MAXIMIZING COLLABORATION AMONG 2-1-1 SYSTEMS IN THE GREATER WASHINGTON REGION

Submitted to:

**Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington
and the 2-1-1 Work Group**

Submitted by:

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is to:

i. Assess the organizational and political landscape that should be in place so that seamless 2-1-1 cooperation can move forward; and

ii. Present information that enables policymakers to assist in that movement.

Efforts in the Greater Washington region to bring the area into the national 2-1-1 campaign have moved steadily forward since the Federal Communications Commission designated the abbreviated access code for community and social services information and referral agencies in 2000. The District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia have petitions for assignment of the 2-1-1 responsibility drafted and moving towards approval. The diffusion of 2-1-1 dialing systems has the potential to move rapidly once the petitioners in the District, Maryland, and Virginia receive approval.

The region's Information and Referral community has begun discussions regarding the efficacy of a regional approach to 2-1-1 within the Greater Washington region. If closure on their discussions is not reached soon, events occurring at the state level and in the District may preclude a seamless 2-1-1 regional approach. The region faces a choice. While it may seem an easy one - take charge of the region's future or have another entity do so - to accept a regional approach comes with a cost in dollars, time, political and popular will, apprehension, education, and adjustment.

To assist in the discussions underway, and aid in a determination regarding the region's direction on 2-1-1, the Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington launched an initiative in November 2002 to provide training and research designed to maximize collaboration among planning efforts regarding the implementation of 2-1-1. An initial step was establishment of a 2-1-1 Work Group, including some of the major information and referral stakeholders and their allies in the Greater Washington region, funded by a grant from the Washington Grantmakers Community Capacity Fund.

Those groups seeking to influence the parameters of 2-1-1 system design for the region must have a well-conceived game plan for responding quickly to rapidly changing events. To move a regional 2-1-1 campaign forward, the Greater Washington Region needs the following:

1. A common vision;
2. An administrative mechanism;
3. Network capacity-building;
4. Institution-building.

Smaller pieces of that broad landscape include:

1. A common 2-1-1 Work Group vision;
2. A common regional 2-1-1 vision;
3. Enhancements to the 2-1-1 Work Group;
4. Enhancements to the 2-1-1 campaign;
5. Competency and quality leveling;
6. A composite and compatible business plan;
7. A permanent administrative framework;
8. A database collaborative;
9. Financial resources.

Policy Options

PO-1 Agree Upon 2-1-1 Work Group Vision.

The 2-1-1 Work Group needs to agree on all or parts of a 2-1-1 vision through a facilitated group meeting.

PO-2 Assess Public Vision.

An assessment of the public's perceptions of and reasons for regional 2-1-1 usage needs to be completed through usage of subtask forces, focus groups, and/or surveys.

PO-3 Use Common Message and Information Source.

A single source of current information on typical questions such as the status of 2-1-1 in the region, the impact of 2-1-1 on existing I & R agencies, the provision of feedback regarding concerns over 2-1-1, standards in the profession, etc., is needed.

PO-4 Establish Task Force or Expand Work Group.

The Work Group should consider the creation of a task force with representatives of the community of interests surrounding a seamless 2-1-1 system or consider itself for such a role with the suggestion that it incorporate additional members so that more organizational and targeted-populations diversity is accommodated.

PO-5 Create Steamlined Action Committee.

Because of the potential for fast-breaking action on 2-1-1 nationally and in the region, the Work Group should give thought to a permanent committee, or perhaps even staff, to monitor activities, to advance the goals of the 2-1-1 Work Group, to have day-to-day responsibility for maintaining contact with the key 2-1-1 interests in the region, and to mobilize the Work Group and Task Force as needed.

PO-6 Organize National Capital Chapter of AIRS.

The organization of a National Capital AIRS chapter can provide a ready-made and recognized organizational face and ally for the 2-1-1 campaign.

PO-7 Assess Competency of Present System.

An assessment of the regional I & R agency network will help with the effort of capacity-building to reach AIRS database protocol standards, accreditation standards, and certification requirements, and 2-1-1 call center standards.

PO-8 Address Commonalities and Differences in Three Business Plans.

A comparison of the three 2-1-1 business plans developed by the District, Maryland, and Virginia, when they are made public, will move the campaign towards creation of a regional 2-1-1 business plan.

PO-9 Select an Administrative Option.

Work on the administrative framework includes deciding upon a system design option, an administrative governing arrangement, and the degree of integration among the three separate 2-1-1 efforts.

PO-10 Create a Regional Database Collaborative.

A database collaborative will need to be created to negotiate and adopt common database protocols for a regional 2-1-1 system to function.

PO-11 Address Local Financial Needs.

The 2-1-1 Work Group should agree upon a mechanism of cooperative dialogue and support of financing efforts underway within the individual jurisdictions.

PO-12 Address National Financial Needs.

The 2-1-1 Work Group should assist and support national efforts to acquire underwriting of 2-1-1 implementation.

Introduction

At this moment, 2-1-1 for accessing community information and referrals is no more than a sleeping promise to the Greater Washington region, a promise that a single three-digit telephone number will hasten assistance and expand opportunities. Awakening that promise and implementing it is one of the area's first regional challenges of the 21st century. Continuing its slumber means the region will default to the three distinct 2-1-1 systems now emerging in plans for the District, Maryland, and Virginia.

The region faces a choice. While it may seem an easy one – take charge of the region's future or have another entity do so – to manage that future comes with a cost in dollars, time, political and popular will, apprehension, education, and adjustment.

Such a choice will require three disparate sovereign governments, their respective Information and Referral networks, and appropriate allies to take on the additional task of developing a coherent regional system through collaboration among the existing 2-1-1 plans and current I & R arrangements. This I & R service that region-wide was termed "disjointed, complex and random" in an earlier report of this series will become the workhorse of any 2-1-1 implementation regionally.[1] Regional 2-1-1 implementation will require decisions regarding compatible technology, complementary standards, database cooperation, back-up assistance, public partnerships with private and nonprofit organizations, and hundreds of other larger and smaller issues.

The Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington launched an initiative with the goal to maximize collaboration among planning efforts regarding the implementation of 2-1-1, initially convening a 2-1-1 Work Group of some of the major stakeholders to foster the implementation of a seamless information and referral system in the Greater Washington region, funded by a grant from the Washington Grantmakers Community Capacity Fund.

To move a regional 2-1-1 campaign forward, the Greater Washington Region needs a common vision, an administrative mechanism, network capacity-building, and institution building. Smaller pieces of that broad landscape include a common 2-1-1 Work Group vision, a common regional 2-1-1 vision, enhancements to the 2-1-1 Work Group, enhancements to the 2-1-1 campaign, competency and quality leveling, a composite and compatible business plan, a permanent administrative framework, records exchange and maintenance through a database collaborative, and financial resources to instigate a cooperative seamless 2-1-1 system for daily use and for emergency response assistance. To assist the choice, this report assesses the organizational and political landscape surrounding these nine categories, and presents information that enables policy-makers to move coordination forward in the Washington region.

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[1] The transmittal letter of the April 2002 report "Greater Washington Region Information and Referral Scan" concluded that the current information and referral network in the region is "disjointed, complex, and random." Atkins, Patricia, "Greater Washington Region Information and Referral Scan," Washington, D.C.: George Washington University, April 19, 2002.

2-1-1 Is More Than Just A Number

2-1-1 is a universal access number, one of the eight N11 numbers that the Federal Communications Commission has reserved nationally to provide access to specialized information and services. It has been set aside by the Federal Communications Commission for use by community and social services information and referral agencies. In communities where 2-1-1 has been activated, callers reach the closest available system I & R call center, and a trained specialist assesses their need and matches them to the appropriate community service or refers them to a more specialized I & R within the region.

Regions and states with 2-1-1 access have learned that 2-1-1 can be enhanced beyond its basic use as a gateway to community and social services information and referral. Callers soliciting volunteer placement, foundations seeking an assessment on emerging community problems, and youth looking for summer opportunities with employers are enhancement features introduced in other areas. These purposes vary from one 2-1-1 system to another, and within systems from season to season.

I. Initial Round – Policy Options

The diffusion of 2-1-1 dialing systems has the potential to move rapidly once the petitioners in the District, Maryland, and Virginia receive approval. The three jurisdictions will be making decisions that could confer incompatible technologies, standards, data protocols, financing mechanisms, and the like, foreclosing the option of a single seamless 2-1-1 system for the Greater Washington region. Those groups seeking to influence the parameters of 2-1-1 system design within these three jurisdictions so as to weave a seamless regional 2-1-1 system must have a well-conceived game plan for responding quickly to rapidly changing events.

This initial round of policy options (PO) addresses what the 2-1-1 campaign could do to gear up towards that game plan. Borrowing from the catchy 3-1-1 slogan ("Where there's urgency, but no emergency."), this agreed upon strategy can be seen as a Regional Urgency Plan of action rather than "a regional emergency plan" of action. Without a Regional Urgency Plan for 2-1-1, the Work Group may be placed into a reactionary position, less effective in achieving group goals than a pro-active position. There are some immediate steps that the 2-1-1 Work Group should consider taking, so that a pro-active stance can be maintained.

