



FILED
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
OAKLAND

2015 OCT 15 PM 2:30

AGENDA REPORT

TO: Sabrina B. Landreth
City Administrator

FROM: Sara Bedford
Director, Human Services

SUBJECT: 2015-2017 Eden I & R
Grant Agreement for
2-1-1 Telephone Line Services
Supplemental Report

DATE: October 15, 2015

City Administrator Approval

Date:

10/15/15

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator To Execute A Grant Agreement With Eden Information & Referral Inc., For The Provision Of 2-1-1 Telephone Line Services For Information And Referral Services In The Amount Of \$100,000 Each Year For Fiscal Year 2015-2016 And Fiscal Year 2016-2017.

REASON FOR SUPPLEMENTAL

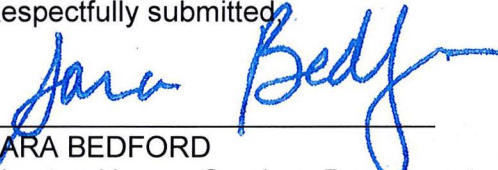
At the October 13, 2015 Life Enrichment Committee meeting, staff was asked to provide a supplemental report containing additional information from Eden I & R regarding challenges and problems that create barriers for providing 2-1-1 services to all callers, including the number of calls that do not go well, how often this happens and what happens when it does not go well? The requested information is provided in the attached Eden I & R response (**Attachment A**).

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt the proposed resolution authorizing the City Administrator to execute a grant agreement with Eden Information & Referral Inc., for the provision of 2-1-1 Telephone Line Services for Information and Referral services in the amount of \$100,000 each year for fiscal year 2015-2016 and 2016-2017.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Estelle Clemons, Alameda County-Oakland Community Action Partnership (AC-OCAP) Manager at 510-238-3597.

Respectfully submitted,



SARA BEDFORD
Director, Human Services Department

Prepared by: Estelle Clemons, AC-OCAP Manager

Attachment A 2-1-1 Supplemental Information

Item: _____
City Council
October 20, 2015

ATTACHEMENT A



October 14, 2015

TO: Clemons, Estelle [mailto:EClemons@oaklandnet.com]
FROM: Barbara Bernstein
Subject: Eden I&R/211 Life Enrichment Committee Meeting (10/13/15) Response

Dear Life Enrichment Committee Members:

During the Life Enrichment Committee meeting several questions were asked about the 2-1-1 phone line. Please find the response below:

1. Number of calls dropped

Eden I&R's phone system recorded that during FY2014-15 (July 2014-June 2015) the 2-1-1 Resource Specialists were unable to answer 12,058 calls. These are not "dropped calls" but calls that went unanswered. This is an ongoing problem. We have more calls than we have Resource Specialists to answer those calls. We do, however, handle OVER 100,000 calls annually, and as a reminder, over 50% of the in-county calls come from the city of Oakland.

2. Average hold time

According to our phone system, the average call wait time is 53 seconds. This average covers weekday shifts where we could have up to 10 Resource Specialists on duty as well as weekend shifts with only 2 phone line specialists and grave yard shifts with only one person on duty.

Also, call lengths are varied and they determine how often Resource Specialists are available for the next call. For example, if the caller only wants a phone number, that call can be less than a minute. The other extreme example is a recent initial 4 hour call that started in Oakland and involved two cities, and government departments over a period of several days. *This call is summarized below.

In general, our experience is that when people are in crisis, they do not stay on hold for even a minute. Unfortunately we have no way of determining how many of the people who don't wait on hold call us back. We can only track the over 100,000 calls that we do handle.

3. Total number of feedback calls over last fiscal cycle 14-15.

2-1-1 callers are asked by the Resource Specialists if they would like to leave a feedback message. If so, the Specialist transfers them to the feedback message box. Each night, the feedback messages are transcribed and given to the 2-1-1 Manager for review. The 211 Manager has estimated that we receive approximately 100 recordings a year.

4. Number/% of positive feedback vs. Number/% of feedback from callers with concerns.

The 2-1-1 Manager estimates that 80-90% of the messages are positive. The 10-20% of the complaint messages are overwhelmingly about the lack of community-wide resources available to the callers (e.g., primarily affordable housing).

