

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **United Way of Southwestern PA, partners expands PA 2-1-1 Southwest** *Referral services now accessible in all of Pennsylvania*

Pittsburgh, Pa. (DATE) — United Way of Southwestern PA is pleased to release several new announcements about its PA 2-1-1 Southwest resource service and helpline. By collaborating with local agencies, funders and counties, 2-1-1 services will now be available to more Pennsylvanians in new and more accessible ways. The goal is to increase contacts to 2-1-1, over 75,000 in the 2016 calendar year, by 10% this coming year.

United Way of Southwestern PA has collaborated with United Way of Pennsylvania, United Way of Erie, United Way of Venango County, the United Fund of Warren County, along with other counties, agencies and organizations, to expand 2-1-1 into the Northwest region starting on May 23, 2017. The Northwest region of Pennsylvania was the only region in the state not covered by 2-1-1 until now.

"United Way of Southwestern PA is pleased to partner with United Way of Pennsylvania and the Northwest 2-1-1 coalition to bring 2-1-1 services to counties in the northwest region for the first time, moving us closer to connecting all of our state's residents to valuable health & human services resource referrals," said Angela Reynolds, director of 2-1-1 and Helping Families Thrive, United Way of Southwestern PA. "Through 2-1-1, individuals can find support and assistance for housing, utilities, free tax preparation, and more, to help get them back on their feet."

United Way of Southwestern PA also expanded their text and chat services to be available 24/7 in November 2016. Since the launch, text and chat has increased to make up 10% of total 2-1-1 contacts, previously at 2%. Users who reach 2-1-1 by texting their zipcode to 898-211 or chatting online at [pa211sw.org](http://pa211sw.org) will receive a response from a live person around the clock.

"We want to be available to our community during their time of need—no matter what time of day that is or what method they choose to reach out," Reynolds said.

Individuals also have the opportunity to sign up for 2-1-1 text updates, where they send alerts by text about different limited-time services that are available throughout the community, such as summer food for children and utility assistance programs (such as LIHEAP).

24/7 text and chat services have been made possible in part by a \$50,000 grant from Duquesne Light. Another major supporter, Peoples Natural Gas, has made it possible for PA 2-1-1 Southwest to make updates to its data base, tracking software and quality assurance programs. The grants have also allowed 2-1-1 to strengthen operations to provide more holistic support and ensure follow-up calls are made to 2-1-1 callers.

For more information on PA 2-1-1 Southwest, visit [pa211sw.org](http://pa211sw.org).

**About United Way of Southwestern PA** – United Way of Southwestern Pennsylvania, serving Allegheny, Westmoreland, Fayette and Southern Armstrong counties, leads and mobilizes the caring power of individuals, the business community and organizations to help local people in need measurably improve their lives. United Way creates long-lasting change for the betterment of our community.

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