A. Common Expectations and Vision

Successful regional 2-1-1 efforts have spent time being clear about their expectations for 2-1-1 service and in constructing a common vision. Agencies that will be affected by the introduction of the 2-1-1 system need to be at the table together and to have agreement on that regional vision for 2-1-1.

This vision helps participants connect their role in 2-1-1 development with the roles of others, and to appreciate that their solutions to system development problems are critical to the achievement of that common vision. A common vision reduces internal bickering that can mar implementation efforts, and sour the public – citizens, legislators, and the business community – on the 2-1-1 campaign.

"We need a common vision. We need some wonderful soul to stop the present scenario and bring people together," said Deb Alich, Executive Director of the Federation of Virginia Food Banks and member of the Virginia VOAD. "It will need tenacity and patience. This vision needs the right people with ideas and passion who exhibit leadership, selflessness, and teamwork. They need to represent their jurisdictions, express their needs and perspectives freely, but take nothing personally. Let's not continue to run in a thousand different directions when we could accomplish so much more in unity. If we didn't learn that after 9/11, we've learned little at all."

Echoes Tylee Smith, Manager of Information and Referral for the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, and experienced in managing her region's coordinated I & R system, "People have to keep in mind that if we want to be successful, we are going to have to be flexible and open-minded." Dan Williams, Executive Director of the national 2-1-1 campaign, says of this visioning process, "There is not a beginning and an ending. It never stops." Regions make best

use of this community investment when they continually find new ways to employ its capabilities. Over time, it can become a major regional asset.

1. Common Group Vision

PO-1: Agree Upon 2-1-1 Work Group Vision
The 2-1-1 Work Group needs to agree on all or parts of a 2-1-1 vision through a facilitated group meeting.

Information and referral practitioners and interested policy-makers make up the 2-1-1 Work Group[2]. They met recently and devoted a portion of the half-day meeting to a discussion of what the group envisioned as an ideal for 2-1-1 start-up. During their brainstorming segment on this topic, they envisioned a seamless regional 2-1-1 system set to these characteristics.

They suggested that it be user-friendly, be accessible to all in a variety of ways, be pay phone accessible without coin deposit or credit card usage, and be culturally-sensitive, quick, current, accurate, and well-known. They see a system that ensures the confidentiality of callers, alleviates needless suffering, accommodates people in crisis, accepts calls from cell phones, provides the best possible match to a caller's request, and increases civic involvement because people know where to call to get involved. They see a system with adequate funding where callers actually receive service and gaps in services are addressed immediately. This is a system that instills confidence in the social services system. It is a system that is a central component of emergency response and preparedness. It is system with professional standards and a consistent level of quality. It is a system that provides improvement of life for the community. The 2-1-1 Work Group needs to agree on all or parts of a 2-1-1 vision. This would best be accomplished through a half day session through a facilitated group meeting.

2. Common Regional Vision

PO-2: Assess Public Vision.
An assessment of the public's perceptions of and reasons for regional 2-1-1 usage needs to be completed through usage of subtask forces, focus groups, and/or surveys.

PO-3: Use Common Message and Information Source.
A single source of current information on typical questions such as the status of 2-1-1 in the region, the impact of 2-1-1 on existing I & R agencies, the provision of feedback regarding concerns over 2-1-1, standards in the profession, etc., is needed.

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[2] The Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington launched an initiative in November 2002 to provide training and research designed to maximize collaboration among planning efforts regarding the implementation of 2-1-1. An initial step was establishment of a working group of some of the major stakeholders to foster the implementation of a seamless information and referral system in the Greater Washington region, funded by a grant from the Washington Grantmakers Community Capacity Fund. The Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington is made up of the executive directors of 87 of the leading nonprofit organizations in Greater Washington. The Roundtable is a forum for nonprofit advocacy organizations, direct service providers, and grantmakers to work strategically to advance the region's nonprofit sector *as a whole* and to strengthen the sector's collective voice on issues of regional concern.

The participants of the 2-1-1 Work Group have provided some of the first language in the 2-1-1 vision discussion, but not much is known about the public's vision of and for 2-1-1. Nan Waranch, Director of Public Policy and Governmental Affairs for United Way of Central Maryland, has asked what is it about 2-1-1 that will resonate with the public and how it is that they envision 2-1-1. What would encourage them to use 2-1-1? She suggests thinking of the problem as a business start-up venture, where the unknowns include budget, location, costs, attitudes, and perception. She asks, "Well, what sells this product to the public? Maybe it is: access a specialist for free. Maybe it is: what 2-1-1 can do in time of war. Ask people what they want from this system." Business leaders, especially for their capacity to focus on this perspective, and other sectors of the regional community, could be included in the public perception and usage solicitation process.

It is important to gauge the public's knowledge, interest, and level of enthusiasm for 2-1-1. There may be unknown bases of support that can be tapped. Because of the diverse character of the Greater Washington Region and the multiple jurisdictions, there will not be one internally consistent vision of 2-1-1 for the region, and it is additionally important to express this diversity. Prior to launching its Information & Referral service in July 1999, the District of Columbia effort convened focus groups that should be an initial source of information.

Another aspect to the visioning process is maintenance of that vision. A single source of current information on typical questions such as the status of 2-1-1 in the region, the impact of 2-1-1 on existing I & R agencies, the provision of feedback regarding concerns over 2-1-1, standards in the profession, etc., could be helpful. It could facilitate education, interest, and understanding; and be a source of valuable feedback.

The George Washington Institute of Public Policy initiated a discovery process on Information and Referral in the region for the Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington.[3] Many excellent questions were raised by stakeholders. One individual asked in one long breath, "Where are we on 2-1-1 and how do I get my questions answered and how do we sign up?" Through any transition, agencies have worries about whether they will be relevant or expendable. They are concerned about potential changes in routine or the costs of reform. A dependable source of information can reduce the stress of the situation, for affected agencies and for the general public. This FAQs source should include both call-in and web-based access.

B. Appropriate Administrative Mechanism

A mechanism that holds the center of a regional 2-1-1 project together is essential to the success of seamless 2-1-1 service in the region, because three parallel 2-1-1 efforts are on-going in the region. More than the governments of the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia must be linked. Local governments and nonprofits manage the call centers for Information & Referral. A coordinating mechanism is essential and no clear candidate exists.

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[3] Atkins, Patricia, "A Baseline for a Shared Understanding of Information and Referral in the Greater Washington Region," Washington, D.C.: George Washington University, November 14, 2002. Updated January 24, 2003.

The three main governmental actors have initiated these steps. The District of Columbia's Department of Human Services filed a petition for 2-1-1 designation with the D.C. Public Service Commission. The Department continues its dialogue with the D.C. Public Service Commission to refine the details of the plan. Current January 2003 discussions center on technical specifications relating to telephone lines and computer networking. When the petition is approved, the District plans to create a task force to guide the work. A Maryland 2-1-1 Task Force was created that is a public-private collaboration and includes approximately 80 members from throughout the state. This 2-1-1 Task Force petitioned the Maryland Public Service Commission for 2-1-1 designation and a nonprofit agency, the United Way of Central Maryland, offered to serve as the base for 2-1-1 planning in the state. The Public Service Commission gave approval in January 2003 for the Maryland 2-1-1 Task Force to conduct three pilot 2-1-1 efforts in advance of any statewide service. Like Maryland's 211 Task Force, a Virginia 2-1-1 Task Force has been leading the exploration for 2-1-1 statewide, in Virginia under the aegis of the Virginia Alliance of Information and Referral Systems. A petition for statewide designation of 2-1-1 is in the final stages, and will be sent to the State Corporation Commission in February 2003.

Work on 2-1-1 will benefit if the three efforts proceed forward on a similar timetable. Though a national monitoring effort places the work of the three jurisdictions independently at the collaborative stage and assesses that they are poised to move into the negotiation stage, there presently is considerable range in petition status. [4]

Many parts of the area's nonprofit and public communities are already working on pieces of the regional 2-1-1 system and a number of them cross major jurisdictional boundaries and could serve as models for the kind of administrative framework needed to anchor the effort. (See Appendix for listing.) This listing demonstrates that many potential building blocks for an administrative framework are in place.

Moreover, linkages not visible from the organizational listing add a rich source of informal assistance. Efforts are critically interlocked by the multiple roles of I & R leadership in the region. The I & R Collaborative in northern Virginia included representatives from the District and from Maryland when it hosted a meeting introducing the Virginia 2-1-1 coordinator to its local I & R partners. Two individuals on the provisional VOAD in northern Virginia also served on the COG Ad Hoc Task Force on Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness, and one represents an organization that is bi-state plus the District. Thus, though the VOAD territorially includes only northern Virginia, two individuals carry regional insight into the work plan discussions. This networking and sharing, though informal, has enormous benefits for reducing duplication, and is a common feature of the I & R community in the region.

