

This is a supplemental piece developed to augment the current Crisis Readiness Training available through AIRS and through the United Way of America. The process was funded through a generous grant from the United Way of America and the Lilly Endowment.

The intended outcome of this training piece is that:

1. The I&R community will have a blueprint for better defining the role that 2-1-1 can play in responding to disasters/crises.
2. The I&R community can accelerate their procurement of 2-1-1 by offering services that augment and in some cases, greatly enhance, a community's ability to respond to crises.
3. Local United Ways will be able to define a working relationship with the 2-1-1 in their community (when they are not within the same organization).
4. Local United Ways will seek ways to enhance the 2-1-1 through financial and political support.

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It is our sincerest wish that this information be utilized to improve 2-1-1, information and referral services and both AIRS and United Way of America's ability to respond to disasters with strength and integrity.

## **I. Background**

Information and referral has played an active and **defined** role in disaster response and recovery since the early 90's (emphasis on planned and defined). In 1997, through a Department of Commerce federal grant, AIRS developed and presented the National Emergency Information Network (NERIN), a disaster-training guide for Information & referral providers.

The training was based on natural roles that information and referral centers play in a community and built upon those roles to describe those it had already played or could potentially play during and following a disaster.

The experiences of information and referral centers acting in disasters were used to define disaster missions and with the proliferation of 2-1-1 those roles may be expanded.

The purpose of the training manual is to:

1. Assist information and referral centers in understanding the potential use of 2-1-1 during disasters/crisis
2. Expand the 2-1-1 normal role and offer suggestions for community acceptance of the role during disasters
3. Accelerate the implementation of 2-1-1 in communities through defining a critical role in responding to disasters, crisis and/or terrorist threats
4. Assist information and referral centers in accessing funding from local, state and federal organizations that fund disaster infrastructure planning
5. Define relationships with United Ways, volunteers centers and donation management groups and coordinate use of 2-1-1 to augment those services following a disaster/crisis

## **II. Understanding Disaster Response**

It is critical that a 2-1-1 center and/or information and referral center understand how a local municipality, as well as its' state office on Emergency Management (OEM) responds to a disaster. It will assist the information and referral center in describing how the center can assist and/or improve the response in a community.

Do not despair if the initial contacts do not result in full understanding or acceptance of the 2-1-1 services. Just be prepared to do the work if a disaster occurs. Remember, that a crisis brings many opportunities. If the information and referral center is prepared to respond and does so with quality and integrity, the rest will follow.

Call management is frequently mentioned as an area for improvement and/or concern when groups are de-briefing following a disaster/crisis.

How does disaster response work? This is a quick summary. For more information, please refer to: **AIRS Disaster Manual**

**Response** – this is the period of time immediately following a disaster. This is generally the purview of the municipality, the police, fire and rescue organizations. This is the period of time when lives are at greatest risk and the saving of lives and properties are the highest priority. Generally, during this period there is only a very limited role for a call center. Most calls should be going to the 9-1-1. This period generally lasts up to 72 hours. In the case of bio-terrorism or bombings, the rescue processes could go on for a considerable period of time and the response period will overlap the relief and recovery period.

**Relief** – this is the second stage of a disaster. This is when the municipalities expect American Red Cross and The Salvation Army to step in and begin providing relief services, such as shelter and food. It is during this period of time the public becomes hungry for information. The search for information can move from where the closest shelters are located to what highways are open. It is at this stage that local emergency management officials and American Red Cross volunteers and staff will be conducting an assessment to determine their abilities to meet the needs of the community. If the impact is large, there will be a request for a federal Declaration. If a federal disaster declaration occurs, national groups will join the community in its relief and recovery efforts. This period can generally last up to three months.

**Recovery** – this is the community’s road back to normalcy. In many cases this can take between 6 months to two years. The movement from dependency on national and emergency resources to community-based resources occurs during this period of time. Few, if any, national organizations remain active in the long-term recovery process.

### **III. Understanding the ICS Incident Command System**

It is critical that information and referral centers understand the ICS. This is a military based response system that allows for independent response and yet creates a system for knowing who will do what, when and where. It organizes the response and every group knows who is ultimately responsible for the outcome of specific functions. It is designed to reduce confusion in decision-making, increase functionality and manage situations where loss of communication may occur.

In most cases, the information and referral center should be able to describe their functions within an ICS model. For more information on how to develop an ICS model for disaster response, see the AIRS Disaster Training Manual.

