





## Putting the 2-1-1 Coverage Map in Context

The **2-1-1 Coverage Map** illustrates the nation's access to the three-digit dialing code, 2-1-1, via residential landline telephones. This service was mandated by the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) in its July 2000 ruling setting aside the number for community information and referral (I&R). While residential landline availability of 2-1-1 represents significant progress in response to the FCC ruling, it does not tell the whole story. The following notes highlight other aspects of work yet to be completed.

**Wireless and New Telephony Devices:** The FCC ruling did not address cell phone or Voice over IP telephony, but these newer technologies continue to grow. Cellular and VoIP coverage have been achieved in some areas but coverage is less than the amount shown on this map.

**Geographical Coverage:** The 2-1-1 Coverage Map illustrates 2-1-1 availability by population. Most 2-1-1 services operate in urban areas, so the map may not accurately reflect the additional challenges associated with bringing 2-1-1 to rural areas. Assuring a local presence for 2-1-1 by partnering with smaller I&R services or placing resource specialists in hard-to-reach areas needs to be better supported and expanded.

**24/7/365 Access to 2-1-1:** In many communities 2-1-1 has become part of the infrastructure for access to information about social services. 2-1-1 is expected to be available around the clock, but the lack of dedicated financial support means 24/7/365 access is not yet a reality in many areas.

**Online Resource Databases:** 2-1-1 services are moving to provide searchable access to their invaluable resource databases by making them available online. In some cases this level of access lags behind the development of statewide telephone coverage.

**Certification and Accreditation:** The national 2-1-1 system is committed to established professional standards developed by the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems (AIRS). Since 2-1-1 is largely funded by local, grass-roots and non-profit efforts, achieving certification of I&R Specialists and accreditation of 2-1-1 service providers has not yet been uniformly accomplished across the country.

**National and State Governance:** 2-1-1 works best when coordinated with social service providers and other key stakeholders (government, nonprofit, corporations and foundations). A growing number of states have established formal entities for statewide coordination. The United Way Worldwide (UWW), AIRS and 2-1-1 representatives across the country have established 2-1-1 US to aid in improving national coordination. Much of this work is done by volunteers with other responsibilities, thereby limiting its progress to date.

**Public Sector Support:** 2-1-1 is an essential community response system for everyday personal crises and in times of disaster. To reach its full potential, significant public investment must be secured. Federal, state and local dollars are needed to match private sector investments from United Ways and others. With this investment from the public sector, 2-1-1 can accomplish the tasks outlined above and achieve a sustainable future.