

**STATE OF MICHIGAN
BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

In the matter, on the Commission's own motion,)
Regarding designation of a State 2-1-1 coordinating) Case No. U-14725
Agency pursuant to Section 214 of the Michigan)
Telecommunications Act)

**MICHIGAN 2-1-1 PROGRESS REPORT FOR
THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

Pursuant to the Commission's order of March 11, 2008, in this proceeding, Michigan 2-1-1, the agency designated by the Commission to be the State 2-1-1 coordinating agency, submits its third report on the progress of Michigan 2-1-1 in meeting its availability and funding goals. Michigan 2-1-1's previous progress reports were filed on February 1, 2007 And February 1, 2008. In its March 11, 2008, order, the Commission stated that the third progress report should contain "current information on funding, advances made in 2-1-1 availability in Michigan and other relevant information on its progress." Each of these issues will be addressed in the following report.

CURRENT PROGRESS

Coordination of Statewide System

Michigan 2-1-1 developed and implemented an endorsement process in August 2006 to ensure that new 2-1-1 call centers and counties served be part of a Statewide coordinated 2-1-1 system. The endorsement process was described in the first and second progress reports and has continued to operate effectively in the two and one half years that have transpired since the process was developed. Michigan 2-1-1 continues to work toward developing a central routing system, but like the Commission, Michigan 2-1-1 cannot require community resource referral entities in all counties to apply for 2-1-1 designation. Nonetheless, progress has been made toward a fully integrated system, as demonstrated by the subsequent information in this report.

Organizational Development

Michigan 2-1-1 was incorporated on August 19, 2004 and was incorporated as a wholly owned subsidiary of the Michigan Association of United Ways in August 2006. Three members were added to the Michigan 2-1-1 Board in November 2007 (see board roster, attached hereto as Exhibit 1). During 2008, the Michigan 2-1-1 Board of Directors focused on the identification of near and long-term strategic initiatives, including: statewide availability of 2-1-1, evaluation of 2-1-1 impact, sustainable funding, a two-year technology plan and the establishment of a user-friendly Michigan 2-1-1 website. With statewide coverage and sustainable funding as its priorities, the Board is refreshing the Michigan 2-1-1 Business Plan to include resources from the private sector. Michigan 2-1-1 Board members have each taken leadership roles in this work. All Michigan 2-1-1 Call Centers are now fully accredited by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS), the national accrediting body, with the last four call centers reaching this benchmark in 2008. This comprehensive and rigorous process serves to ensure quality service provision for Michiganders.

In 2008, Michigan 2-1-1 Call Center's call volume increased to 546,119 calls, an increase of 163,359 calls over 2007. In 2006, Michigan 2-1-1 established the Michigan 2-1-1 Operating Council and statewide system development taskforces to oversee and enhance the day-to day operations of Michigan 2-1-1 Call Centers. (See below).

Michigan 2-1-1 Operating Council

The Michigan 2-1-1 Operating Council was established in August 2006 by the Michigan 2-1-1 Board according to the Michigan 2-1-1 Business Plan. Comprised of Call Center directors representing identified regional call centers and representatives of the Resource Managers Workgroup, the Council addresses the day-to-day operations of Michigan's 2-1-1 system. Their

initial focus was on identifying processes for the collection and sharing of statewide data, emergency preparedness, and consistent call center operations. The Operating Council works collaboratively on statewide information and referral access programs such as Mentor Michigan (chaired by First Gentleman Dan Mulhern), Earned Income Tax Credit (in collaboration with the Department of Human Services) and Mortgage Foreclosure Assistance (in collaboration with the Statewide Mortgage Foreclosure Taskforce) and, in the fall of 2008, the Michigan Participation Project (in collaboration with the Michigan Nonprofit Association), designed to provide assistance to the public about voter registration, polling locations, transportation to the polls and resources about potential challenges facing voters.

Resource Managers Workgroup

The Resource Managers Workgroup is comprised of Resource Managers from 2-1-1 Call Centers, comprehensive and specialized I & Rs, has met monthly for over four years and receives oversight from the Michigan 2-1-1 Operating Council. Its mission is to ensure the quality of Michigan's resource databases, standardize taxonomy indexing, prioritize the scope of records, standardize record structure and content, develop and implement a standardization process that meets defined quality assurance criteria practices as outlined by MI-AIRS and AIRS, support and network with fellow resource managers. The Workgroup continued to make progress toward its mission in 2008 and has also provided capacity to other MI 2-1-1 workgroups.