### **IV. 2-1-1 Roles in Disaster**

1. **1. Manage and track available resources** – preparation for resource management – see the disaster taxonomy. Whenever possible, review the categories and locate the available resource information ahead of time. The OEM will have some of this information. It needs to be in the database and updated annually.
2. **Manage and track requests for resources** – have a back-up plan for augmenting the number of I&R specialists available to answer the telephones. When 2-1-1 was used following the September 11<sup>th</sup> events, the use of 2-1-1 was 90% higher

- than use of 1-800 #s. Call volume could increase by 100%. Connecticut 2-1-1 center trained Department of Social Services workers as back-up telephone support. Their center had adequate telephone hardware capacity to handle the increased volume of calls.
3. ***Provide comfort and assurance*** – people will need a place to call. I&R Specialists need to be prepared to listen to a variety of needs, many times just the need for people to connect with someone. 2-1-1 offers an easy to remember telephone number that invites people to call.
  4. ***Volunteer management*** – if your community has a volunteer center separate from the 2-1-1, Points of Light Foundation, United Way of America and AIRS encourages the information and referral center to draft a memorandum of understanding that outlines how 2-1-1 can be used to provide call management for volunteerism for the Volunteer Center. The incidence of spontaneous volunteerism is enormous following a disaster. Your Volunteer Center can be critical in being able to manage this important asset. See the section on “To give help.”
  5. ***Donation management (both financial and in-kind)*** – behind spontaneous volunteerism comes spontaneous donations. If there is an organization that has been designated in the municipal emergency management plan, have a memorandum of understanding in place with those organizations about appropriate donation management referrals. United Way of America is drafting a training to outline models for financial donation management. American Red Cross and Salvation Army will probably run their own media donation campaigns, but a community-wide campaign for funds may need to occur to make sure that the community has the funds necessary to recover. The information and referral center could be the financial information provider or it could even take telephone donations via credit card on behalf of the entity designated in a community to manage the donations. In-kind donation management is usually written into the OEM plan. Follow those instructions. If it is not, the information and referral center may ultimately end up handling those calls. Try to use the local food bank (member of Second Harvest network) for all packaged food donations. If the community has a Gifts-In-Kind Program member, that organization may have the capacity to manage the spontaneous donations. Rule of thumb: most disaster victims do not need large quantities of donated clothing; please try to discourage these donations. American Red Cross will not accept used clothing or furniture, only new. The Salvation Army reserves the right to re-sell them in their thrift stores. Consider offering these organizations spaces at the 2-1-1 call center to answer the phones, access their tracking systems, follow specific protocols for screening referrals to the Volunteer Center or Gifts-In-Kind Program. There are many ways to create a partnership with these key community partners.
  6. ***Information for coordination of services*** – the information and referral center will know who is providing what kind of services, when and for whom. This information becomes a critical piece to locating victims and for providing comprehensive relief and recovery services. Bring this information to all meetings, in print and also demonstrate how it can be found on the Internet.

7. **Rumor control** – this may become an essential piece following a bio-terrorism act. “Stick to the facts”, get to the bottom of questionable information, and do not give out any unverified information.
8. **Information control** – see above
9. **Media contact**– the media will want to know who is doing what, for whom and where. They will also want to get contact information. Provide information about service providers, be very careful and in most cases, avoid giving out information about victims – leave it to the direct service providers. Correct questionable information and put the most positive spin possible on how agencies are responding. See the AIRS Disaster Training Manual for more information on working with the media. Do advertise the 2-1-1 number as the easy to remember number for comprehensive information about the community’s response to the disaster.
10. **Evacuation/traffic** – the information and referral center will get calls about evacuation routes or highway closings. If the state has an operating 5-1-1 or similar service, check to make sure it is working and has up-to-date information and refer callers to them. If not, call the Department of Transportation (DOT), listen to the radio and/or watch the television to get some of the most current information. Have a process for distributing changes to the staff.
11. **Travelers’ aid** – persons may become stranded in the community as a result of the disaster. If possible, use the normal system to respond to the travelers needs. If the organization is overwhelmed, contact non-traditional agencies and seek assistance on behalf of the travelers.
12. **Displaced pet location** – the local chapters of the SPCA and/or Humane Society have a process for locating and boarding pets following a disaster. Make sure the information and referral center has these resources in the database.
13. **Information for corporations** – this is an opportunity to introduce corporations to 2-1-1 and information and referral. If the center has the capabilities, publish a daily or weekly update on available disaster resources and volunteer/in-kind opportunities. This is great advertising and community relations service that benefits the entire community.
14. **Money management resources** – the disaster will take on many forms and create a variety of financial problems for people. Take time to understand the available federal funding streams (FEMA, disaster unemployment) and have in place a quick training to make sure the specialists are able to screen and refer persons appropriately.
15. **Burial assistance** – many communities have limited resources available for families. If there has been a large-scale disaster resulting in a high number of deaths, there may be a need for these types of services. Coordinating those organizations that can assist in payment, as well as delivery of services will be a possible role.
16. **Missing persons tracking** - this category is up for discussion. A large-scale disaster, like the September 11<sup>th</sup> event, may create a need for this service. It was determined that within the domestic defense process it was not assigned to any specific agency or entity to perform this service. The information and referral centers may want to explore the use of 2-1-1 for this service.

