



P.O. Box 10950 ♦ Tallahassee, FL 32302-2950
Administration 850.617.6348 ♦ Fax 850.561.3443
Hotline 2-1-1 or 850.617.6333
www.211bigbend.org

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Sheila Horne at (850) 617-6323
or shorne@211BigBend.org

2-1-1 Big Bend to Celebrate National 2-1-1 Week

TALLAHASSEE – 2-1-1 Big Bend, Inc., along with hundreds of 2-1-1 centers across the U.S. will celebrate National 2-1-1 Week February 6-11. 2-1-1 Big Bend staff and board members are canvassing the community with yard signs and 2-1-1 promotional materials to increase awareness of this valuable service. By calling the 2-1-1 three digit number, residents can access highly-trained counselors for free, confidential help related to human service information, referrals and counseling. Helpline 2-1-1 also serves as the suicide prevention hotline in the Big Bend region.

“A call to 2-1-1 can be someone’s first call for help or a last resort,” said 2-1-1 Big Bend Board of Directors Chair Allison Harrell. “We connect people to helpful services before their situation becomes a crisis, and provide counseling and crisis support whenever needed. This organization makes a direct, positive impact on our community each and every day, 24 hours a day. It is truly a community safety net that saves lives.”

There is an ongoing national effort to provide 2-1-1 services to everyone. Currently, 242 agencies serve over 260 million Americans (87% of the entire population) covering all or part of 50 states including Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico. Canadian 2-1-1 development is also underway with twelve 2-1-1 centers.

2-1-1 Big Bend, a United Way Agency, is a gateway for area residents who need help with everything from paying their utility bill to finding legal aid to getting help with parenting stresses. This one-stop clearinghouse saves time and money by connecting people with the most appropriate service based on their needs. Nearly 600 organizations and 1100 human service programs are cataloged in the extensive 2-1-1 Big Bend database. More than 31,000 referrals were provided in 2011. Plus, nearly 13,000 visitors searched the 2-1-1 Big Bend online resource directory last year.

“Our skilled counselors and information management team combine efforts to help callers, human service providers and community leaders” said 2-1-1 Big Bend President Randy Nicklaus, who has led the agency since 1985. “By offering referrals, providing crisis interventions and sharing our resources with local human service groups, we accomplish our mission and make this a better community for all.”

Each year, 2-1-1 Big Bend works with projects and networks that target new and emerging needs. During the past two years the agency worked with two specialized, short-term hotline projects - one to help military families and the second to assist people struggling with the stress and mental health anguish from the Gulf Coast oil spill. This year, the agency is collaborating with groups targeting parenting support, youth mentoring, the Cold Night Shelter and ongoing initiatives such as tax preparation assistance and disaster response.

2-1-1 Big Bend answers more than 40,000 calls each year through its five hotline programs. The regional Helpline 2-1-1 program assists about 2,000 callers each month. Thousands of people have sought help for unemployment, utilities, food, housing and mental health concerns. Anyone can dial 2-1-1 in the eight-county Big Bend area to talk with someone when it may be difficult to talk to friends or family. So look for the yard signs popping up around town to remind all to call 2-1-1. For more information about 2-1-1 Big Bend or to access the on-line database, visit www.211BigBend.org.
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