

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

**Telecommunications Division
Market Structure Branch**

**RESOLUTION T-16821
February 26, 2004**

R E S O L U T I O N

Resolution T-16821. Contra Costa Crisis Center. Request for certification as the 2-1-1 service provider for Contra Costa County.

By Letter to Executive Director dated September 11, 2003.

Summary

This resolution grants Contra Costa Crisis Center the authority to use the 2-1-1 abbreviated dialing code to provide information and referral (I&R) services to all of Contra Costa County. This authority is granted for an indefinite term, and can be contested by letter to the Executive Director or by formal application to the Commission.

Background

2-1-1 is the national abbreviated dialing code designated by the Federal Communications Commission to be used to phone non-emergency community I&R providers. Upon dialing 2-1-1, a caller will be routed to a referral service and then to an agency that can provide information concerning social services such as housing assistance, programs to assist with utility bills, food assistance and other less urgent situations not currently addressed by either 911 or 311 services. On January 23, 2002, the California Public Utilities Commission (Commission) instituted Rulemaking (R.) 02-01-025 into the implementation of 2-1-1 dialing in the State of California. In Decision (D.) 03-02-029, the Commission adopted regulatory policies and procedures to implement 2-1-1 dialing.

Included among these policies were guidelines and procedures whereby the Commission can certify I&R providers as eligible to purchase network telephone service that will enable them to receive calls from those who dial 2-1-1. Most of the procedures for I&R providers to follow in requesting authority to use the 2-1-1 dialing code are contained in D.03-02-029's Ordering Paragraph 2, quoted below:

2. Information and Referral (I&R) providers seeking authority to provide 2-1-1 service or to establish Regional Technical Centers for routing 2-1-1 calls to I&R service providers in California shall submit a letter to the Executive Director of the Commission approximately nine months before they plan to commence service. The letter shall contain the information detailed in the Service Provider Application Package in Appendix A, shall include a service rollout plan, and shall demonstrate compliance with the guidelines contained in Appendix A to this decision, along with letters of endorsement from community groups as described in Appendix A. The I&R providers shall serve this application letter on the parties to this proceeding on the same day as its submission to the Commission. The Commission shall publish a notice of this letter in its Daily Calendar. We establish a milestone of six months from the initial filing of this application letter for action by the Commission via a resolution resolving any issues. This application letter should be served on the appropriate incumbent local exchange carriers and on all parties to this proceeding.

On September 11, 2003, Contra Costa Crisis Center sent to the Commission's Executive Director a complete copy of its application letter¹ requesting certification as the 2-1-1 service provider in Contra Costa County, as well as a copy with information Contra Costa Crisis Center considered confidential redacted. On the same date, Contra Costa Crisis Center sent to the service list for R.02-01-025 redacted copies of its application letter.

Notice/Protests

Contra Costa Crisis Center states that it mailed a copy of its application letter to SBC Communications as well as to the service list for R.02-01-025, which includes the appropriate incumbent local exchange carriers. The Telecommunications Division published notice of Contra Costa Crisis Center's application letter in the Commission Daily Calendars on December 9 through December 15, 2003. Written comments on Contra Costa Crisis Center's application letter were received from California Alliance of Information and Referral Services, Inc. (CAIRS), supporting the request of Contra Costa Crisis Center to use the 2-1-1 dialing code in Contra Costa County.

¹ The terms "application letter" and "application" used herein mean the package of materials the prospective I&R provider files with the Commission by letter to the Executive Director, as specified in D.03-02-029, and are not a formal application to the Commission as described in the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure.

Discussion

The application prescribed by D.03-02-029 for potential I&R providers is divided into four major sections. The first section elicits information on the I&R provider's organization, its structure, its background, and experience.

Contra Costa Crisis Center is a non-profit corporation, incorporated in California on January 7, 1969. The documents Contra Costa Crisis Center included to support this categorization are its articles of incorporation, including amendments, and letters from the Internal Revenue Service. Its location is 307 Lennon Lane, Walnut Creek, CA 94598. The contact person is John Bateson, Executive Director, (925) 939-1916.

Contra Costa Crisis Center's application states that since 1963, it has been an integral part of Contra Costa County's health and human service delivery network and it is widely recognized among hospitals, churches, businesses, government offices, and community based organizations as the most respected source of accurate, up-to-date, information and referral for health and human services. The types of specialized programs Contra Costa Crisis Center provides directly, according to its application, are: 24-hour crisis, suicide, grief, homeless, child abuse and elder abuse hotlines, as well as a school violence tipline. It provides individual and group counseling to children, teens and adults mourning the death of a loved one. The crisis center also provides an array of services to homeless people. Additionally, Contra Costa Crisis Center provides information and referral to hundreds of other specialized providers of human services in Contra Costa County. It manages and maintains Contra Costa CORD (County Online Resource Database). This is Contra Costa's County's central database of human services, used by all county offices and the vast majority of community-based organizations.

Furthermore, the Crisis Center plays a fundamental role in preparing local agencies to respond in the event of an emergency through its administration of the local CARD (Collaborating Agencies Responding to Disasters) in partnership with the primary local responders, the Office of Emergency Services and the Red Cross. Contra Costa Crisis Center's application indicates that all three of its key managers have many years of experience either directly in comprehensive I&R service, or in similar human services planning and information management.

Contra Costa Crisis Center's budget and financial statements indicate a stable and solvent financial position. It appears that the Crisis Center has appropriate budgetary planning procedures to support 2-1-1 service at current call volumes.

