



## **United Way launches text messaging service to expand 2-1-1's Access to Information**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Kokomo, IN, June 30, 2016/Press Release/ The United Way of Howard County's 2-1-1 information and referral center is a lifeline for the community. 2-1-1 is an accredited service that was designed as a one-stop shop for residents in Howard, Tipton, Miami, Clinton and Cass counties to seek information concerning job training, educational resources, housing and food assistance, services for veterans. And during disasters, 2-1-1 becomes a central hub, providing information on how to give and get help.

As the 2-1-1 motto says, "One call. One search. One visit. Tons of information." But now, the motto can add "One text" as the United Way of Howard County launches a text messaging service in cooperation with two other Indiana 2-1-1 Centers. By texting your zip code to TXT211 (898-211), residents can start a conversation with a trained 2-1-1 call specialist between the hours of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday – Friday.

Currently texting is being provided through one statewide hub. Three Indiana centers are participating: Connect 2 Help, Northwest Indiana Community Action, 2-1-1 United Way of Howard County, who serve 56 counties in this first pilot program of its kind. September 1 the remaining Indiana Centers will join the service hub and texting will be available to the entire state. The ability to provide this service is largely due to a statewide database cooperative and standardized training. The statewide database is funded by the State of Indiana.

"The text message feature is one more way Indiana 2-1-1 is engaging the community and responding to rapidly growing need," said Cheryl Graham, the United Way of Howard County 2-1-1 Director. "Oftentimes, residents find it difficult to place a call, so sending/receiving a text message allows them to save important addresses, hours and telephone numbers in the message of the text. United Way 2-1-1 has always been a

one-stop resource for obtaining information and referrals to thousands of state and local health and human service programs. Now, accessing help is faster and easier than ever.”

Calls to the 2-1-1 information and referral system have grown each year. In 2015, 15,080 contacts to 2-1-1 were made by residents with a Howard County zip code, and another 4,101 were made from the counties of Cass, Clinton Miami and Tipton. Of those, 44 percent were first-time callers and 705 were first-time web users. Of those, 61 percent said their issue was resolved and 90 percent of users said they would call again if needed.

For more information, call 2-1-1 or visit [www.unitedwayhoco.org](http://www.unitedwayhoco.org) or browse our database: <http://www.referweb.net/uwhc/>.

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