## **V. How Tos:**

### **A. How to contact your local OEM and suggestions for both verbal and written materials:**

Start with the largest local municipality (town, city, county) and ask if they have a specific person designated to handle emergency management. In large communities, they may have an entire staff – in which case make an appointment to meet with the Director. In smaller communities, it may only be one person or it may be a portion of a person's full-time job. If it is unclear as to who may be handling emergency management – ask the local fire chief.

1. Take the disaster operation manual developed for your local organization (demonstrate knowledge).
2. Take the list of potential roles the organization can play (team player). Take an example of a Statement of Understanding or Memorandum of Agreement to indicate how your organization may be partnering with others.
3. Keep an open mind and ears and listen for opportunities where the community may need an organization to fill a much-needed gap in disaster recovery.

### **B. How to contact your state OEM with suggestions for verbal and written support materials:**

Every state has an Office of Emergency Management (see attached list of state OEM). It is sometimes a stand-alone organization with its own commissioner or it could be located under the Department of Public Safety, or even the Department of Health. Try to make an appointment with the highest official and get them to provide you the contacts within their department that you should meet with. If you cannot get an appointment, ask your local state representative or senator to assist.

1. Take the disaster operations manual developed for your local organization and information on your organization's ability to work within the current OEM structure to the meeting.
2. If your organization has intentions to provide gifts-in-kind tracking, volunteer management or region/state-wide information and referral, develop an MOU/SOU with the State OEM. This may enable your organization to request payment for services if there is a state/federally declared disaster.
3. Take copies of the SOU between AIRS & American Red Cross and let them know AIRS has applied for membership with NVOAD.
4. Let State OEM know about your relationships with local municipalities and VOAD.

### **C. How to contact FEMA and let them know about you:**

See the attachment the FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison (VAL) contacts. It is important your organization contacts the FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison for your region of the

United States. These individuals are your contact with all other FEMA and disaster response organizations.

## **VI. Next Steps**

### **A. If you are already a 2-1-1:**

1. Become a part of the state OEM response plan. See where they lack confidence in service delivery (donation management, spontaneous volunteer management, call management beyond 9-1-1 calls and offer to strengthen their plan.
2. If you experience difficulty, seek a champion to assist you. If you are not a United Way program, ask the United Way if they can assist.
3. Tell them you have been trained by a national organization that has applied for membership with NVOAD, and has a Statement of Understanding with American Red Cross to provide cooperative services.
4. Review the state plan – it is public information and shows them where your organization fits in.
5. Keep your network of I&Rs (specialized) informed about your commitments for future disaster response. They will need to be aware of situations that could impact their service/referral levels AND they could possibly assist your organization in call management.

### **B. If you are soon to become a 2-1-1:**

See above... act “as if”. A disaster occurring could place your organizations’ movement towards 2-1-1 on a fast track. The state OEM and local OEM’s see the power of 2-1-1 in call management when it is happening. They will want to know where to refer folks for all the services they do not provide.

### **C. If you are an I&R center that is not a 2-1-1 Center, but you are in a region covered by a 2-1-1 Call Center.**

1. Become a partner with the 2-1-1 center.
2. Look for ways your organization can augment the disaster services provide by the 2-1-1 center.
3. Complete your disaster operations manual.
4. Maintain relationships with the local OEM.

### **D. If you are an I&R center in an area that does not have a 2-1-1 center:**

1. Follow the same instructions for being a 2-1-1 center.
2. I&R is a critical function for any community recovering from a disaster. 2-1-1 is only a tool for making it easy for people to know where to call.

## **VII. Working with your United Way**

Over the past decade, the United Way of America has been encouraging their membership to prepare for crisis. In many communities, Crisis Readiness Plans have been developed by United Ways.

Call your local United Way and ask if your organization can be a partner in that response.

See the attached list for United Ways with Crisis Readiness Plans. If your local United Way is not on this list, call United Way of America.

#### **VIII. Working with your local Volunteer Center**

Points of Light Foundation is a NVOAD member. This essentially means they have a clearly defined disaster recovery role. If your organization is not primarily responsible for volunteerism in your community, look to your local Volunteer Center.

Ascertain if they have developed a local disaster response plan. Seek ways to partner with them. VOAD can be a valuable partner following a disaster.

In the recent past, there have been marked increases in spontaneous volunteerism following a disaster. The 2-1-1's ability to serve that segment of the community is critical. The service can come through a mutual agreement with the local Volunteer Center.