

Eden I&R, Inc.

"linking people and resources"



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2-1-1 Status Report Fiscal Year 2007 (July 2006 - June 2007)

Eden I&R staff focused on two primary 2-1-1 goals throughout Fiscal Year 2007:

- Ramping up 2-1-1 phone services, and technical support, for a public launch of this 24/7 phone line access to free health, housing and human services information; and
- Securing sufficient leveraged multi-year public/private funding to support 2-1-1 as a public communication tool.

Eden I&R was successful in launching 2-1-1 in Test Mode at the end of November 2006. Test Mode meant:

- If a person dialed 2-1-1 from a land-line phone anywhere in Alameda County, at any time of the day or night, s/he would have had a live Resource Specialist answer the call (cell phone access will be added when there is the financial capacity to hire and train a sufficient number of Resource Specialists to answer additional calls). Unfortunately, due to limited phone line staff, 2-1-1 callers could have experienced lengthy wait times before their calls were answered. This will be resolved once there is funding for additional Resource Specialists.
- Callers who do not speak English were assisted by an on-site Resource Specialist who is fluent in their language (particularly Spanish, Cantonese and/or Vietnamese) or they were assisted by a "real time" interpreter (via TeleInterpreters which provides over 100 languages) who translated between the caller and the Resource Specialist.
- AT&T and Eden I&R worked together to reduce the number of Phantom Calls (when no one is on the line) entering the 2-1-1 phone system (since January 2007 the agency has received 15,933 phantom calls on our 2-1-1 phone line). This is a nation-wide technical problem and Eden I&R is spearheading the movement to greatly reduce or eliminate this problem.
- The agency's new phone system was tested and redesigned to produce statistical reports that can be used to monitor and evaluate 2-1-1 service delivery, as well as be shared with funders, 2-1-1 partners and public policy analysts.
- All agency health, housing and human databases were, and continue to be, enhanced and "tweaked" to provide the most comprehensive and accurate data possible.
- Client databases were redesigned in order to collect the most comprehensive information possible for the following primary purposes: 1) to assist with making appropriate referrals; 2) to aggregate the data for demographic statistical purposes.
- Because the agency was unsuccessful in securing the government funds to fully staff the 2-1-1 phone lines before the end of June 2007, there deliberately was minimal public publicity in order to balance the number of calls received on a 24/7 basis in line with the number of the Resource Specialists available to answer those calls.

Who 2-1-1 Assisted:

Despite no countywide public 2-1-1 promotion, and limited Resource Specialists answering the 2-1-1 phone lines, **1,061 2-1-1 callers** (individuals and families, as well as their advocates) were assisted with up-to-date health, housing and human services information via 2-1-1 from January 2007 through June 2007 (this is in addition to the

over **10,600 calls** -- representing over **5,000 unduplicated callers** -- that were assisted over the Community Housing And Information Network – CHAIN – phone lines throughout FY07). Example 2-1-1 calls include:

- An Oakland woman called in need of help with her PG&E bill. She had received a 48 hour notice. Eden I&R's Resource Specialist called PG&E on a conference call with the caller to get a two day extension so she could get the necessary papers filed with the Salvation Army who could then call in a payment guarantee. After speaking with three PG&E supervisors the extension was granted and ultimately the bill was paid by Salvation Army (also arranged through the Resource Specialist). This same caller was also behind on her rent for two months. The Resource Specialist called Operation Dignity and they agreed to cover the caller's rent once all the necessary documentation was presented at the appointment the next day (which was also arranged by the Resource Specialist). The caller called back to let the Eden I&R Resource Specialist know that she is now employed by the Salvation Army taking the calls for utility assistance!
- An 83 year old disabled woman who tearfully called in need of housing for herself and her grandchildren. Eden I&R provided referrals to two apartments and a house, all of which were wheelchair accessible and in her price range.
- A single young homeless woman from Fremont who was able to save enough money from her part-time job, while staying at a shelter, to pay for first and last month's rent. Eden I&R was able to provide her with three available one bedroom apartment referrals in her price range.
- A 21 year old woman called and stated she was a battered woman with no income and in fear for her life. "My ex-boyfriend is out there in Oakland somewhere and if he finds me I don't know what he'll do. He's already broken my jaw." She had no safe place to go that evening. Eden I&R was able to refer her to two battered women's shelters who reported to us that they each had space for a single female.