5. Give an overview of type of concerns

Types of complaints are varied and include those involving the lack of resources, inadequate staff assistance, and anger about how they are being treated by the system. For example:

- Callers needing housing are angry that landlords are not accepting Section 8 or no affordable housing units available for immediate occupancy.
- Callers do not want to do a 2-1-1 intake and think this is intrusive and complain of lack of privacy until they learn that 2-1-1 needs to refer callers to landlords and agencies only if they meet the eligibility criteria set forth by those entities, hence the need for an intake.
- Homeless callers get angry when they could not get through to the shelter bed reservation line, and they complain that 2-1-1 gave them the wrong number, or if there were no beds remaining at the time of their call. (NOTE: 2-1-1 is the only agency that calls shelters twice a day to find out about bed availabilities. This information is time sensitive so a call needs to be made during the time recommended).
- Callers often call angry and vent with 2-1-1 about such things as: there is no Section 8 available immediately in Alameda County's Shelter + Care. In such situations callers get abusive or blame the problem of lack of availability to an influx of immigrants, even going the extreme of accusing the 2-1-1 staff, who may have other accents because they are immigrants, for "stealing jobs and using up Section 8."
- If a caller has a complaint about an employee, the 2-1-1 Manager addresses the caller's concerns immediately with the staff person involved and appropriate follow up steps are taken (e.g., additional training, verbal and/or written warnings, etc.). These callers are informed that their issues will be addressed by the Program Manager and that appropriate follow up steps will be taken, along with an apology for their having had a less than satisfactory experience.

6. How has Eden I&R addressed concerns/process for addressing concerns

Eden I&R takes quality control and client feedback very seriously and undertakes several steps to ensure that callers are given the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the services they received. Examples include:

- 77, 729 Callers were asked if they were pleased with the service they received and about the information they were provided. Specifically:
 - *Have you received enough information to help you with your search.* 99.96% said Yes
 - *Was this information better than what you've gotten elsewhere?* 99.94% said Yes
- Callers are encouraged to leave feedback messages at the end of their calls. The Resource Specialists seamlessly transfer the caller to this message recording line.
- Caller can always ask to speak with the 2-1-1 Manager, and a live transfer can take place or a message left for the Manager if she is unavailable at the time of the call.
- Volunteers and Interns at the agency conduct follow up calls with 2-1-1 callers who have given permission to be called back, to ascertain what the caller's experience was like and whether they

would call 2-1-1 again. Should these callers need additional assistance, they are then transferred back to a trained 2-1-1 Resource Specialist.

Also are you working on updating your technology platform?

Eden I&R, as a professional information and referral agency, is a member of regional, statewide and national associations that share updated technology best practices and concerns. Through these vehicles, and others, the agency has been researching and testing a variety of new software systems, for example, that are cloud-based, as well as a variety of “open referral systems”. These technology-based research processes, and discussions, are extremely time-consuming due, in part, to different “experts” recommending very different options/solutions. Our ultimate goal is to provide excellent content/data that can reside anywhere (especially since the “open referral” options are multiple, and changing rapidly). The bottom line, however, is that we must maintain the financial foundation upon which to keep the health, housing and human services data current throughout the year (e.g., over 2,900 health & human service records; over 82,000 housing units). This takes ongoing staff time to vet the changing agency/program data, contact agencies multiple times for responses, code data appropriately, and enter the data quickly so that it’s available to the 2-1-1 Resource Specialists as well as our electronic users (via our web Resource Directory at www.211alamedacounty.org and www.edenir.org)

In addition, new software and/or platforms necessitate staff time for changes in the data format, etc. as well as other costs. For example, after over a year of research and testing it was decided that a particular cloud-based technology was best for the agency. Unfortunately the cost to migrate to this platform has been estimated at close to \$100,000 because we need a housing component, that other I&R’s don’t use, to fully integrate with the rest of our data (e.g., client; human services). In addition there are ongoing costs, annually, once we move to this new technology, and since our funding sources (e.g., the cities) continue to fund 2-1-1 at the same rate each year, we do not have the additional financial resources at this time to upgrade our database systems.

What are other challenges Eden I &R face?

The biggest challenge is funding. We do not have sufficient staff, nor can we keep highly skilled supervisors and managers, due to our very low wages. 85% of Eden I&R’s budget is earmarked for salary and benefits. When additional funding is achieved, salaries are increased. However, each year the agency must request (and go through the processes) of requesting operational funds for 2-1-1 from each city (14), various county departments, individual foundations, and corporations. It is extremely time-consuming for multiple staff members since meetings and RFPs for each of these entities is quite overwhelming. Since 2-1-1 has become integrated into the fabric of the safety net system we are hopeful that multi-year contracts can become the norm in the near future since people in need, and their advocates (e.g., city employees and elected officials) call 2-1-1 every day for basic needs (e.g., shelter/housing, food, clothing, medical assistance, etc.).

In terms of additional challenges to 2-1-1, in Oakland specifically, there is a growing influx of new residents that has resulted in higher rents and a very low vacancy rate for existing units. These issues force low income families into greater and greater instability. Increasingly, the calls to 2-1-1 are highly complex with callers needing referrals in multiple areas of their lives: Housing, Food, Health Care, Mental Health, Legal Aid, etc. These calls require a high level of training, familiarity with local resources, and longer calls.

Oakland is also a destination for a large number of formerly incarcerated people. They face even greater challenges in finding housing due to their criminal records. Their return to families also increases the strain on those families due to limited financial resources. These individuals leave prison without marketable skills. Mental health issues are very common. Eden I&R is working closely with the Re-Entry collaborations that have formed to directly serve these men and women, along with their advocates.