The second section of the prescribed application sets forth the required service conditions that a 2-1-1 service provider must meet. Section 2 of Contra Costa Crisis Center's application indicates that the crisis center does not and will not receive fees

from referred organizations nor charge providers to be listed in its database. Furthermore, the crisis center provides its service at no charge to callers and there are no advertisements or commercial sponsorship messages on its lines. Contra Costa Crisis Center states that it currently operates 24/7/365. Information and Referral services are provided live by staff and trained volunteers, and currently it has staff capacity to offer services in Spanish and Tagalog. In addition languages spoken by volunteers include Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, Cantonese and Farsi. Tele-interpreting services are also utilized and are available for 140 languages.

In the third section of the prescribed application, the applicant must demonstrate its understanding of and agreement to adhere to the standards for delivery of I&R services established by the Alliance of Information and Referral Services (AIRS). Contra Costa Crisis Center's application includes descriptions of its policies in the areas of call assessment and follow-up, confidentiality, database standards, disaster readiness, reports and measures, cooperative relationships, training, marketing, and program evaluation. These policies appear to be more than adequate to meet the standards established by AIRS. Moreover, the crisis Center is certified by the American Association of Suicidology ("AAS"). AAS has recently been working in cooperation with the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems ("AIRS") to explore options for reciprocity in recognizing all or a portion of each other's accreditation requirements.

In the fourth section of the prescribed application, the applicant demonstrates its level of community support by including up to 15 letters of endorsement from organizations and agencies that are stakeholders in the health and human services network in its community. Contra Costa Crisis Center included in its application letters of endorsement from 18 different organizations and agencies in a broad range of health and human service fields including housing, health, mental health, employment, domestic violence, disability, emergency (disaster), alcohol and drugs, and senior services. Many of Contra Costa Crisis Center's endorsements are from city and county agencies in Contra Costa County, indicating its close integration with local government in its area of service.

In processing this 2-1-1 application, Telecommunications Division considered the opinion of Contra Costa County government, which oversees the operations of county hospitals, a county welfare department, and numerous other agencies and programs in the fields of health and human services, and is best equipped to evaluate whether an I&R provider is well suited to provide comprehensive I&R service in Contra Costa County. California's size and diversity, in geography, politics, and many other categories, argue against a statewide "one size fits-all" approach to evaluating and choosing comprehensive I&R providers. County governments can best apply local standards and local knowledge to this difficult but important task. The Chairman on behalf of Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors sent a letter on September 22, 2003 endorsing Contra Costa Crisis Center to serve as the 2-1-1 provider for Contra Costa

County residents and employees. The Commission values the input of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors on this matter, and takes official notice of its action.

D.03-02-029 did not specifically address the length of time for which the Commission's grant of authority to use the 2-1-1 dialing code should be made. Utilities and other frequent participants in Commission proceedings generally know that most Commission decisions, resolutions, and actions can be later modified or rescinded if a showing of sufficient grounds to do so is made in a filing before the Commission. However, most I&R providers and county governments are not frequent participants in Commission proceedings, and may benefit from some clarification of this point. The grant of authority to use the 2-1-1 dialing code in a county or group of counties is for an indefinite term and may be revised or rescinded if a showing of sufficient grounds to do so is made to the Commission. For the reasons cited in the previous paragraph, the Commission should consider a resolution by the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors as a crucial part of any showing that the authority to use the 2-1-1 dialing code for comprehensive I&R service for Contra Costa County should be rescinded, reassigned, or modified. A letter to the Commission's Executive Director could serve to initiate such a process. Any such process should provide notice to all affected parties and an opportunity to be heard.

The Telecommunications Division concludes that the application letter filed by Contra Costa Crisis Center meets the requirements set forth in the Commission's order and recommends that the Commission approve this filing. Commission approval is based on the specifics of the application letter, and does not establish a precedent for the contents of future filings or for Commission approval of similar requests.

This is an uncontested matter in which the resolution grants the relief requested. Accordingly, pursuant to P.U.Code Section 311 (g) (2), the otherwise applicable 30-day period for public review and comment is being waived.

Findings

1. Contra Costa Crisis Center sent its application letter for certification as the 2-1-1 service provider for Contra Costa County to the Commission on September 11, 2003.
2. One written comment on Contra Costa Crisis Center's application was filed.
3. The Commission should defer heavily to the judgment and expertise of county government for the selection of the county's comprehensive I&R provider.
4. The Chairman of the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors sent a letter to the Commission on September 22, 2003, endorsing Contra Costa Crisis Center to serve as the 2-1-1 provider for Contra Costa County.

5. TD concludes that Contra Costa Crisis Center's application meets the requirements established by D. 03-02-029 to use the 211 dialing code.

THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that:

1. Contra Costa Crisis Center is granted the authority to use the 2-1-1 abbreviated dialing code to provide information and referral (I&R) services to all of Contra Costa County.
2. This authority is granted for an indefinite term, and can be contested by letter to the Executive Director or by formal application to the Commission. Any process to contest, revise, or rescind this authority shall provide notice to all affected parties and an opportunity to be heard.
3. If Contra Costa Crisis Center fails to implement 2-1-1 dialing within a year after the Commission's approval of Contra Costa Crisis Center and the needed tariffs of the telecommunications service providers ordered in Ordering Paragraphs 3, 4, and 7 of D.03-02-029, then, barring further Commission action, the certification of Contra Costa Crisis Center shall lapse so that another I&R provider may apply to offer service in a service territory containing Contra Costa County.

This Resolution is effective today.

I hereby certify that the Public Utilities Commission at its regular meeting on February 26, 2004 adopted this Resolution. The following Commissioners approved it:

WILLIAM AHERN
Executive Director

MICHAEL R. PEEVEY
President
CARL W. WOOD
LORETTA M. LYNCH
GEOFFREY F. BROWN
SUSAN P. KENNEDY
Commissioners