After-Hours Taskforce

This Taskforce is charged to look at after-hours 2-1-1 service delivery, as it relates to implementation of the Michigan 2-1-1 Business Plan. Currently, the Taskforce is in the process

of establishing quality assurance benchmarks and tools for after-hours providers. Serving on the Taskforce are representatives from 2-1-1 Call Centers and Crisis Call Centers.

Statewide Database Project & Taskforce

The Statewide Database Project transitioned last year to a collaboration that includes Dow Chemical Corporation. Dow Chemical Corporation committed to leveraging their vendor partners to provide database and telecommunication support to Michigan 2-1-1, beginning with a five-county 2-1-1 Call Center to be based in Midland. Following the launch of this call center and an ample evaluation period, it is planned that the technology piloted in Midland will be made available to all Michigan 2-1-1 Call Centers, providing a statewide database and telecommunications backbone. Over the past year, a software platform has been developed and is currently in the testing phase at the Midland Regional Call Center, which is slated to launch 2-1-1 in 2009. The new platform incorporates newer technologies such as text messaging and online chat with Michigan 2-1-1 Call Specialists. Additionally, a call routing system will be piloted for the Midland Regional Call Center. Following its evaluation, this call routing system can be made available to Michigan 2-1-1 Call Centers as resources are made available.

Emergency Preparedness Taskforce

Comprised of representatives from the Michigan Department of Community Health and Michigan State Police, AT&T, and Michigan 2-1-1 Regional Call Center directors, this group is looking at ways that the Michigan 2-1-1 system can be used during times of disaster and emergency. The Taskforce is developing statewide 2-1-1 protocols which identify the use of 2-1-1 in an emergency or disaster. In 2007, Michigan 2-1-1 was identified in the Michigan State Police Emergency Public Information Plan as providing the call center function. CALL 2-1-1,

located in Muskegon, was called into service for the provision of emergency information during the flooding emergency in Mason County in March, 2008. Local Emergency Management officials utilized and publicized 2-1-1 as the number for the public to call for information on road closures and emergency shelters, freeing up Central Dispatch to focus on police, fire, medical, and other emergencies.

Two of Michigan's largest 2-1-1 Call Centers (Kent County and Southeastern Michigan), established and tested mutual aid agreements to ensure 2-1-1 availability in times of emergency or disaster.

A subcommittee of the Emergency Preparedness Taskforce has focused on the ability of special populations to access 2-1-1 day-to-day and in emergencies. During 2008, the group focused on access to 2-1-1 by people that are deaf or hard of hearing. Several technologies were identified ranging from continued use of the TTY required to be available in each 2-1-1 Call Center, to Video Relay Services (VRS) to a specialized software platform that would enable calls to Michigan 2-1-1 Call Centers via text.

Statewide Data Collection Workgroup

Work continues on development of a process for the collection and reporting of Statewide 2-1-1 data is the charge of this group. The purpose is to identify, for a larger audience, the needs and unmet needs of Michigan 2-1-1 callers. Common data elements utilized by each 2-1-1 Call Center have been identified and standardized.

2-1-1 AVAILABILITY

2-1-1 availability is expanding and building out according to the statewide system defined within the Michigan 2-1-1 Business Plan. In 2008, expansion of 2-1-1 service occurred

for St. Joseph County through Hands On Battle Creek, located in Calhoun County and for Lenawee County, through Central Michigan 2-1-1, located in Jackson. Central Michigan 2-1-1 also assumed responsibility for 2-1-1 services to Livingston County. United Way for Southeastern Michigan's 2-1-1, located in Detroit, assumed responsibility for 2-1-1 services delivery to Monroe and Washtenaw Counties in 2008. The changes reduced the number of Michigan 2-1-1 Call Centers to seven. Looking forward, local financial commitments are in place to continue 2-1-1 expansion in 2009 according to the Michigan 2-1-1 Business Plan. Expansion to the following counties is planned for 2009: Allegan, Manistee, Branch, Berrien, Cass, Van Buren, Genesee, Midland, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, and Gratiot. An eighth and final regional call center will be launched, located in Midland, to serve five of the aforementioned counties, with future expansion to counties in northeast Michigan. Counties that have established workgroups for the implementation of 2-1-1 in 2010 include Newaygo, Lake, Osceola, Mecosta, Wexford, Saginaw, and Grand Traverse. Following the 2009 expansions, 2-1-1 service will be available to over 82% of Michigan's population.