All organizational candidates presently lack certain components that would be useful to a responsible role for seamless 2-1-1 coordination. A regional convening framework should be independent of any one segment of the community, not perceived as linked to any one private, nonprofit or public entity. It should not represent the District, Maryland, or Virginia, but the

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[4] Telecommunications and Information Policy Institute, University of Texas at Austin, "2-1-1 State by State," Austin: University of Texas, August 2002.

Greater Washington Region. It should bring to the table a significant representation of communities of interest from the community, human, and social services information fields, and include linkages to disaster response efforts.

The administrative framework for regional coordination may be one of the hardest aspects of the 2-1-1 effort, if it has parallels to the development of the homeland security preparedness plan for the region. "Our biggest challenge was the regional coordination piece," David Robertson, Interim Executive Director of COG, notes. "9-11 showed us the critical role of first responders which is a local level responsibility. There was a tremendous need for communications among local responders. The local elected officials clearly saw that regional coordination has to be available with a major crisis. The regional angle was the new kid on the block." He continues, "If something is really big, . . . and it's going to be so in a regional crisis, there is a need for regional coordination."

A critical component of that regional coordination is communications – both among leadership and to the public, and consequently it was one of the first elements of the emergency preparedness Ad Hoc Task Force's plan to be implemented. Called the Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS), RICCS received its inaugural trial during the sniper attacks in the region. While first responders have long used an incident command system for emergency communication, emergency preparedness leaders note that such a communications plan for policy leaders had been lacking, making RICCS's development a critical first step for the Ad Hoc Task Force plan.

Recalls David Robertson, Interim Executive Director of the COG, "With the sniper attacks, there was the creation of the same fear, the same panic and the same miscommunication as with 9-11. They were able to use RICCS to respond to the crisis. The police chiefs, the CEOs, and the school superintendents had many communications calls, almost daily conference calls to monitor the latest developments. They got alerts to the meetings on their pagers, e-mails, and cell phones. Chief Moose even said in one of his press conferences that the network had been helpful." David notes that the group did not make decisions for people. It did enable jurisdictions to not get whipsawed by the media and the public. They were able to discuss among one another what their individual actions meant within a regional context. "It pointed up in our mind the value of this tool for regional emergencies and incidents," he said.

The events of 9/11 demonstrate the utility of such a communications tool to the volunteer and donations interests, and potentially to the I & R community. Organizations were independently initiating announcements for volunteers, and any policy centralization to usage of volunteers or to donations collection collapsed under the crisis. Mass referrals of volunteers were not possible. The region learned that the staggering scale of the regional crisis changed the rules of normal communications. RICCS enables specialized interests, such as the school systems in the case of 9/11, to rapidly coordinate and to provide the public with a unified clear message.

The COG wants to continue to work with the human and social services community to improve the Regional Emergency Support Function #15 (See Appendix.) which concerns the volunteers and donations management aspect of emergency response. They would like to see a point-

person or organization emerge from the human and social services community to provide leadership for them on this.

From a 2-1-1 campaign, a focused human and social services assistance could emerge. RICCS now is a proven communications system, a system with a built-in regional communications niche for the volunteer and social services community during emergency response. Selected policymakers have the critical communications hardware and software for successful access and participation in RICCS, as the sniper attacks demonstrated. Funds and organizational leadership are necessary to bring the volunteer and donations community to a similar level of participation.

1. Enhancements to Work Group

> **PO-4: Establish Task Force or Expand Work Group.**
> *The Work Group should consider the creation of a task force with representatives of the community of interests surrounding a seamless 2-1-1 system or consider itself for such a role with the suggestion that it incorporate additional members so that more organizational and targeted-populations diversity is accommodated.*

> **PO-5: Create Streamlined Action Committee**.
> *Because of the potential for fast-breaking action on 2-1-1 nationally and in the region, the Work Group should give thought to a permanent committee, or perhaps even staff, to monitor activities, to advance the goals of the 2-1-1 Work Group, to have day-to-day responsibility for maintaining contact with the key 2-1-1 interests in the region, and to mobilize the Work Group and Task Force as needed.*

The 2-1-1 Work Group should consider the creation of a task force to do the heavy lifting for the Regional Urgency Plan, or consider itself for such a role with the suggestion that it incorporate additional members so that more diversity is accommodated. The region presently does not have an existing group that is both focused directly on regional 2-1-1 implementation and sufficiently large enough to be representative of the regional stakeholders of seamless regional 2-1-1 system development. (See Appendix for a list of some of the nonprofit and public groups in the region that are or likely would be interested in working on pieces of 2-1-1 introduction.)

It might also consider forming a streamlined action committee that can operate on its behalf in conjunction with the Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington to discharge the policy options that are agreed to at meetings or that become incorporated into a Regional Urgency Plan. The Work Group could add additional responsibilities as the campaign progressed. Very careful thought will need to be given to the selection of these individuals, as to their commitment, zeal, experience, and results-oriented work skills.

The task force would include practitioners, allies, users, and supporters of everyday and crisis I & R services in the nonprofit, private, and public sectors. The action committee, because of its small size, could not be as representative, but utmost care would be needed in its crafting.
It is vital that the 2-1-1 Work Group be creative about how best to solicit groups in the three regions to provide input into the 2-1-1 vision for the region. The table for discussion of expectations and vision has to be large and round and accessible, and invariably becomes bigger and rounder as work from vision to service progresses. This was a common refrain among the

many individuals interviewed, that this diversity of interests must get into the same room around the same table, and in a balanced equilibrium. If everyone is not present, a regional team will not solidify. The right people can go out to the community with the 2-1-1 message.

Discussion requires making connections across all kinds of cultures: the military approach of the first responders and the listening approach of the social services, the public culture of governments used to mandates and the private culture of nonprofits whom government can only advise, and the technical and telecommunications specialists concerned about equipment and similar issues and the service creators thinking of the vision for the entire system. Then there are three different I & R cultures in this interstate/District region. The District of Columbia's system is handled by the D.C. government's Department of Human Services, Office of Communication and Public Affairs. Maryland's system is run by the Central Maryland United Way – a nonprofit with a mix of public and private support. Virginia's system is handled by the Department of Social Services in cooperation with six regional partners, but subcontracted to a nonprofit to oversee.

Several respondents remarked that visionaries who will contribute out-of-the-box value should be explicitly included. Without these visionary individuals, the exercise loses much of its meaning.

The list grows longer when the specialized populations with translation and other needs are added to the targeted and the general I & R services. Specialized agencies not affiliated with United Way, target-based I & R agencies, and military I & R require more outreach for inclusion in visioning. These specialized I & Rs, closer to the community, provide a connection and oversight that is essential to a regional system, especially in a region as diverse as greater Washington.

The federal government has a more pervasive role in the Greater Washington region than elsewhere. As the capital region, this region faces greater scrutiny because of Congress' interest – making the stakes higher. Thought should be given to federal involvement.

It is not possible to have absolutely everyone. The strategy used by the Ad Hoc Task Force during the development of the emergency preparedness plan was to find the business groups, the non-profits, and the other stakeholders, and then use the regional networks of those organizations to pass information back and up – the "go to" groups. The Ad Hoc Task Force was hampered when critical interests lacked a regional organization. The "go-to" groups are needed that are representations of the diverse public and organizational cultures involved in I & R provision and 2-1-1 scenarios.

An immediate task of a Streamlined Action Committee or the 2-1-1 Work Group might be to shepherd the region through to agreement upon a vision of a 2-1-1 system appropriate for the Greater Washington region both for everyday use and for emergency cooperation with 3-1-1, 9-1-1, and other regional emergency plans.

Another might be insuring that the 2-1-1 efforts underway in the District, Maryland, and Virginia adopt as many common protocols as possible, such as the accreditation and certification

standards of the Alliance of Information and Referral Agencies and the American Association of Suicidology, the soon-to-be-released database standards from the Alliance of Information and Referral Agencies, a common software such as IRis, and/or the national standards for 2-1-1 Centers.

2. Enhancements to 2-1-1 Campaign

PO-6: Organize National Capital Chapter of AIRS
The organization of a National Capital AIRS chapter can provide a ready-made and recognized organizational face and ally for the 2-1-1 campaign.

Other tools should be in place to give lift to the effort to initiate seamless 2-1-1 assistance in the Greater Washington region. Steps that will bring civic leadership to the effort and that will encourage a professional approach to the endeavor are needed. One mechanism that accomplishes both of these goals would be the creation of a National Capital Alliance of Information and Referral Systems. This approach to strengthen existing I & R systems coordination in the region brings benefits. Public and nonprofit agencies could be provided with access to AIRS standards and training sessions could be scheduled. Access could be expanded through a common regional website that contained links to the I & R websites of the constituent jurisdictions. A fund could be established to undertake joint marketing on the 2-1-1 campaign.

A National Capital AIRS chapter could provide a regional voice in efforts to approach the two state administrations and legislatures, and the District of Columbia, as regards advocacy or coordination efforts. This could include working with the District, Maryland and Virginia to adopt the same AIRS accreditation and data protocol standards. A National Capital AIRS Chapter could work closely with the Streamlined Action Committee.

