2-1-1 of Ottawa County provides callers with a comprehensive human services Information and Referral (I&R) system. By dialing 2-1-1, callers avoid the inconvenience of calling many different agencies without receiving any answers or help. With 2-1-1, callers can obtain the most up-to-date information about how they may access the assistance they need.

**Our Mission** — “2-1-1 of Ottawa County empowers people to make informed choices by offering accurate information and referrals and is committed to improving the quality of life by improving the flow of human services in the community”.

Ottawa 2-1-1 staff are available to give presentations to local community groups, human resource staff of local companies, or any other groups hoping to learn more about 2-1-1 and the services offered. Call (616) 935-1298 to schedule a time.

For more information about Information & Referral and the 2-1-1 initiative in Michigan and nationwide, please visit these websites.

- [www.airs.org](http://www.airs.org)  
  Alliance of Information and Referral Systems
- [www.211.org](http://www.211.org)  
  Information about 2-1-1 around North America
- [www.comnet.org/miairs/](http://www.comnet.org/miairs/)  
  Michigan - Alliance of Information and Referral Systems

**A COMMUNITY RESPONDS** –

When Hurricane Katrina finally exited, many families from the affected south found themselves in communities a long way from their homes. According to Sindee Maxwell, Executive Director of the Ottawa County Chapter of the American Red Cross, by the end of September, their agency had opened 25 cases and provided emergency assistance to 60 evacuees in Ottawa County alone.

Ten percent of all calls to Ottawa 2-1-1 during the month of September were from evacuees, their family members, or friends. 2-1-1 also received calls from those individuals who wished to offer time, financial resources or material goods.

Requests for assistance included: knowing where to apply for social services such as food stamps and cash assistance, how to access state unemployment insurance in Louisiana, where to obtain car repairs, baby food and clothing, and needed prescription and medical assistance. Offers for help included: those who required immunizations to travel to the affected areas, those wishing to obtain training from the Red Cross and offers of clothing, food, personal hygiene items and housing. During this period, 2-1-1 served as the clearinghouse for individuals or organizations wishing to provide vacant housing in the community.

In some cases, callers were connected with 2-1-1 call centers in Texas and Louisiana for information on local resources serving family members and friends in those areas.

_Senator Elizabeth Dole speaks as a lead sponsor of the Calling for 2-1-1 Act, which would support states with federal funding to implement 2-1-1 nationally. She said recently, “As we have seen in the devastated areas of our Gulf Coast, efficient communication is critical to overcoming a crisis. Installing 2-1-1 nationally would
provide just that—a well-organized service where anyone offering volunteer assistance or in need of community services can turn, where they will find the answers they need.”

**Data Reports** - 2-1-1 of Ottawa County gathers data from each caller. Based on this data, 2-1-1 identifies various elements including call volumes, service requests and unmet needs for the reporting period. 2-1-1 provides a countywide "snapshot" of real time needs as they occur. The data that is collected assists community leaders and planners with their efforts to develop creative and effective solutions to the presented needs. For more information on how Ottawa 2-1-1 data has been utilized to assist with identification of community needs and to link to additional reports, please visit our webpage at [http://www.hope.edu/admin/frost/community_resources/OttawaCounty211.htm](http://www.hope.edu/admin/frost/community_resources/OttawaCounty211.htm).

**Call Volume** - For the period July 1, 2005 through September 30, 2005 a total of 2,433 calls were received. 2,223 of those calls were from Ottawa County callers.

![2005 Third Quarter Call Volume Increase](chart.png)

Ottawa 2-1-1 saw a 20% rise in total call volume from last year's third quarter period; 10% were due to September's Hurricane Katrina relief calls. Requests for utility assistance also rose, contributing to the overall period increase.

**Information and Referral** -

2-1-1 of Ottawa County provides callers with both information and referral services. Information giving is the process of providing basic information, such as an agency name, phone number, address, or directions in response to a caller’s direct request. Making a referral requires assessing the needs, identifying appropriate resources, assessing eligibility and providing detailed information on an organization’s application procedures and contact information.
82% of calls to 2-1-1 this quarter contained one or more Referrals. 18% were requests for Information Only.

Ottawa County Calls By City
Total Third Quarter Calls - 2223

*Other represents those calls received by 2-1-1 of Ottawa County from the Ferrysburg, Conklin, Jamestown, Grandville, and Grand Rapids areas within Ottawa County.

Service Requests – A service request is one request for health and human service assistance made by a caller to 2-1-1; one caller may make multiple requests. There were 152 requests for utility bill payment assistance during the second quarter of 2005. The third quarter has seen an almost thirty percent increase in need with 192 requests for assistance paying gas, electric, water and heating fuel bills. Most of these households have already had some type of utility shut-off or notice of pending disconnect.
Unmet Needs – An unmet need is a request for a service that cannot be referred. Reasons for unmet services include callers not meeting income requirements, callers not meeting service criteria, callers having received prior assistance, no resources currently available in the community or the service does not exist. Local Bus Transit unmet needs are most often due to the caller living outside the service area.

Unmet Needs - Third Quarter 2005
Total Ottawa County Unmet - 270

2-1-1 of Ottawa County Resource Information Highlights

As the holidays approach, many families are wondering where they can locate resources that offer Thanksgiving Meals, Christmas Toys, Food Baskets, and Christmas
Meals for themselves, their children, friends and neighbors. Many Ottawa County agencies have established programs that assist low income families and individuals by providing various types of holiday assistance. Dialing 2-1-1 can link those in need with the most appropriate program serving their specific area. Cell phone users dial 888-353-6717.

Up-To-Date Resources – 2-1-1 of Ottawa County’s primary objective remains “The Right Referral the First Time”. Service information, eligibility criteria and program contacts change on a regular basis. 2-1-1 of Ottawa County works actively with community agencies to understand admission criteria in order to offer more than simple “directory assistance” to callers. It is the cooperative efforts of local agencies that assist 2-1-1 in maintaining current records on the 1200 programs listed in our system.

Agencies wishing to list their programs and services with 2-1-1, must meet specific Inclusion/Exclusion criteria. The criteria are available to the general public and to agencies wishing to list their services with 2-1-1 of Ottawa County. Anyone may request a copy by contacting Sue Boes @ 616-935-1298.

Questions or comments regarding this report may be directed to 2-1-1 of Ottawa County at 211ottawa@tds.net or by contacting Sue Boes at (616) 935-1298.