



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **2-1-1 Service Expands to Monroe and Owen Counties**

2-1-1 service will soon be available to residents of Monroe and Owen Counties. The launch of this new service will be announced at the Monroe County Commissioner's meeting Monday, November 20<sup>th</sup> at 9 a.m. During the meeting State Representative Peggy Welch will make the first call to the new local 2-1-1 center.

2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember three-digit dialing system (similar to 9-1-1 and 4-1-1) that makes a simple but critical connection between people seeking services and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies. Part of a national initiative, 2-1-1 is a cost-effective answer to help Indiana residents navigate the complex and changing human service system. It provides quick access to health and human services, encourages prevention, and fosters self-sufficiency.

The 2-1-1 service is available in Monroe and Owen Counties through a unique collaboration among Area 10 Agency on Aging, United Way of Monroe County, and Indiana 211 Partnership. Trained and certified staff at Area 10 will manage the referral database and answer the calls.

"We have been working toward this day for nearly five years," said Jewel Echelbarger of Area 10 Agency on Aging. "2-1-1 will provide accurate information for callers to navigate a system of health and human services that often can seem confusing and complicated."

Barry Lessow, Executive Director of United Way of Monroe County, added "The main benefit of 2-1-1 is providing local residents, especially those in need, with the best possible information. Certified call center staff are knowledgeable about the delivery system at each local agency, and will ensure that callers receive the right information for their specific circumstance. Another important benefit is that data about the types of calls that come to 2-1-1 can help leaders plan effective community solutions."

As the 2-1-1 service launches, it is imperative that information be comprehensive and up-to-date. Echelbarger commented, "We welcome input from human and social service agencies in Monroe and Owen Counties. They can simply visit our web site at [www.211infolink.org](http://www.211infolink.org) to verify their information in

our referral database.” The 2-1-1 web site for Monroe and Owen Counties, [www.211infolink.org](http://www.211infolink.org), is accessible to the public and in the coming months will be upgraded to a fully searchable database.

“We are still testing the lines to make sure 2-1-1 works from all types of telephones. Please be patient with us as we ramp up to provide the highest quality 2-1-1 service—remember that it took over 25 years for 9-1-1 to be universal,” said Lucinda Nord of Indiana 211 Partnership.

2-1-1 was first launched by United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta in 1997, and has grown to serve 193 million Americans - over 65% of the US population; there are 210 active 2-1-1 systems covering among 41 states and the District of Columbia.

Today 76% of Hoosiers can access human services information by calling 2-1-1 to find answers. The 2-1-1 service will eventually be available statewide, but is now operational in fourteen centers serving 62 counties. (See [www.in211.org](http://www.in211.org) for map of coverage.)

Indiana 211 Partnership, Inc. (IN211) is supported by Duke Energy (formerly Cinergy Foundation), United Ways and other grants and contributions. IN211 has representation from the human service information field throughout the state.

Area 10 Agency on Aging is a nonprofit agency that provides programs and in-home services enabling frail elderly to continue living at home, information and assistance, caregiver support, and fitness and health programs at the Endwright Center. Area 10 can be reached at 812-876-3383 or [www.bloomington.in.us/~area10](http://www.bloomington.in.us/~area10).

United Way of Monroe County is a nonprofit organization that improves people’s lives by addressing critical needs today and working to reduce those needs tomorrow. Through its Community Care Fund, it allocates resources to 27 member agencies that address the most pressing human service needs in Monroe County. United Way can be reached at 812-334-8370 or [www.monroeunitedway.org](http://www.monroeunitedway.org).

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