The diverse at-risk populations in Oakland require the type of cultural awareness and linguistic skills that 2-1-1 brings to each call, 24/7. We have seen a spike in “crisis calls” as well where victims of domestic violence, and undocumented immigrants, for example, do not want to call government agencies. We have many example of calls that demonstrate the extreme length of calls, the partnership with police when appropriate, and the number of staff needed to avert a personal disaster from escalating (e.g., suicide; homicide).

Remember too that 2-1-1 becomes the “go-to number” during a disaster, freeing up 9-1-1 to focus on life-threatening calls only. The agency staff members participate with city and county representatives during multiple drills every year making sure that our data is exchanged seamlessly, and the public is receiving consistent and accurate information during turbulent times.

Because the city of Oakland provides over 50% of our in-county callers (FY2015= **49,668 Oakland callers**), the other 13 cities have stated that they want to see Oakland contribute additional funding before they will increase their financial support. Therefore, we are receiving stagnant financial support from the other cities (e.g., Hayward: \$50,000; Berkeley: \$35,000; San Leandro: \$25,000).

The current fiscal year’s budget for 2-1-1 is just under \$2 million dollars for a 24/7, multilingual communication system that not only serves over 100,000 callers annually, but also provides updated resource information via the web serving many more thousands of people electronically. The actual cost to any city and/or government department for a service like 2-1-1 would be far higher than our agency’s 24/7 budget.

2-1-1 has proven itself to be responsive, comprehensive, holistic, and collaborative. The agency and its programs are not perfect. Mistakes are made and addressed immediately. We welcome feedback from the public, both positive and negative. We are proud of what we have accomplished in a relatively short period of time (2-1-1 launched in 2007), with extremely dedicated and hard-working staff, and with limited financial resources.

We look forward to working with the city of Oakland elected officials, commissioners/committee members, department staff, CBOs, businesses, the general public, but most important vulnerable populations as we continue to strive toward being as “perfect” as possible.

Should you need any additional data, or have any additional concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. As a reminder, our very comprehensive 2-1-1 Monthly Reports can be accessed on our website at any time. Thank you all for your ongoing partnership and support.

Barbara Bernstein
Eden I&R Executive Director
510-537-2710, ext.8
bbernstein@edenir.org
www.211alamedacounty.org; www.edenir.org

***Synopsis of initial October 8th 4 hour call that extended to: October 9th 7 calls, October 12th 1 call, October 13th 2 calls, October 14th 3 calls.**

2-1-1 received a call from a female caller who was receiving death threats on her phone. The caller was hysterical when she called 2-1-1 because about a year ago her young son had been killed in Oakland, but not all the suspects had been arrested. The Victims/Witness Assistance Program had helped relocate the caller from Oakland to another city (NOTE: we deliberately are not mentioning this city in Alameda County for confidential reasons). The death threats that this caller had received from a man indicated that the man knew the names of her surviving children and the schools that they attended, as well as the family’s current address... All of which was very frightening and left the caller dreading the loss of

another child. 2-1-1 asked the caller if she had contacted the other city's PD or Sheriff's Dept., and was informed that she had not and she needed help doing so. 2-1-1 helped her connect to the Sheriff's Dept. and the Oakland PD where her son had been killed. 2-1-1 also helped the caller connect to the children's schools and the other city's USD so that they were alerted to potential safety issues. Upon receiving the threats the caller had immediately collected her children from school, but was afraid to return home with them.

Because the caller had relocated to the other city from Oakland when her son had been killed with the assistance of the Victim/Witness Assistance Program through the Alameda County District Attorney's Office a few months ago, 2-1-1 contacted the DA's office and helped conference the caller with DDA Chris C. who was handling her son's case. He asked the caller if she was aware that some of the suspects in her son's case had court hearings coming up, and she indicated she did not know this. The caller informed the DDA that she had been attending the court proceedings but stopped because the suspects had made death threats in the courtroom, and even with the Sheriff Deputies being present she had been very fearful. The caller asked if she could be relocated out of state as she had lost another close family member shortly before her son was killed and did not have family support locally but had a distance cousin out of state. The DDA said that the Victims/ Witness Assistance Program would have to be contacted for that. 2-1-1 informed the DDA that they would assist the caller with connecting to the program, which they did.

The caller followed through with contacting the Alameda County Sheriff's Dept. and she said they have been patrolling her neighborhood several times daily which has benefitted her family's peace of mind. The caller is awaiting a call back from the Victims/Witness Assistance program to see if her request to move of state has been approved. In the meantime she was advised by law enforcement to start packing, so that she can quickly relocate once her request is approved.

Since the caller has been through a great emotional upheaval, 2-1-1 referred the caller for trauma related counseling; as well as for financial assistance to help her purchase packing supplies for her move.