C. 2-1-1 Network Capacity-Building

Interviews and meeting discussions have shown concerns among individuals regarding the differences in professional operation and technology infrastructure of I & Rs in the region. Some of the smaller, more community-based I & R agencies need guidance and financial assistance to be brought up to the same standards set by the larger regional agencies.

In a handbook produced by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, some of these necessary common tools and standards are cited as follows: meeting accreditation standards, using the Taxonomy of Human Services as the common classification language, acquiring professional certification of information and referral specialists, and meeting I & R standards which cover all aspects of the operation of an I & R agency such as resource file, database management, and cooperative relationships.[5] Current AIRS work includes establishment of

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[5] Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, "2-1-1 Service: Introduction. An introductory guide to implementing 2-1-1 access to information and referral services in the community," Seattle, Washington: Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, 2002.

database protocols. Many of these inconsistencies within the region are treated in a prior report.[6] These differences are so basic that acceptance of a common definition would be a starting point.[7] A shared system of 2-1-1 service delivery is only as strong as its least developed link. Depending upon the procedures adopted within the three 2-1-1 plans currently under development, some of these databases will be linked. Also, some of the specialized I & R agencies may maintain their own records for the benefit of the system, and will need transition funding and professional assistance in capacity-building. They provide intimate connections to and oversight of their target communities and cannot be left behind. When the Atlanta region began its 2-1-1 service implementation, it created a special financing provision to assist in specialized agencies' upgrades.

Efforts should center on instituting the professional guidelines and standards created for information and referral agencies to all information and referral agencies in the network.

Moving the 2-1-1 efforts towards compatible business plans will make eventual accreditation and certification efforts simpler. This becomes another tool of Network-Capacity Building. Only Maryland had a 2-1-1 business plan available to the public at the time of this report.[8]

1. Competency and Quality Leveling

> **PO-7: Assess Competency of Present System**
> *An assessment of the regional I & R agency network will help with the effort of capacity-building to reach AIRS database protocol standards, accreditation standards, and certification requirements, and 2-1-1 call center standards.*

Before work begins on how to get those groups who are not at capacity for professional staffing or technology infrastructure to capacity, a very detailed inventory of the different levels of competency and infrastructure within the region in I & R agencies is needed. When the precise status is known, then the costs of bringing I & Rs to a common standard becomes the next necessary piece of information to the advancement of a regional seamless 2-1-1 system.

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[6] Atkins, Patricia, "A Baseline for a Shared Understanding of Information and Referral in the Greater Washington Region," Washington, D.C.: George Washington University, November 14, 2002. Updated January 24, 2003.

[7] Information and Referral Programs are programs whose primary purpose is to maintain information about human service resources in the community and to link people who need assistance with appropriate services providers and/or to supply descriptive information about the agencies or organizations that offer services. The information and referral process involves establishing contact with the individual, assessing the individual's long and short-term needs, identifying resources to meet those needs, providing a referral to identified resources, and, where appropriate, following up to ensure that the individual's needs have been met.

[8] 2-1-1 Maryland Task Force, "2-1-1 Maryland: Easy Access to Community Resource Information," Baltimore, Md.: 2-1-1 Maryland Task Force, November 2001.

2. A Composite and Compatible Business Plan

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PO-8: Address Commonalities and Differences in Three Business Plans
A comparison of the three 2-1-1 business plans developed by the District, Maryland, and Virginia, will move the campaign towards creation of a regional 2-1-1 business plan.

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The business plans for 2-1-1 within the region provide windows on the comparative priorities for usage of 2-1-1 in the District, Maryland, and Virginia. Only Maryland had a 2-1-1 business plan available to the public, so comparisons cannot be made at this time. The Alliance of Information and Referral Systems has created a 2-1-1 sample business plan that contains the basic features of a 2-1-1 business plan and that might serve as a template for a composite regional business plan.[9]

A significant hurdle to a seamless 2-1-1 effort will be legal and operational integration of the three business plans. The District, Maryland, and Virginia will have jurisdictionally-specific requirements for the elements that appear in a business plan, as well as different legal operating procedures. Reconciling the disparate requirements will require inventiveness and attention. Getting each major jurisdiction's political apparatus to accept a document tailored to the needs of all will require political diplomacy.

Because a business plan must provide detailed components, regional participants ultimately will have to reconcile all the difficult issues of multiple 2-1-1 interface, including, for example database congruence, accreditation issues, services organization, and telephony linkages. Given the events of 9/11, a business plan may want to include information on coordination with the regional emergency networks in addition to the non-emergency network, and with the other N11 numbers such as 311 and 911.

Critical to address in a business plan is also the topic of marketing. Earlier research demonstrated remarkable differences in marketing among existing I & R agencies in the D.C. region.[10] A subtask of the business plan should be to find agreement on a clear and targeted message about 2-1-1. Those interviewed spoke of many necessary messages: that it is not a duplication of service, that it is a true service and not solely an information source, that it will be costly yet ultimately cost-effective. As some I & R policy officials observed, if people and legislators see a choice between funding a direct service and funding only information, they will choose direct service. The effort needs to position itself to show that it is a service, as well as information.

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[9] Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, "2-1-1 Service: Introduction. An introductory guide to implementing 2-1-1 access to information and referral services in the community," Seattle, Washington: Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, 2002.

[10] Atkins, Patricia, "A Baseline for a Shared Understanding of Information and Referral in the Greater Washington Region," Washington, D.C.: George Washington University, November 14, 2002. Updated January 24, 2003.

II. Next Round – Policy Options

A. Institutionalizing 2-1-1

The comprehensive information and referral function is greatly intertwined among a variety of agencies and departments across this region with those relationships spelled out in a mix of agreements, handshakes, memorandums of understanding, and legal contracts. The less these existing ties between states, local jurisdictions, and nonprofits have to be adjusted, the easier will be the work within the political arena. A continuum of administrative arrangements exist for organizing an I & R reform or 2-1-1 campaign. From a citizen-user's perspective, the existence of three 2-1-1 systems is immaterial, if they are cooperating to deliver a seamless system.

Diversity and flexibility will be critical to creating institutional arrangements for a 2-1-1 system to flourish. Regions elsewhere in the country have been adaptable to create diverse negotiated arrangements. The Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services provides to seniors an I & R service called "Just One Call." The Department maintains and updates the information files on agencies specializing in aging needs, comprising about 100 of the 700 agencies in the United Way 2-1-1 I & R database. The County supplies these specialized senior services records to the United Way 2-1-1 database, while the United Way agency remains responsible for updating the information on the 600 other agencies.

1. Permanent Administrative Framework

PO-9: Select an Administrative Option
Work on the administrative framework includes deciding upon a system design option, an administrative governing arrangement, and the degree of integration among the three separate 2-1-1 efforts.

Determining whether an administrative framework should be centralized or decentralized, and its organizational look and content, will require a review of existing legal arrangements, and frank discussions about what each participant wants or needs from an administrative framework. For example, if an interstate agreement is required, the three major jurisdictions have different means and timelines for interstate compacts. In the District of Columbia, the Department of Human Services' General Counsel handles this responsibility; in Maryland, it is the Secretary of State; and in Virginia, it is the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

A major issue here is creation of an administrative governing arrangement that is authoritative enough to resolve disputes and turf battles, soothe past disagreements, and overcome resistance to change, especially without a high-profile crisis in social services delivery to propel the effort. The only situation harder than a crisis for moving public policy forward may be the absence of a crisis.[11] Here are three examples of administrative governing arrangements.

Board or Commission. The region might create or designate a commission or board with responsibility for seamless 2-1-1 coordination. It would be capable of handing the fiduciary

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[11] Peirce, Neal and Curtis Johnson, *Boundary Crossers: Community Leadership for a Global Age*, Washington, D.C.: The James MacGregor Burns Academy of Leadership, 1998.

responsibilities of funding acquisition and management, and the intergovernmental, nonprofit and private sector representation /mediation duties. Moreover it could be terminated when implementation was completed or could be reorganized into an on-going oversight function.

Subsidiary Arm. Another idea is to house the responsibility within a subsidiary arm of an existing agency, but this will identify the 2-1-1 effort with the hosting organization, creating a potential complication. In the informal I & R network, some agency names are discussed as possible heirs to such a role. One is the COG but some believe it is too identified with and beholden to government to represent the interests of the nonprofits involved in I & R. Others would question the National Capitol Region United Way in such a role, for the very same reason, that United Ways in general are too tied to the I & R process and the nonprofit sector. While the local United Way's organizational problems were cited by some of the dozens of individuals interviewed, individuals noted that it was in transition, and that there was much strength in the United Way's relationships and history in the corporate community. While this "subsidiary arm" approach is more to the scale of authority needed, the coordination and costs that are required may make it too much of a burden for any one agency to undertake.

Special District. Because three pre-existing entities in the District, Maryland, and Virginia have legal responsibility for 2-1-1 and are well-along to receiving designation as the responsible 2-1-1 agents, superimposing an entity such as a special regional district or a quasi-governmental corporation may be akin to structuring more governmental authority than is warranted for the needed responsibilities. This kind of agency would require an interstate agreement, and possibly, approval of Congress. Further it may weigh the collaborative too much towards the governmental arena. On the other hand, it makes for an exceptionally strong united regional front in dealing with Annapolis, the District, and Richmond on issues of regional concern.

