to their county’s Area Agency on Aging, which could connect them to resources for older adults even though they were over the income limit for certain utility assistance programs.

A few days later, Jim and Dorothy texted their thanks. Their furnace was repaired and the heat was on.
“Asking for help is difficult, particularly when you are in a situation where you lack what you need to care for your family’s basic needs. Calling 2-1-1 is a leap of faith. When I answer that phone call, I know that I need to honor that trust by providing great service in a compassionate way.”

*PA 2-1-1 Southwest* Resource Navigator

“My kids would have gone hungry if it weren’t for *PA 2-1-1 Southwest.*” Nia panicked late one Friday afternoon when she realized that her ACCESS card was lost. Her food assistance benefits were loaded on that card. It would take two business days to replace it. She had no other way to buy food, and her local food pantry was already closed for the day.

She contacted *PA 2-1-1 Southwest.* At the Resource Navigator’s suggestion, she called the Walk-In Ministry. Fifteen minutes later she was on an inbound bus, headed for the downtown church where she received enough emergency food to get through the next few days.

Nia’s very thankful now; her kids will have enough to eat.
“Quality control is very important to 2-1-1, and that is evident. They are constantly improving, and we are happy to work with them to get callers the help they need.”

- Darcy Casey, coordinator, The Cornerstone

**The Cornerstone**

United Way responds to a growing number of requests to **PA 2-1-1 Southwest** every day by working with local agencies to connect community members in need with the best resources for their situation. The Cornerstone is a service provider for Beaver County residents where different agencies have collaborated to connect people with resources, including rental and utility assistance, that will improve their lives.

When **PA 2-1-1 Southwest** receives a call from a Beaver County resident who is unable to pay their rent or a utility bill, they will refer them to The Cornerstone, who works one-on-one with callers to get them back on their feet. “Once a client is referred to us from **PA 2-1-1 Southwest**, we try to do a holistic interview with them,” said Darcy Casey. “We look at what the referral was for and try to go beyond that to see how we can help in the most effective way.”

Since 2011, **PA 2-1-1 Southwest** and The Cornerstone have partnered to process more than 2,339 mutual referrals. Whatever the problem, The Cornerstone works with 2-1-1 to ensure callers are safe and headed toward a self-sufficient future.

“If there is something we don’t offer or can’t help with, we refer the client to 2-1-1,” said Casey. “We are definitely a partnership.”
“There’s no lack of need in the community. Working with 2-1-1, we can help people get to the right place.”

- Joseph Elliott, Manager of Specialized Integrated Services and Supports, Allegheny County Department of Human Services.

Allegheny Link

In 2005, Allegheny Link began as a way to connect seniors and people with disabilities to resources in the community. Since then, it has expanded to serve people who are at a risk of homelessness and parents wanting to connect with the county’s home visiting programs. Its mission endures, however, to “simplify and streamline access to services and supports in an effort to help individuals and families maintain their independence, dignity and quality of life.”

Like 2-1-1, the Allegheny Link connects people with programs, agencies and resources in the community. But its specialized areas of focus, including screenings, options counseling, application assistance, case management, homeless service coordination and follow-up, make it an excellent partner for 2-1-1.

“2-1-1 is especially helpful for us when we have callers from out of the county looking for services,” Elliot said, since 2-1-1 covers a wide, 11-county area. Additionally, 2-1-1 is a great resource for callers to the Allegheny Link during tax season, giving people a place to turn for tax preparation. “At the same time, when callers to 2-1-1 have the need for homeless services, they can direct them to us,” Elliot explained, “it’s a really good partnership.”
Help for Basic Needs

The volume of basic needs assistance calls in 2015-16 shows that many people still need help to feed, clothe and provide shelter for their families. This level of need is the same across specialized populations, such as veterans.

Top Seven Needs in 2015

- Rent Assistance
- Electric Service
- Tax Preparation
- Gas Service
- Food
- Financial Assistance
- AARP Aide Programs
How to Make Better Use of 2-1-1

For Agencies: Have you ever wondered how many referrals 2-1-1 makes to your agency? We are happy to share that information! Email your agency name to info@pa211sw.org or request an agency update ID and you can access this information whenever you want. We can also help you brainstorm services for clients, or when a client asks you for help you cannot provide, suggest that they contact 2-1-1.

Need Help? Call 2-1-1 or text your zip code to 898-211. You can also contact us via chat on pa211sw.org. Sign up for text alerts at pa211sw.org to be informed of seasonal programs and resources as they become available!
“Making Your Life Better” is more than just a mission statement; it ties into our overall vision and commitment to help move our region forward. It also complements the mission of PA 2-1-1 Southwest — to connect people to needed resources and improve their life situation.

Peoples’ mission statement dates back to the origins of Peoples Natural Gas. In 1860, during the height of Pittsburgh’s early industrial days, the newly discovered natural gas found near Murrysville was believed to be Pittsburgh’s escape from its “dirtiest city in the nation” reputation. The newfound natural gas would begin to decrease the need for our region’s coal-powered steel plants. The Peoples pipeline company formed in 1860 to ensure that natural gas in Pittsburgh was for the people. And today, because of the development of Marcellus Shale, natural gas is the cheapest form of energy and provides significant environmental benefits that are vital to our region’s future.

By lowering energy costs, more people can afford energy, making it easier for families to also afford food and shelter. Peoples’ mission consistently reminds us of this reality, and ensures that we do our best to help our region. This mission also aligns us with PA 2-1-1 Southwest and the help and services it supplies to families and individuals in need. We all recognize that effectively providing a helping hand is more important than ever before.

To that end, our vision of going above and beyond customer expectations is a key part of our day-to-day operations. Very much like PA 2-1-1 Southwest’s dedicated resource navigators, we believe in exceeding expectations on every phone call and service call, while being compassionate with customers’ challenges. This culture is constantly on display as Peoples’ employees volunteer their time and resources for charitable causes throughout the year. We understand that “Making Your Life Better” extends well beyond the work we do here at Peoples, which is why we’re so proud to partner with PA 2-1-1 Southwest—an organization that strives to make lives better every day.