Cell phone access to 2-1-1 continues to be available to callers utilizing the following providers: Verizon Wireless, Alltel, T-Mobile, Nextel/Sprint, AT&T/Cingular, and Centennial Wireless, significantly expanding the reach of 2-1-1. Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) connectivity is also available through Charter Telephone, Comcast Telephone, Vonage and other providers.

FUNDING

Michigan 2-1-1 will continue to seek funding from all available sources, both public and private, in order to meet its goal of building sustained and predictable funding for the entire 2-1-1 system. Local 2-1-1 call center investment combined with central operations in 2008 was

\$4,100,000. Michigan 2-1-1 central coordination made up \$214,000 of this total statewide investment. Michigan 2-1-1 continues to make every effort to obtain funding for its operations from a multitude of private and public sources, including local government agencies. Moreover, there are currently 40 local United Ways that provide funding for the statewide operation of Michigan 2-1-1 through Michigan Association of United Ways membership dues. All 2-1-1 agencies support statewide operations with in-kind support through significant staff time, travel cost, and other contributions.

The Michigan Association of United Ways (MAUW) continues to support statewide coordination of 2-1-1 since universal 2-1-1 access is a strategic directive of MAUW's membership and Board of Directors. In addition to funding the Michigan 2-1-1 Director position, MAUW supports efforts to align 2-1-1 with publicly funded health and human services and to garner private as well as public funding.

Department of Human Services Budget

Section 307 of Public Act 248 of 2008 provides:

Sec. 307

- (1) Of the money appropriated in part 1 for demonstration projects, \$ 200,000.00 shall be distributed as provided in subsection (2). The amount distributed under this subsection shall not exceed 50% of the total operating expenses of the program described in subsection (2), with the remaining 50% paid by local United Way organizations and other nonprofit organizations and foundations.
- (2) Money distributed under subsection (1) shall be distributed to Michigan 2-1-1, a nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of this state that is exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the internal revenue code, 26 USC 501(c)(3), and whose mission is to coordinate and support a statewide 2-1-1 system. Michigan 2-1-1 shall use the money only to fulfill the Michigan 2-1-1 business plan adopted by Michigan 2-1-1 in January 2005.[sic]
- (3) Michigan 2-1-1 shall report annually to the department and the house and senate standing committees with primary jurisdiction over matters relating

to human services and telecommunications on 2-1-1 system performance, including, but not limited to, call volume by community health and human service needs and unmet needs identified through caller data and customer satisfaction metrics.

This Department of Human Services demonstration project was successfully completed during 2008. For 2009, the DHS budget amount was doubled, to \$200,000, from the amount budgeted for FY 2008 (Act 131 of 2007).

Accordingly, the Commission's concern about the continued funding uncertainty for Michigan 2-1-1 and the reliance on State funding has, with regard to the DHS demonstration projects, been addressed. However, in keeping with its commitment to explore all sources of potential funding, Michigan 2-1-1 is making great strides to secure funding from the private sector. (See "Private Sector Funding, *infra.*)

The Legislature has ensured, by the language quoted above, that local United Way organizations and other nonprofit organizations and foundations will provide at least 50% of the funding for these demonstration projects. With regard to the annual operating budget of Michigan 2-1-1, all sources of potential funding will continue to be explored in 2009.

Michigan 2-1-1 Demonstration Project

Michigan 2-1-1, in partnership with the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) and Community Actions Agencies throughout Michigan promoted 2-1-1 as a tool for providing information about the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program, the preparation of tax forms at no cost, and the creation of volunteer opportunities related to the preparation of EITC forms. The Earned Income Tax Credit Program is intended to return dollars to those individuals who are "low-income" according to Federal Guidelines. Money returned to taxpayers can then be used to address critical needs and issues that individuals/families may be experiencing.