Selection of a system design model for 2-1-1 delivery is another component of administrative framework. The 2-1-1 systems currently in operation nationally use one of three models: a centralized administration with a single call center, a centralized administration with multiple call centers, or a decentralized administration with multiple call centers. Interstate regions end up with arrangements where training centers might locate in one state, data management with another organization in a different state, and call centers scattered in a number of locations.

A third component of this decision process is to determine the amount of integration of the District, Maryland, and Virginia 2-1-1 systems. Under the seamless 2-1-1 system façade, will there be three distinct 2-1-1 systems, will there be some interface of 2-1-1 effort, or will there be virtually a single 2-1-1 system?

2. A Database Collaborative

> **PO-10: Create a Regional Database Collaborative.**
> *A database collaborative will need to be created to negotiate and adopt common database protocols for a regional 2-1-1 system to function.*

Whether done within state or across the region, coordination or integration of the diverse databases will be the single-most hours-consuming element to 2-1-1 implementation. Northern

Virginia has some experience with database coordination, but their situation does not parallel the regional outlook, because the state of Virginia offered financing to accomplish software and required database compatibility for northern Virginia I & Rs in the statewide system. Out of this came the Data Base Users Group that meets regularly by conference call. Reflective of the financial times, the state had been picking up the conference call bill, but with budget problems each of the data base partners now absorbs part of the cost of the conference call.

The national Alliance of Information and Referral Systems has national database protocols that are due soon and they are working with the American Association of Suicidology. Usage of these protocols as the initial touchstone will be valuable for opening the discussion on this complicated database task, because a common standard will not have to be created from scratch before dialogue can begin. The 2-1-1 Work Group should consider supporting District, Maryland, and Virginia 2-1-1 efforts to adopt this common set of master data transfer protocols.

At a 2-1-1 Work Group meeting, Tylee Smith, Manager, I & R Program, Northern Virginia Regional Commission, suggested the key elements of coordinating a common resource database initiative, including inclusion and exclusion critieria for records, common standards for the data elements, common accessibility and indexing, common database classification system, and coordinated interim updating.[12] As an example of these variations, some privately-run nonprofit I & Rs list for-profit legal or home care services, while publicly-run I & Rs do not. Privately-run I & Rs' records may have bias towards agency principles; public agencies have to be bias-free. Specialized agencies may use the same taxonomy as general agencies, but customize (a taxonomy option) their records more frequently or differently than general agencies. Other negotiation issues are how partners might handle calibration of duplicate listings, discovery of missing resources, or usage of specialized databases. There was also some conversation regarding what are the possible first steps, if database cooperation were to be considered. Those with a national perspective noted that the experience from other regions leads them to the conclusion that the region would want to avoid the challenges of merging disparate databases, and simply rebuild a regional database.

3. Financial Resources

> PO-11: Address Local Financial Needs.
> *The 2-1-1 Work Group should agree upon a mechanism of cooperative dialogue and support of financing efforts underway within the individual jurisdictions.*

> **PO-12: Address National Financial Needs.**
> *The 2-1-1 Work Group should assist and support national efforts to acquire underwriting of 2-1-1 implementation.*

Due to governmental and organizational differences, the District, Maryland, and Virginia do not have the same funding approaches and opportunities at the local level to 2-1-1 or I & R enhancement within their own jurisdictions.

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[12] See also Tylee Smith, "Metro Washington 2-1-1 Combined Services Database, Underlying Assumptions, 1st Draft for Discussion Purposes," October 28, 2002.

Finding analogous means for funding will be a political challenge. Elected officials will need to be able to demonstrate that there is no net financial loss to their jurisdiction and that there is a community benefit; and that out-of-state 2-1-1 or I & R improvement efforts do not receive directly any of their tax dollars.

An example of a possible acceptable arrangement would be for one jurisdiction to finance a call center on its side of the boundary, while another jurisdiction funds a regional I & R training center on its side. With the current downturn in the economy, taxpayers and legislatures both are scrutinizing public expenditures.   More than ever, efforts at raising funding for I & R improvement or 2-1-1 implementation will need to draw upon a well-composed vision and business plan and a well-crafted marketing pitch.

Current assumptions on 2-1-1 funding include campaigns for state legislative imposition of a telephone surcharge in Maryland, departmental funding in the District of Columbia, and legislative appropriations in Virginia for implementation and on-going operational expenses.

Because the three I & R systems presently in place in the major jurisdictions exist at different levels of cooperation and because populations are different-sized (estimates are that $1 to $1.50 per person within a region will need to be raised to cover annual operating costs), the District, Maryland, and Virginia would have different financial needs and funding patterns.

For example northern Virginia has a well-developed cooperative I & R arrangement, but no money exchanges hands among the local jurisdictions that have signed the Northern Virginia Regional Agreement. (See appendix for document.) The state-designated agency, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, like the other five state I & R partners statewide, received initial uniform software through the state, and operational funding from a special appropriation for conversion as well.   There is an annual appropriation and contracting process to continue the state's financial support. When the state system was first set up, the Northern Virginia Regional Commission's pre-existing decentralized I & R system did not follow the state model – the other five regions each have one administrative agency that handles all activity – and they were out of the state system loop initially. The Northern Virginia Regional Commission provides on-going training to its local partners, and absorbs the cost. Only occasionally is there a small fee for more extensive training sessions. For those fee sessions, the Commission opens the event to everyone in the I & R community.

Should 2-1-1 be the chosen course of regional action, costs for all will need to be covered for increased staffing to handle expected increases in call volume, additional training for accreditation and certification, common telephone and computer equipment and upgrades, database connectivity work, and expenses related to infrastructure interface. Many of these expenses will be incurred, irrespective of whether a regional system is pursued, and participants can emphasize only the extra money that will need to be incurred for a regional system, rather than the total fee expected.

At the national level, currently 51 million citizens (18 percent of the population) are covered by 2-1-1 system – at start of 2000 it was only 7 percent. Funding would give significant advance to

the 2-1-1 national campaign, and the national 2-1-1 movement has focused attention upon the resources of the federal government as a means of financial assistance.

The national 2-1-1 coalition fixed the goal of securing $200 million in federal money for the next year for operating costs for local 2-1-1 efforts. To that end, they have on-going efforts on national enabling legislation to put 2-1-1 into dedicated legislative funding streams. The coalition is exploring a parade of federal programs for financial applicability, and working with the client organizations to these federal agencies and programs. These include HUD's CDBG funds or TANF where the job placement capacity of 2-1-1 can be emphasized, Older Americans Act which requires that seniors have access to I & R services, Title XX of the Social Security Act, Child Care, Disaster Preparedness, homelessness (HUD), the Public Health and Bioterrorism Act where 2-1-1 centers are an allowable expenditure - authorized without allocation of funds to date, Homeland Security, CDC, SAMHSA, and the Universal Service Fund.

The 2-1-1 federal funding campaign uses a long list of associations and groups, including associations representing, for example, firefighters, police, paramedics, hospitals, rural health, social workers, and crisis intervention.

The national coalition has spent less time making the case for state funding because of its more time-consuming nature. "Talking points" on features of 2-1-1 that help states find more efficiencies and other 2-1-1 benefits are a possible strategy. Because the national 2-1-1 coalition promised the Federal Communications Commission that the service would be free to the public, state movements to fund 2-1-1 through a surcharge are discouraged by the national coalition.

Conclusion

The District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia have petitions for assignment of the 2-1-1 responsibility moving towards approval, and all are proceeding on a fast timeframe to accomplish implementation within their geographic borders of the three digit 2-1-1 number, the abbreviated telephone access code for community and social services information. The implementation of three separate 2-1-1 systems will fragment the information and referral process for residents of the Greater Washington Region and limit the growth of the service as a regional community asset.

The region faces a choice that quickly must be made. While it may seem an easy one - take charge of the region's future or have another entity do so - to manage that future comes with a significant price tag and workload.

To help with that choice, this report has assessed the organizational and political landscape that should be in place so that seamless 2-1-1 cooperation can move forward; and presented information that enables policymakers to assist in that movement.

Selection of a set of policy options to move forward a campaign for a seamless regional 2-1-1 system should occur soon, if it is to occur. The two states and the District are making decisions that could confer incompatible technologies, financing mechanisms, and other barriers, foreclosing for the foreseeable future the option of a single access point into the regional community and social services provider network.

Appendix

Nonprofit and Public 2-1-1 Efforts

This section contains examples of the types of nonprofit and public communities that are or likely would be interested in working on pieces of the regional 2-1-1 system. Most of the efforts cross the three major jurisdictional boundaries, but several that are wholly contained within the District, Maryland, and Virginia are listed for clarity purposes.

