

http://www.thenewsenterprise.com/news/local/service-meets-united-way-s-expectations-expected-to-grow/article_b809e4bf-17be-5988-9d2f-4a7535d37e54.html

2-1-1 service meets United Way's expectations, expected to grow

MARY ALFORD The News-Enterprise 7 hrs ago



2-1-1 services — a one-stop local information helpline that launched in the region last year — provided more than 3,000 referrals to those in need of community services in 2017, United Way of Central Kentucky announced Monday.

The system is used as a way to connect residents in Hardin, Breckinridge, Grayson, LaRue and Meade counties with access to information about 2,000 different services, a news release said. In its first year, more than 1,900 calls were made to the free and confidential hotline. Some of the calls were for multiple referrals.

United Way of Central Kentucky President and CEO Megan Stith said for a community without history of having the service, the usage met their expectations for an area of this size.

The most requested services in 2017 included rent assistance, food pantries, housing, basic needs support and academic programs. Data from hotline and online database usage showed the most requested yet unmet needs were for shelter, rent and utility assistance. Unmet needs are defined as

a call received by 2-1-1 where there are no agencies or resources available to serve the caller's expressed needs.

Stith said as United Way develops solutions that address the region's most complex challenges, it is important its bases strategies on needs identified by the communities it serves.

"By organizing and publicly sharing data from our 2-1-1 system, we are able to help organizations, service providers and government officials provide targeted responses to these issues," she said.

Stith said the organization is proud to see 2-1-1 make such an early impact in the region. She said the number of referrals given in 2017 was 10 times greater than what they could provide in the past.

"Having a single place to find information has not only provided our nonprofit partners with access to a centralized service directory, it has made the process of finding help more efficient for those in crisis," she said.

Stith said United Way plans to grow the use of 2-1-1 and continue to seek opportunities to raise awareness of the free resource.

"We have a variety of tools to help organizations benefit from 2-1-1, such as on-site trainings for nonprofit staff, promotional materials and briefings for businesses whose employees may benefit from referrals to supportive services," she said.

Stith said 2-1-1 provides valuable infrastructure for the community. By having one place to look for programs and non-emergency services, United Way can make the process of finding help more efficient for those in crisis and nonprofit organizations.

"The public can access our online database of services, which allows case managers and those providing assistance to work from a single source of information that can be updated at any time," she said.

United Way of Central Kentucky's 2-1-1 service is operated in collaboration with Metro United Way, United Way of Kentucky and Louisville's Center for Women and Families. Operations in 2017 was paid for locally by United Way of Central Kentucky, Hardin Memorial Health, WesBanco and Bluegrass Cellular.

Kentucky is one of the only states in the country without existing statewide 2-1-1 coverage, according to the release. UWCK became the fifth of 22 local and independent United Ways in the state offering a 2-1-1 service, with others now following the model developed locally.

For more information, go to www.unitedwayck.org/2-1-1.

Mary Alford can be reached at 270-505-1741 or malford@thenewsenterprise.com.