Millions of these federal dollars have gone unclaimed and more importantly, not spent in our communities because low-income Michigan wage earners have not made application for them. Many of these wage earners have no knowledge of the Earned Income Tax Program and are not aware if they are eligible for EITC assistance including free tax preparation services. 2-1-1 callers were prescreened by Michigan 2-1-1 Call Specialists for eligibility for the EITC. The outcome of the 2-1-1 demonstration project is that individuals accessing these additional resources to address their own individual needs will become more self sufficient as they spend those resources within the community.

Michigan 2-1-1 collaborated with the Accounting Aid Society (AAS), American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Statewide Earned Income Tax Credit Coalition, Community Action Agencies and other local resources to populate the Michigan 2-1-1 databases with up-to-date, accurate information about the availability of tax preparation sites for low-income Michigan wage earners. Updates on these tax preparation sites were provided daily to the call centers during the tax preparation season. Four hundred seventy-four tax preparation sites were maintained within the 2-1-1 database with details on location, hours of operation, etc. A toll-free number to access EITC information through a 2-1-1 Call Center was used by unserved counties.

DHS and the Bureau of Community Action and Economic Opportunity collaborated with Michigan 2-1-1 to promote 2-1-1. Central Michigan 2-1-1, serving Ingham, Eaton, Clinton, Hillsdale and Jackson Counties, in partnership with Capitol Area United Way and their local CAA marketed tax help through 2-1-1 via billboards, radio and television public awareness campaigns. This resulted in a much stronger partnership among these agencies. Utilizing the

formal DHS channels of communication (L-Letter) increased knowledge of 2-1-1 as a resource for low-income wage-earners.

Michigan 2-1-1 developed EITC call handling protocols as well as EITC call specialist training. The call training was uploaded to the Michigan 2-1-1 / Michigan AIRS Training Website for use by Michigan 2-1-1 Call Specialists. It included information about the EITC as well as the Child Tax and Home Heating Credit. Following the training, Call Specialists were required to take a test. Fifty-seven call center staff participated in training and passed the test with an average score of 92.5%. In addition, information regarding the Economic Stimulus packages was provided to all call centers.

Data was collected on every 2-1-1 caller seeking or provided with information about EITC. Monthly data reports include information on the number of callers requesting EITC volunteer information, zip codes of these callers and the name of the agency (ies) in which the caller was referred. Following is some of that data:

Number of EITC Callers referred to free tax assistance sites	9,417
Gender of callers	Male – 3,184, Female -5,789, Did not disclose - 444
Tax preparation volunteer inquires/referrals	115
Unmet needs (could not be referred)	142
Unmet need reasons (top 3)	Over income, service unavailable, registration full
Referral source (top 3)	Repeat caller, family / friend, DHS/ agency
Estimated income returned to Michigan families	\$6,788,477*

Few callers requested information about volunteering to become trained to assist low-income wage earners with tax preparation. Though volunteer opportunities are listed in 2-1-1 databases, the pilot began too late in the tax season to train volunteers. It would appear that the

best time to recruit and train volunteers for these opportunities is in the fall. Michigan 2-1-1 will take this into account in the EITC project slated for 2009.

In addition to providing information and pre-screening for the Earned Income Tax Credit to those requesting that information, Michigan 2-1-1 Call Specialists offered EITC prescreening and information to all callers requesting financial or basic needs assistance.

Michigan 2-1-1 Call Specialists were able to provide information to callers regarding the Economic Stimulus Rebate beyond the scope of this demonstration project.

Follow up with a percentage of callers within 7 to 10 days of 2-1-1 contact is a standard which all Michigan 2-1-1 Call Centers adhere. Satisfaction with 2-1-1 services and the results of referrals made by 2-1-1 are documented during these follow up calls. Callers enjoy high customer satisfaction rankings with 2-1-1, with 96.76% reporting their experience as good or excellent.