2-1-1 Maryland Task Force

Formed in August 2000, this task force of approximately 80 individuals is a statewide public/private collaboration. It has produced through four committees a number of working papers addressing the structure for a proposed 2-1-1- system, principles to guide the provision of service, guidelines to develop a single statewide database, and governance of the system. Subsequently, the Task Force issued a business plan for the system. It also oversaw the petition for 2-1-1 designation to the Public Service Commission, and has received authority to conduct three 2-1-1 pilot projects.

2-1-1 Work Group

The Nonprofit Roundtable of Greater Washington has convened a 2-1-1 Work Group of some of the major stakeholders in the region to foster the implementation of a seamless 2-1-1 information and referral system in the Greater Washington region, funded by a grant from the Community Capacity Fund. The working group is seen as complementary and supportive of other efforts underway in the region. The group works to facilitate the implementation of a regional 2-1-1 system through networking and training.

Ad Hoc Task Force on Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness

National Capital Regional Emergency Preparedness Council

Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System

Because of the September 11 attack and subsequent anthrax attacks, area leaders decided that the region needed a regional coordination plan to handle potential future regional emergencies. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) was the "big room" to house emergency management interests, and they created the Ad Hoc Task Force on Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness. The Ad Hoc Task Force developed the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan.

One component of the Coordination Plan is Donations and Volunteer Management, cited as regional emergency support function #15 (R-ESF #15). Members of R-ESF #15, who include members from the disaster response community, the business community, and local governments, have numerous responsibilities outlined in the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan. They are a part of the Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS). As dictated by the type of regional incidents, R-ESF #15 members can be reached immediately via multiple channels of contact through RICCS. (RICCS was successfully deployed during the sniper attacks in the Greater Washington Region.) Because the effort

needed a structure with more permanence, the COG Board created the National Capital Regional Emergency Preparedness Council in November 2002. Many of the same people that were on the Ad Hoc Task Force migrated over to the Council. The COG houses the Council. The Council is not a separate 501c3 from COG, but it will have responsibility and oversight for the emergency plan. It will have its own budget and will have to solicit its own funds, and will begin functioning in January 2003.

Grass Roots Organization for the Well-being of Seniors (GROWS)

This network is the sole entry that has no current links to the 2-1-1 efforts in the region. It is included in the listing, because it is typical of the multiple networking layers that any 2-1-1 campaign will need to tap. Parallel to general I & R interjurisdictional coordination, specialized I & R services have developed informal cross boundary means of exchanging information and networking.   Grass Roots Organization for the Well-being of Seniors, a not-for-profit coalition that meets meets 10 months out of the year, serves only Montgomery County. However, an affiliated listserve, ProAging Email Network that is directed to senior-serving professionals and I & Rs, covers the entire D.C. region, plus Baltimore and Howard County.

I & R 211 Collaborative

The Northern Virginia Regional Commission hosted the first meeting of the I & R 211 Collaborative.   Under the invitation of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, 2-1-1 peers from around the region convened because of their common involvement in their jurisdiction's 2-1-1 effort and to be introduced to the newly-hired Virginia 2-1-1 coordinator. The group has had a couple additional meetings, was invited to a taxomony training session sponsored by the Regional Commission, and communicates among one another through a listserve, and presently operates as an informal group.

Northern Virginia I & R Work Group

Conducted through the oversight of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, the Northern Virginia I & R Work Group is composed of the directors or designated representatives of its full and limited partners plus one representative of each Northern Virginia city that does not provide a formal I&R service and opts to participate. The I & R Work Group meets at least quarterly to facilitate regional collaboration on I & R programs. Both public and nonprofit agencies are participants in the group.

Northern Virginia Provisional Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster

State-level chapters of Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) exist in the District, Maryland, and Virginia. The northern Virginia VOAD community has proposed that a local chapter be formed, filing a letter of intent with the Virginia VOAD to form a northern Virginia chapter. The convening group held an initial meeting of approximately thirty northern Virginia agencies including Boys and Girls Clubs, homeless shelter organizations, and domestic violence groups. Those in attendance agreed to support the Northern Virginia Provisional Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster while the formal proposal moves through approval channels.

Office of National Capital Region Coordination

This office was authorized by the Homeland Security Act of 2002. The Office of National Capital Region Coordination establishes a single Federal point of contact within the new federal Department of Homeland Security (DHS). It coordinates the activities of the DHS affecting the Nation's Capital, and acts as a one-stop shop through which state, local, and regional authorities can look for access to the plans and preparedness activities of the numerous other Federal agencies and entities in the region. This office is to be the vehicle used by the Federal entities in the area to receive information and input from the state, local, and regional level in the development of the Federal Government's planning efforts.

Virginia Alliance of Information & Referral Systems 2-1-1 Task Force

The Virginia Alliance of Information & Referral Systems is the 2-1-1 petition holder, but actual work is subcontracted to the Council of Community Services in Roanoke. The Council of Community Services anticipates that they will have the petition for 2-1-1 service provision submitted to the Virginia State Corporation Commission by the end of January 2003.

Virginia Database Users Group

In the early 1990s, Virginia's six regional I & R centers agreed upon a common software and common set of data. Because the state was providing funds on condition that the databases work together, the group had an incentive to reach agreement. The group created the Data Base Users Group that meets by conference call. The state used to pick up the conference call bill, but with state budget problems, members now each absorb part of that cost.

United Way of the National Capital Area

The national United Way of America is one of the original petitioners to the Federal Communications Commission for designation of 2-1-1 as an abbreviated access code to community information and referral services. The local chapter, the United Way of the National Capital Area, has helped handle post-9/11 proposals such as for the September 11th Fund in the region, and some of the grant proposals have the potential to build I & R capacity, and thus 2-1-1 capacity, for the region.

Northern Virginia Regional Agreement on Information & Referral

PREAMBLE

The Human Service Officials of the Cities of Alexandria and Falls Church; the Counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William; and the Human Services Division of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission enter into this agreement to provide for a collaborative regional system of comprehensive information and referral (I&R) services in Northern Virginia. All signatories to the agreement are full partners in the Northern Virginia I&R Network and shall be known collectively as the Northern Virginia I&R Network.

This agreement is also established to provide for regional cooperation with Virginia's Statewide I&R system and other appropriate systems.

DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this agreement, the following definitions will apply:

"Information and Referral (I&R)" means activities that include the systematic collection and maintenance of data about all private not-for-profit and public direct human services agencies, programs and services in a community; and providing information and appropriate referrals to the public without prejudice. I&R includes helping inquirers assess their needs and following up with certain inquirers. It is free and confidential.

"Full Partner Agency" means the I&R service as designated by the jurisdictional Human Service Official with full responsibility for I&R activities as described in this agreement. Full Partner Agencies receive all benefits as may be available through this regional agreement.

"Limited Partner Agency" means a public or a private non-profit agency that enters into an agreement with the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, approved by the Northern Virginia Human Services Officials committee, to support one or more components of the Northern Virginia I&R activities, either data maintenance or data dissemination, or both.

"Northern Virginia I&R Work Group" is composed of the directors or designated representatives of the full and limited partner I&R services plus one representative of each Northern Virginia city that does not provide a formal I&R service and opts to participate. The I&R Work Group meets at least quarterly to facilitate regional collaboration on I&R programs.

"Verify and reverify" means to initiate contact with a human service provider to check that all its agency and service information is accurate and complete. Information may be added, deleted, or corrected as a part of this review.

"Update" means to record or amend information about human service agencies that currently may or may not be in the network database as this information is discovered in day-to-day operations.

"Follow-up" means the process of contacting inquirers or the organizations to which they were referred to determine whether their problems were adequately addressed. Additional assistance to the inquirer in locating or using needed services may be a part of follow-up. Follow-up may also be used to determine if the caller is satisfied with the I&R service.

"2-1-1" is the abbreviated dialing code for free access to health and human services information and referral (I&R), volunteer opportunities and donations of goods and services. The Federal Communications Commission set 2-1-1 aside for use by approved community, regional or statewide I&R services. 2-1-1 is an easy-to-remember and universally recognizable number that makes services easier to access and thus encourages prevention and fosters self-sufficiency.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

1. I&R services should be locally based, where knowledge of the community and the services available is most accurate, and where the information derived from clients and through other needs assessments will be most easily gathered and made available to the officials and agencies responsible for delivery of services.

2. I&R service requests from the public should be received locally, wherever possible, with appropriate coordination between local and regional I&R programs to provide for seamless service.

3. An I&R program in Northern Virginia should be coordinated regionally:

- to acknowledge that many services, especially those offered by private agencies, are provided on a regional basis;
- to facilitate client access to services for which he/she qualifies throughout the region: and
- to facilitate coordination of the Northern Virginia I&R system with Virginia's Statewide I&R system and other appropriate systems.

