



# Community Concerns

## Dialing Up Community Services

(NAPSA)—A simple phone call could help you learn where to find care for an aging parent, after-school supervision for a child, a job or other vital community services—if a bill passes in Washington.

2-1-1 is a phone number that connects callers with important community programs and provides information on local volunteer opportunities. The service recently helped Hurricane Katrina and Rita survivors access relief efforts and it provided information to thousands of people looking to help hurricane survivors in need. Supporters of 2-1-1 said it succeeded where the hurricanes caused similar services to fail. George Penick, president of the Foundation of the Mid South, even called it one of the “few bright spots of that period.”

Yet 2-1-1 is only available to about 47 percent of people in the U.S., meaning more than half of Americans may not have access to important community information. Fortunately, a number of people are looking to change that. Americans can now call 1-888-PASS-211 to encourage members of Congress to co-sponsor the 2-1-1 Act (H.R. 896/S.211). The bipartisan bill would provide 2-1-1 to every community in the country. People with the service could learn about:

- **Basic Needs Resources:** food banks, clothing closets, shelters, rent assistance and utility assistance.

- **Physical and Mental Health Resources:** health insurance programs, Medicaid and Medicare, maternal health, Children’s Health Insurance Program, medical information lines,



**2-1-1 phone service gives people information on vital community programs.**

crisis intervention services, support groups, counseling, drug and alcohol intervention as well as rehabilitation.

- **Employment Supports:** financial assistance, job training, transportation assistance and education programs.

- **Support for Older Americans and Persons with Disabilities:** adult day care, congregate meals, Meals on Wheels, respite care, home health care, transportation and homemaker services.

- **Support for Children, Youth and Families:** child care, after-school programs, Head Start, family resource centers, summer camps and recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring and protective services.

- **Volunteer Opportunities and Donations.**

The effort to nationally implement 2-1-1 is being led by United Way and the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems. For more information, visit the Web site <http://national.unitedway.org/211>.