

Help is on the line

New Orleans, LA

September 2005: Tired, overwhelmed and plagued with the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, Catherine, a 75-year-old New Orleans resident, was just beginning to grasp the destruction when she realized the storm had taken even more than she thought possible. Her cousin and only living relative, Daisy, had been evacuated from her nursing home to a shelter. Catherine had no idea where to find her cousin. Despite two weeks of frantically searching, she continuously came up empty handed.



Every hour of every day, someone in the United States needs essential services or help during a time of crisis. 2-1-1 – which currently serves 75% of the American population – is an easy-to-remember telephone number that connects people with important community services.

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2-1-1 offers access to food banks, natural disaster assistance, support groups, rent assistance programs, children’s health insurance programs, job training, education programs, adult day care and volunteer opportunities, to name a few.

Catherine received a flyer containing information about 2-1-1. Left with little hope, she picked up the phone and dialed the three digit number. Omar, a call specialist from 2-1-1 Info in Portland, Oregon, was in the Monroe, Louisiana call center when the call came in.

“I could tell that she was crying as she explained her desperate search to me,” he said. After taking down all of the necessary information, Omar searched the databases for Daisy. “She’s staying in a shelter in Baton Rouge,” he told Catherine. He gave her the name of the shelter and phone number where she could reach Daisy. With this information, Catherine was finally able to get in touch with Daisy. She was thankful beyond words.

Catherine and Daisy’s experience is one of many success stories that emerged from the 2-1-1 Call Center during the 2005 hurricanes. Thanks to 2-1-1, people were rescued from rooftops, evacuees were able to obtain life sustaining medications, and families, like Catherine’s were reunited. 2-1-1 was essential to many during this time of disaster and continues to be a source of aid and hope every day to people throughout the country seeking help fulfilling their health and human services needs.

To find out if 2-1-1 is available in your area, log onto www.211.org.