SCOPE OF SERVICES

The Human Services Information Program of the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC) will:

1. Maintain and verify the Northern Virginia Human Services I&R database in collaboration with local and regional I&R program directors, using the software designated by the Statewide I&R System, currently IRis 3.0;

2. Maintain a regional web site with searchable information derived from the Northern

Virginia human services I&R database, consistent with a web site policy developed with the partner agencies;

3. Maintain and/or contribute to a state web site of such human services information; maintain and/or contribute to a metro area human services web site as financially feasible;

4. Advocate for and represent the interests of Northern Virginia's I&R Network to Virginia's Statewide I&R System and any developing metro DC I&R system, including efforts to establish 2-1-1 as the 3-digit dialing code for accessing human services information and referral;

5. With local and regional I&R program directors, develop standard formats and other methods to facilitate uniform collection of data, as needed;

6. Compile the data provided, and coordinate with other regional human services planning efforts;

7. Refer requests from individuals for program/agency information received at the regional level to the appropriate I&R program;

8. Update the data contained in the Northern Virginia human services I&R database at least monthly, and provide the updated data to each of the partner agencies;

9. Produce custom printed or electronic information on human services upon request from local I&R programs or other appropriate organizations as feasible;

10. Using current verified information, produce an annual Quick Guide for distribution within the region as Statewide I&R System and other contracts allow, and;

11. Provide to each local full partner at least 10 copies of printed Quick Guides and other publications. NVRC may sell remaining copies of all products to recoup any costs not supported through public or other grants.

12. Make the required regional programmatic and other reports to the Statewide I&R System, using the data reported to NVRC by the I&R partner agencies;

13. Enter into agreements with Limited Partner Agencies as are beneficial to the overall success of the Northern Virginia I&R Network, and as are approved by the Northern Virginia Human Service Officials Committee.

14. Through grants received from the Statewide I&R System for this purpose, provide to full partner agencies licensed copies of standard I&R software with technical support, as requested; and access to searchable versions of the database (Directories on Disk or comparable versions) to those not requesting the standard software.

Each I&R Full Partner Agency will:

1. Answer all calls made by the public to the statewide 1-800 I&R phone number from the jurisdiction it serves, transferring calls to other local or Virginia I&R programs, or to local service providers, as necessary to provide the most accurate service referrals;

2. Provide telephone coverage during standard business hours Monday – Friday, offering inquirers the following options for receiving information outside those hours:
   - calling CrisisLink as outlined in the limited partner agreement with CrisisLink;
   - referring to the Quick Guide On-Line or similar regional or local web site; and/or
   - providing a voice mail system to allow inquirers to leave messages for return calls the next working day;

3. Work with local policy-makers and human service officials to plan for effectively implementing 2-1-1 as the 3-digit dialing code for accessing human services information and referral, volunteer opportunities and donations of goods and services, either directly or through partnerships;

4. When I&R software is accepted under this agreement, maintain such software in working order;

5. Maintain up-to-date information on human service resources either by regularly importing the database updates supplied by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission or through their own resources;

6. Name appropriate representatives to participate in the Northern Virginia I&R Work Group to facilitate regional collaboration on I&R programs;

7. Provide to NVRC at any time during the year information on program changes, closings, or additions or on the opening of new agencies known to the partner agency;

8. Participate with NVRC in periodic data verification activities as coordinated through the regional I&R Work Group;

9. Contact a minimum of 3% of referral contacts (10% of Maternal and Child Health referral contacts) to determine the outcome of the referral(s) or provide additional referrals when appropriate;

10. Provide information to NVRC on issues arising in the I&R system that can or should be addressed at the State level through the Statewide I&R System;

11. Forward statistics on their services to NVRC, as required for submission to the Statewide I&R System. These reports will be made in compliance with the Statewide I&R System required forms;

12. Through the Northern Virginia I&R Work Group, review proposed Limited Partner Agency agreements as brought forward by any member agency or NVRC in order to understand the terms of the proposed Limited Partnership and to provide a recommendation to the Northern Virginia Human Service Officials committee regarding acceptance, modification or rejection of the agreement;

13. Through the Northern Virginia I&R Work Group, review proposed changes to this agreement as brought forward by any member agency or NVRC and provide a recommendation to the Northern Virginia Human Service Officials committee regarding acceptance, modification or rejection of the changes;

14. Seek to employ and reward staff who become certified by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems as Information & Referral Specialists or Resource Specialists;

15. Seek to become I&R services accredited by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems.

FUNDING

NVRC will actively seek and receive funding for components of I&R regional activities as available through the Virginia Statewide Information and Referral System. Such support shall include whatever hardware and software resources may be made available under grants or contracts for use by the Partner Agencies in their I&R activities.

In addition, NVRC will actively seek other appropriate sources of funding to support additional I&R activities of value to the region and as identified by the Northern Virginia I&R Work Group.

AMENDMENTS AND CANCELLATION

1. This agreement will be reviewed by all participants at least every three years from the date of its adoption.

2. Any party to this agreement may propose changes to the agreement by submitting the proposed change in writing to the I&R Work Group. Changes must be submitted at least ninety days prior to the intended effective date. Changes must be approved by the Northern Virginia Human Service Officials committee.

3. Any jurisdiction desiring to change the designated Full Partner Agency under this agreement shall notify the Northern Virginia Regional Commission at least sixty days in advance.

4. Any party to this agreement may withdraw with a minimum of sixty days notice to the I&R Work Group and the Northern Virginia Human Service Officials Committee.

SIGNATURES

This agreement is made and entered into this _21st_ day of _November_____, 2002, by and between the undersigned:

_____
G. Mark Gibb
NVRC

_____   _____
Beverly Steele   Brenda Creel
Alexandria   Falls Church

_____   _____
Marsha Allgeier   Robert Chirles
Arlington   Loudoun

_____   _____
Verdia Haywood   A. Keith Sykes
Fairfax   PrinceWilliam

Regional Emergency Support Function #15
Donations and Volunteer Management

Regional Coordinating Organizations
Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Local Coordinating Jurisdictions
Alexandria
Arlington County
Bowie
College Park
District of Columbia
Fairfax
Fairfax County
Falls Church
Frederick County
Gaithersburg
Greenbelt
Loudoun County
Montgomery County
Prince George's County
Prince William County
Rockville
Takoma Park

State Coordinating Agencies
District of Columbia Emergency Management Agency
District of Columbia Commission of National and Community Service
Maryland Emergency Management Agency
Virginia Department of Emergency Management

Federal Coordinating Agencies
Federal Emergency Management Agency Region III–Voluntary Agency Liaison
The American Legion

Regional Coordinating Private and Volunteer Organizations
District of Columbia Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters
Maryland Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters
Virginia Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster
National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters
American Red Cross Washington Metropolitan Consortium
American Red Cross Frederick County Chapter
Greater Washington Board of Trade

I.   Introduction

A.   Purpose

Regional Emergency Support Function (R-ESF) #15—Donations and Volunteer Management, facilitates the communication and coordination among regional jurisdictions and agencies regarding the need for, and availability of, donations and volunteer services before, during, and after a regional incident or regional emergency.

B.   Scope

R-ESF # 15 focuses on activities in response to the disruption of resource availability that would require communication and coordination among regional partners providing donations and/or volunteer support.

1. Communication and coordination concerning donations and volunteer availability and management may be conducted as separate or joint functions, as dictated by the regional incident or regional emergency.

2. R-ESF #15 will work within existing channels of communication to provide an efficient and effective response before, during, and after any regional incident or regional emergency. The system of local volunteer organizations that comprise R-ESF #15 will use existing dissemination methods to inform those involved in the communication and coordination activities. In conjunction with regional agencies and jurisdictions, the lateral communication structure and a series of liaisons will facilitate regional communication and coordination under R-ESF #15.

II.   Policies

A.   R-ESF #15 will not usurp or override the policies of any federal agency, state government, local government, or jurisdiction.

B.   R-ESF #15 will not usurp or override any memoranda of understanding (MOUs) that exist between an organization and any federal agency, state government, local government, or jurisdiction.

C.   Jurisdictions will respect existing contractual agreements so that there will not be competition for resources that are already under contract to a jurisdiction.

D.   The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) will facilitate coordination among member organizations and/or agencies to ensure that R-ESF #15 procedures are maintained and in concert with the stated missions and objectives of the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan (RECP).

E.　　R-ESF #15 will be used to collect information, communicate, and coordinate between regional organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions concerning donations and volunteer management, and to facilitate the coordination of planning, response, and evaluation activities before, during, and after a regional incident or regional emergency.

F.　　The Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System (RICCS) will be used as the communication and coordination system on the regional level among R-ESF #15 members.

G.　　R-ESF #15 organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions will communicate and coordinate information and activities that are within their area of expertise (i.e., unaffiliated volunteers) and within their operational capacity (i.e., warehousing donations).

H.　　Essential Elements of Information (EEIs) will be collected by local organizations, agencies, or jurisdictions and reported through the RICCS.

I.　　As needed, R-ESF #15 will provide a liaison to R-ESF #5.

J.　　R-ESF #15 will collect information regarding donation needs and volunteer availability from regional coordinating organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions through the RICCS.

K.　　There will be close communication and coordination between R-ESF #6—Mass Care, R-ESF #11—Food, and R-ESF #15, as dictated by the regional event.