If just 80% of the callers followed through with an application, using the 2006 average EITC return of \$1,057, then \$6,788,477 would have come back to Michiganders through this project

Fewer than 200 unmet needs were recorded by Michigan 2-1-1 Call Specialists. These unmet needs peaked at 120 during the month of April, when the free tax assistance sites had few, if any appointments available or were closed for the season.

Federal Funding

As noted in the 2007 progress report, potential future funding through the proposed Calling for 2-1-1 Act requires a statewide coordinating body, like Michigan 2-1-1. Although the Calling for 2-1-1 Act of 2007 did not become law, *the Calling for 2-1-1 Act of 2009* (HR 211/S 211), was introduced by Representative Anna Eshoo (D-CA) and Senator

Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) in the 111th Congress.

It authorizes \$150 million for years one and two and \$100 million for years three through five through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to help implement and sustain 2-1-1 nationwide. Original bill co-sponsors from Michigan include Senators Levin and Stabenow.

Private Sector Funding

Michigan 2-1-1 is working with various private sector entities to expand 2-1-1 into unserved areas. One private entity has committed to investing in the statewide build-out of 2-1-1 service delivery. Over each of the next three years, it is planned that \$100,000 be made available to develop and implement 2-1-1. Additionally, United Way for Southeastern Michigan's 2-1-1 and DTE Energy are piloting a fee-for-service program whereby 2-1-1 assists in the mitigation of lost revenues. This pilot is underwritten by DTE Energy and holds promise as a model that could be adopted by other parts of Michigan.

The Michigan 2-1-1 Board of Directors is working to refresh the Michigan 2-1-1 Business Plan to reflect a greater focus on partnering with the private sector to invest in 2-1-1.

CONCLUSION

The Michigan 2-1-1 board of directors believes it has made substantial progress toward reaching the goals identified in its January 2006 Business Plan, including securing sustained and predictable funding and making 2-1-1 service as ubiquitous as 911 and 411. In addition, Michigan 2-1-1 continues to work toward a central routing system, as evidenced by the Statewide Database Project, which will provide the basis for a statewide telecommunications routing system. By coordinating all 2-1-1 operations in the State, Michigan 2-1-1 is proving it

can facilitate cost efficiencies on the local level so that all of Michigan's residents can gain improved access to health and human services through abbreviated three digit dialing. One significant example of the benefit of 2-1-1 services is the provision of information about the availability of the Earned Income Tax Credit. Michigan 2-1-1 looks forward to continued success in achieving its goals.

Respectfully submitted,

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MICHIGAN 2-1-1 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Per Michigan 2-1-1 bylaws:

(a) Elected directors shall be elected to three (3) year terms, except in the first election of Michigan 2-1-1 directors when one third (1/3) of the directors shall be elected to one (1) year terms, one third of the directors shall be elected to two (2) year terms, and one third of the directors shall be elected to three (3) year terms.

(b) Except for non-voting directors and the permanent directors, directors are limited to serving two (2) consecutive full three (3) year terms.

Name	Organization	Term of Office October - September	Role
Peter Amar	Fox Farm Consulting, Otsego Community Foundation, Otsego/Cheboygan Com. Collaborative	2007 - 2010	Member
Scott Dzurka	Michigan Association of United Ways	Permanent member	Secretary / Treasurer
Jennifer Heston	Fraser, Trebilcock, Davis & Dunlap, P.C.	2006-2009	President
Jonathon Mead	UPCAP	2006-2009	Member
Doug Plant	United Way for Southeastern Michigan	2007-2010	Member
William Pell	Gryphon Place	2007-2010*	Member
Christine Robere	United Way of the Lakeshore	2007-2010	Member
Ken Toll	United Way of Jackson County	2006-2009	Vice-President
Darrell Zavitz	Dow Chemical	2007-2010	Member
John Zimmerman	Retired	2006-2009	Past President

*end of second consecutive full three year term

Election and Term of Office. The officers of Michigan 2-1-1 shall be elected annually by the Board of Directors at its annual meeting. If the election of officers shall not be held at such meeting, such election shall be held as soon thereafter as conveniently may be held. Each officer shall hold office from the close of the annual meeting for a term of one year, or until a qualified successor is elected upon expiration of the term of that officer, or until that officer's death, or until that officer shall resign or shall have been removed in the manner hereinafter provided.