The 2-1-1 phone service has produced some new types of calls as well that are very beneficial to the community. Two examples include:

- A caller wanted to report a suspicious car parked in front of his home. This is an example of a non-emergency police type of call which came to 2-1-1 instead of 9-1-1. The caller was given the local, seven-digit police number to call for assistance.
- A caller had a relative in Dallas, Texas who needed human services assistance. The 2-1-1 Resource Specialist was able to give the caller the toll free 800 number to the 2-1-1 provider in Dallas.

Agency Infrastructure Advances:

● Staffing

At the beginning of the Fiscal Year, thanks to private sector funding, Eden I&R was able to hire the first dedicated 2-1-1 Phone Line Resource Specialist. The most beneficial aspect of this first hire was that this individual started at the agency as a Spectrum Intern (a low-income senior citizen veteran) who was re-entering the workforce. After several months of training, he has proven himself to be a strong and knowledgeable advocate for 2-1-1 callers, especially those who are in need of multiple services.

During most of the "Test Mode" period the agency could accommodate additional 2-1-1 calls by training current staff, who are usually taking other types of calls, on how to handle the complexities of the 2-1-1 client and services databases. This was far from ideal but it was a temporary measure that had been instituted until sufficient 2-1-1 staff can be hired.

The agency was also able to increase the hours of the Information Technology Specialist who has been instrumental in dealing with the many problems that have occurred with the new phone system (i.e., the phantom calls; the phone system's reporting features not working correctly; misc. other technical difficulties.).

During the third-quarter of the year, the United Way of the Bay Area's five (5) year 2-1-1 contract was signed and the agency was able to begin augmenting capacity with some additional 2-1-1 staff and technologies. Since no additional city or county funding was available, the agency still was unable to hire or train sufficient staff to fully launch 2-1-1 during FY2007.

- Health, Housing and Human Services Data Resources

During the course of the Fiscal Year, Eden I&R's housing database grew by 947 units to over **56,316 units of housing** including subsidized, Below Market Rent, Market Rent, residency hotel rooms, SROs, and shares. The vast majority of the CHAIN calls continued to be for housing and housing supportive services and it is projected that most of the 2-1-1 calls will also be related to some form of housing issues (e.g., domestic violence shelter beds; residential care facilities; subsidized housing).

Eden I&R continued to be the only agency in Alameda County that called shelters at least twice a day to check on bed availabilities. This information was then available 24/7 to all 2-1-1 callers.

During Fiscal Year 2007 Eden I&R's health and human services database was updated not only for the 2-1-1 callers but also for the printing of the 2007 edition of *The Big Blue Book: The Directory of Human Services for Alameda County* as well as for the agency's online website database (which can be accessed directly at www.alamedaco.info and/or via the agency's website at www.edenir.org).

Regional 2-1-1 Partnerships:

Eden I&R has been working in partnership with The United Way of the Bay Area and the Contra Costa Crisis Center to create a seamless and coordinated 2-1-1 regional system that includes agreements such as:

