

## Need Help With a Utility Bill or Getting Food Stamps? Dial 2-1-1

A phone line offered by a non-profit organization provides information to help connect residents to a variety of community services.

By [Corky Lang](#) | [Email the author](#) April 23, 2011

There is an informational safety net for social services available in Ramona and the rest of the county. [2-1-1 San Diego](#), a nonprofit organization provides comprehensive information and a referral system linking residents to community health and human services. You can call 211 toll-free, 24 hours a day and be connected confidentially to a trained, multilingual specialist who can help with a multitude of questions.

The operators at 211 have access to a database with information on more than 2,000 government and nonprofit agencies which represent some specialized services.

2-1-1 San Diego is part of [2-1-1 California](#), which currently links 27 counties and has a goal of serving the population of the entire state in the future. The parent organization, [2-1-1 U.S.](#), was introduced in 1997. It now serves more than 82 percent of the country's population and covers 48 states.

The service offers to help the single mother who just got a utility shutoff notice, or the dad who is looking for after-school activities for his children, or the person who is disabled with transportation needs or, worse, you're depressed and need a place to turn. You might want to volunteer in the community, or maybe, in these hard economic times, you are forced to consider food stamps for the first time. All of these concerns can be addressed by dialing 211 or the 2-1-1 little numbers.

In addition to providing information on food, shelter, job placement and an array of health care programs, 2-1-1 San Diego is a crucial local public information system during a crisis such as an earthquake, tsunami, or fire.

Here is one success story from the 2-1-1 San Diego website: "During Firestorm 2007, I was living in a trailer park in East County. I wasn't aware of a fire so close to my home. Then, I got a phone call. It was a reverse 911 call telling me to evacuate my home. By the time my neighbors and I were evacuated, the park seemed to be completely surrounded by flames, and the exit route was cut off. I didn't know what to do, but the reverse 911 call told me to call 211 for more info, so I did. My heart was racing. I got through to a live person in moments who had access to information about the fire area, which calmed me down a little. The woman on the phone very quickly connected me to the Sheriff's department, which immediately sent us out for all of us to safely evacuate our residence. Thankfully, 211 was there to save us. I don't know what we would have done."-- Marilyn, 72-year-old County resident.

Anyone with Internet access can search the [211 database](#) to find community resources. Or you can call 211. Their slogan goes: Three simple numbers. One helpful voice.