L.　　Before, during, and after a regional incident or regional emergency, R-ESF #15 will communicate with R-ESF #1—Transportation, R-ESF #3—Public Works and Engineering, R-ESF #5—Information Planning, R-ESF #6—Mass Care, R-ESF #7—Resource Support, R-ESF #11—Food, R-ESF #13—Law Enforcement, and R-ESF #14—Media Relations and Community Outreach, as dictated by the regional event.

M.　　Communication with R-ESF #14—Media Relations and Community Outreach will help coordinate public donations in an effort to reduce redundancy and excess from unsolicited donations and provide information to the public on the need for and "collection" stations of affiliated and unaffiliated volunteers. R-ESF #14 will also assist in channeling unsolicited volunteers to best meet, or balance, the needs of the emergency.

III. Situation

A. Regional Emergency Condition

A regional emergency may result from a significant natural or man-made disaster, a technological emergency, power disruptions, or any other regional emergency that causes extensive damage. A regional emergency could create short, or long-term impacts on resource availability throughout the region, placing a significant demand on R-ESF #15 donations and volunteer resources. Regional emergencies may cause the need for long-term donations assistance across the region, while others may require a quick response. Any regional emergency will require communication of donation needs, volunteer service availability, and the coordination of related R-ESF #15 activities to plan for or provide an efficient and effective regional response.

B. Planning Assumptions

1. Regional communication and coordination activities before, during, and after a regional incident or regional emergency will eliminate redundancy and facilitate an efficient and effective response.

2. Agencies and organizations under R-ESF #15 will perform tasks under their own authority, as applicable, and coordinate these tasks under the RECP.

3. R-ESF #15 public and private organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions will focus on the communication and coordination of donations and volunteer management throughout the region to ensure efficient and effective response before, during, and after a regional incident or regional emergency.

    4. The following emergency conditions may exist:

    - Localized emergency requiring resource supplementation through R-ESF #15;
    - Emergency in two or more jurisdictions;
    - Region-wide emergency of any scale—short-term or long-term;
    - Emergencies specific to certain economic or demographic groups of any scale and of any origin;
    - An emergency related to the public or private availability of food, household supplies, clothing, etc.;
    - Any other condition that would require the emergency transportation or distribution of donations (i.e., food, household supplies, pet supplies, clothing) and/or volunteer services.

5. The size and scope of a regional incident or regional emergency will dictate the duration of R-ESF #15 activities, the relevant EEIs, and the amount of communication and coordination among regional partners necessary to achieve an efficient and effective response to any regional event.

6. Under R-ESF #15, communication and coordination activities for the management of donations and volunteers may be conducted as separate or joint functions, as dictated by the regional incident or regional emergency.

IV. Concept of Coordination

A. General

1. R-ESF #15 members will engage in planning, training, and evaluation activities (e.g. discussions, focus groups) to develop relationships and analyze potential donations and volunteer management issues and methods before, during, and after a regional incident or regional emergency.

2. Before, during, and after a regional incident or regional emergency, the organizations, agencies and jurisdictions that comprise R-ESF #15 will, while executing their respective responsibilities and authorities within their individual operation plans, communicate and coordinate under the RECP.

3. Information will be collected at the local level through existing channels of communication as determined by standard operating procedures and will be relayed to R-ESF #15 through the RICCS.

4. In order to augment existing communication, R-ESF #15 will collect local information regarding donation needs and volunteer availability, and will provide this information to regional organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions through the RICCS.

5. Before, during, and after a regional incident or emergency, R-ESF #15 will provide information for overall situation assessments in order to facilitate communication and coordination among R-ESFs. R-ESF #15 will provide a liaison to R-ESF #5 as needed.

6. As dictated by the regional incident or regional emergency, R-ESF #15 will coordinate donations and volunteer management functions with other R-ESFs. Coordination may include, but is not limited to:

- R-ESF #1—Transportation
  - Coordination of the transportation of donations
  - Coordination of the transportation of volunteers

- R-ESF #3—Public Works and Engineering
  - Coordination of providing potable water to volunteers

- R-ESF #5—Information Planning
  - Coordination and communication with RICCS

- R-ESF #6—Mass Care
  - Coordination of donations for displaced persons within the impacted area
  - Coordination of volunteers, as needed

- R-ESF #7—Resource Support
  - Coordination of incoming resources via donations

- R-ESF #11—Food
  - Coordination of donated food stuffs for impacted areas
  - Coordination of feeding volunteers

- R-ESF #13—Law Enforcement
  - Coordinate security at donations and volunteer management sites

- R-ESF #14—Media Relations and Community Outreach
  - Coordination of message to public regarding donations
  - Coordination of message to public regarding volunteers

B. Organization

Communication and coordination activities for a regional event will begin with notification of an actual or possible implementation of the RECP through the RICCS. Local organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions involved in donations and/or volunteer-related response activities that have been activated under their respective operational plans will form R-ESF #15. R-ESF #15 organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions will utilize the appropriate communication and coordination activities as dictated by the regional event. The lead R-ESF #15 member from an affected jurisdiction is responsible for such actions as facilitating any conference calls.

C. Notification

Upon notification by any jurisdiction of a potential or actual regional incident or regional emergency requiring R-ESF #15 support, the RICCS will notify R-ESF #15 regional organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions

and will establish appropriate communication. If R-ESF #15 members are made aware of a potential or actual regional incident or regional emergency through other sources, they will notify the RICCS. The RICCS will be used to notify the organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions that need to supply a liaison. Communications will be made in accordance with RICCS protocols and in cooperation with R-ESF #2—Communications Infrastructure.

V.   Responsibilities

A.   R-ESF #15 Participating and Supporting Agencies and Organizations

The primary purpose of the R-ESF #15 is to facilitate communication and coordination among jurisdictions and private organizations before, during, and after actual or potential regional emergencies. Local responders are to report emergency events within their jurisdictions to their respective authorities through existing standard operating procedures. Participating R-ESF #15 organizations and/or agencies are responsible for gathering information about where donations and volunteer resources might be needed to supplement a regional emergency response. This information exchange is to be transmitted through the RICCS. EEIs have been determined as the minimum essential information categories to satisfy coordination needs among the R-ESF #15 agencies.

B. Essential Elements of Information

The primary purpose of the RICCS is to facilitate the exchange of information among coordinating agencies during a regional event. EEIs have been determined as the minimum essential elements of information to satisfy coordination needs among the R-ESFs. In the event of a regional incident or regional emergency, R-ESF #15 organizations, agencies, and jurisdictions will be able to exchange EEIs through the RICCS. EEIs include, but are not limited to:
- Status of transportation system and facilities;
- Status of food supply and distribution schedule;
- Location of useable mass care facilities, including shelters and feeding stations;
- Sources of donations;
- Donations needed;
- Availability of medical and first aid support;
- Status of bulk distribution networks;
- Evacuation locations and routes;
- Location of hazardous areas;
- Status of volunteer organizations and health professionals;
- Status of Family Well-Being Inquiry System;
- Estimated time for return to normal operations and for people to return home/work;

- Status of potable water supply;
- Status of communications network;
- Location of the incident or regional emergency;
- Demographics of the area (language and/or cultural barriers);
- Jurisdictions involved;
- Socio-economic impacts;
- Overall priorities (immediate need);
- Status of resources, personnel, and facilities;
- Status of efforts under the local, state, or federal emergency operations plans;
- Credentials and certifications of affiliated and non-affiliated volunteers;
- Volunteer organizations' areas of expertise;
- Liability status of active and potential volunteers;
- Receiving/collection points;
- Security controls;
- Logistical problems;
- Structural areas impacted or out of commission; and
- Prioritization of service/deliveries.

VI. Preparedness Cycle

The Preparedness Cycle is a means of ensuring a high level of readiness for R-ESF #15 and the RECP through continuous improvement in the plans and procedures. The cycle begins with the sound planning practices, followed by training of personnel who will engage in executing those plans. When personnel have been trained, plans and procedures are tested through exercises or simulations designed to check planning assumptions against the scenarios. The performance of the respective organizations is evaluated as a means of refining the plans, and the cycle repeats. R-ESF #15 and COG are responsible for maintaining the preparedness cycle.

A. Planning

The Donations and Volunteer regional clusters, under R-ESF #15, are responsible for coordinating planning under R-ESF #15, including the review and recommending revisions of R-ESF #15. All participating Donations and volunteer management supporting agencies and organizations will contribute, in some capacity, to the planning of R-ESF #15.

B. Training

Ongoing and scheduled training related to RECP and R-ESF #15 responsibilities will be developed and carried out.

C. Exercises

In order for the RECP to be effective, a series of regional simulations and/or exercises will be conducted on a regularly scheduled basis. This exercise series includes of tabletop exercises, functional communications and coordination drills, and field exercises conducted by COG or other organizations

D. Evaluation

In order to ensure continuous improvement in the coordination of donation supplies and resources, and volunteer availability under R-ESF #15 and the RECP, the plans, policies and procedures that support operational proficiency are evaluated through real-world experience and exercises.

E. Corrective Action

Lessons learned from exercises and real world experiences will be captured in a corrective action system and the issues tracked to ensure that they are resolved and incorporated into plan revisions as appropriate.