- **Common Client Data:** Bay Area 2-1-1 centers have begun to develop the ability to aggregate information about clients—demographics, needs, location, follow-up (success or other findings), etc.—consistent, at a minimum, with statewide data collection by the California Alliance of Information and Referral Services (CAIRS).
- **Sharing Resource Information Databases:** Sharing databases will enable I&R Resource Specialists from a variety of counties to access resource information in other areas to reduce the number of subsequent calls a 2-1-1 caller has to make. Since 2-1-1 programming ensures that calls are routed to the 2-1-1 center serving the county that the call originated in, shared databases enables callers to get the best information possible from local experts outside of their county via shared technology and data. The goal is for 2-1-1 call specialists throughout the Bay Area to have easy access to resource databases when callers have multiple needs that cross county lines.
- **Handling Call Volume Overflow:** Bay Area 2-1-1 centers are beginning to develop a rollover system for calls to be rerouted to another center when call volume gets past a certain level—i.e. assisting with overload especially during unforeseen situations such as a disaster (earthquake, fire, flood, terrorist attack, toxic spill, etc.).
- **Mutual Communication and Outreach:** Joint public information and marketing strategies (and materials) are being developed that will emphasize and recognize the Bay Area-wide 2-1-1 system (and its local components). This marketing effort will also help clarify the difference between 2-1-1 and other N-1-1 numbers to avoid public confusion. Coordinated outreach will also ensure that 2-1-1 information is consistent, accurate, and effective.
- **Disaster Response Preparation:** Since 2-1-1 is a public communication tool that is critically needed when disaster strikes, mutual aide agreements are being crafted that will enhance the capacity of Bay Area 2-1-1 centers. These agreements involve making sure that the regional service continues via back-up at alternative sites if necessary, as well as the ability for expanded services immediately following a disaster.
- **Public Policy:** There is mutual agreement at the local, statewide and national level that support by public officials is critical to the ongoing success 2-1-1. Therefore, 2-1-1 service providers at the local, regional and statewide level have been meeting to promote a coordinated campaign to support “The Calling for 2-1-1 Act” as well as upcoming statewide legislation that would help fund 2-1-1 in the future.

Funding Successes and Challenges:

The most important lesson learned throughout the past seven years, while attempting to fund 2-1-1 equitably, is how exceedingly difficult it is to coordinate the funding of a countywide service among 14 cities and the county. Even though a fair and equitable leveraged funding plan was approved by the City Managers and Mayors two years ago, Eden I&R was still unable to implement the public sector funding plan during FY07 since it is dependent upon ALL of the cities participating at their per capita share amount (NOTE: 10 out of the 14 cities, and several county departments last fiscal year did set aside FY07 funding for 2-1-1 but the funds were not released).

Fiscal Year 2008 looks much more promising since the largest city, Oakland, has recently committed to its full per capita share of funding, and the county has committed to multi-year 2-1-1 funding as well.

The private sector continues to be extremely supportive of 2-1-1. In fact, it was the private sector that has allowed Eden I&R to launch 2-1-1 in "Test Mode" during FY07. For this, and many other reasons, Eden I&R is extremely grateful to the following funders for their past, and hopefully future support:

The United Way of the Bay Area; Walter & Elise Haas Fund; Pacific Gas & Electric; Kaiser Permanente; The San Francisco Foundation; AT&T; Community Technology Foundation; First 5/Every Child Counts; KB Home; Safeway; and Eden Township Healthcare District.

Next Steps:

Eden I&R is committed to fully implementing 2-1-1 services for all of Alameda County's residents and employees during the first half of Fiscal Year 2008. The Executive Director will continue to meet with the City Manager's Association and the County's representatives to get the participation necessary to fully fund 2-1-1. Once this is achieved, additional phone line staff will be hired and trained, and a regional marketing effort will be launched to comprehensively explain and promote 2-1-1 services throughout the Bay Area.

When fully operational 2-1-1 could be used as a Single Point of Entry for such programs as:

- Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)
- EveryOne Home projects
- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) programs
- Specialized public information like Cooling Station locations during heat waves
- Public information related to such potential disasters as earthquakes, fires, pandemics, and terrorist attacks.

Over 65% of the nation's population has access to 2-1-1. Eden I&R is dedicated to full implementation of Alameda County's 2-1-1 services by the end of Calendar Year 2007 so that the projected 140,000 annual callers can receive prompt, comprehensive, and accurate health, housing and human service information 24/7, and in multiple languages.

Eden I&R staff and Board of Directors thank and truly appreciate all of the support and assistance we have received this past year from city, county and private sector officials, staff, and business leaders.

Report compiled July 13, 2007 by Barbara Bernstein, Executive Director, 510-537-2710, ext.8