

Mailed: September 5, 2008

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

**Communications Division  
Program Implementation Branch**

**RESOLUTION T-17145  
September 4, 2008**

**R E S O L U T I O N**

Resolution T-17145. Volunteer Center of Sonoma County. Request for certification as the 2-1-1 service provider for Sonoma County. By Letter to Executive Director filed on March 14, 2008.

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**Summary**

This resolution grants Volunteer Center of Sonoma County hereinafter referred to as Volunteer Center, the authority to use the 2-1-1 abbreviated dialing code to provide information and referral (I&R) services to all of Sonoma County. This authority is granted for an indefinite term, and is subject to review upon a letter to the Commission showing sufficient grounds to revise or rescind the term.

**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.

Volunteer Center filed a complete copy of its application letter<sup>1</sup> requesting certification as the 2-1-1 service provider in Sonoma County, as well as a copy with information Volunteer Center considered confidential redacted, that was received by the Commission's Executive Director on March 14, 2008. On the same date, Volunteer Center sent to the service list for R.02-01-025 redacted copies of its application letter.

We remind local exchange carriers of D. 03-02-029, Ordering Paragraph 3, which states "Within four months of the filing of a letter by I&R providers or a regional technical center seeking to initiate 2-1-1 service, the incumbent local exchange carriers serving the territory over which the 2-1-1 service will be offered shall file advice letters to provide the 2-1-1 switch translation services required. Ordering Paragraph 4 states "All other incumbent local carriers serving a territory over which the 2-1-1 service will be offered shall provide the needed switch translation service, but may either concur in the price terms offered by Pacific or Verizon or submit their own cost support information. This filing shall follow that of Pacific or Verizon by no more than 30 days." Competitive local carriers must comply with Ordering Paragraph 7, which states in part, "Within one month of the filing of an advice letter by incumbent local exchange carriers to offer 2-1-1 switch translation services in a specific area, each competitive local carrier

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<sup>1</sup> The terms "application letter," "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.

providing services in the affected areas shall submit an advice letter, under General Order 96-A,<sup>2</sup> demonstrating that it will offer 2-1-1 switch translation service at a reasonable rate to I&R providers on a timetable consistent with their rollout plans.”

We remind payphone service providers of the same decision’s Ordering Paragraph 6, stating in part “The providers of payphone services in an area in which 2-1-1 service will be offered shall end all non-conforming uses of 2-1-1 service within six months of their filing.” i.e., within six months of the filing of the application letter by the I&R provider.

### **Notice/Protests**

Volunteer Center states that it mailed a copy of its application letter to SBC Communications, now AT&T and Verizon Communications, as well as to the service list for R.02-01-025, which includes the appropriate incumbent local exchange carriers. The Communications Division published notice of Volunteer Center’s application letter in the Commission Daily Calendar on April 4, 2008 through April 10, 2008. In response to Volunteer Center’s application letter, the California Alliance of Information and Referral Services, Inc. (CAIRS) submitted written comments supporting the request of Volunteer Center to use the 2-1-1 dialing code in Sonoma County. No other comments were submitted.

### **Discussion**

The 2-1-1 application process 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, structure, background, and experience.

Volunteer Center is a non-profit organization incorporated in the State of California. The documents included to support this categorization are its articles of incorporation, including by-laws, and letters from the Internal Revenue Service. Volunteer Center is located at 153 Stony Circle, Ste 100, Santa Rosa, CA 95401. The contact person is Renee Tolliver, Sonoma County 2-1-1 Project Manager, at (707)573-3399 ext. 130 and e-mail at [rtolliver@volunteernow.org](mailto:rtolliver@volunteernow.org).

Volunteer Center’s application states that it has operated an I&R service in partnership with the Sonoma County Human Services Department since 1983. This partnership was designed to address the issues of individuals and families in extreme need. Over 16,500 clients are served annually. In addition to its partnership with the Human Services

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<sup>2</sup> General Order 96-A has since been replaced by General Order 96-B.

department, the Volunteer Center's I&R service is supported through partnerships with the entire county non-profit community.

The Volunteer Center's I&R service center is situated within the Sonoma County Human Service Department at a public assistance intake center. This location provides easy access to the target population, offering vital information and referral services on a face-to-face basis as well as by telephone and e-mail to over 16,500 clients annually. To respond to acute needs within the community, the program maintains an immediate needs pantry, stocked with basic food and personal hygiene items to help during emergency transition periods.

A cornerstone of the I&R process is a database of available programs and services that currently contains 1,100 records. Operators and interviewers use the database to assist clients on the telephone or in person. The database is also accessible as a web-based searchable listing linked to the Volunteer Center website, the Human Services website, and the United Way of the Bay Area's HelpLink website. A hard-copy Directory of Services is published annually, with listings taken from the database. It is available for sale to the public.

The joint venture between Sonoma County and the Volunteer Center has operated for twenty-five years. The county provides office space and equipment, and employs a social worker who is a member of the I&R staff team. The Volunteer Center employs a call specialist/volunteer coordinator and a Certified Resource Specialist who comprise the core of the I&R staff, all based at the county offices.

The County-Volunteer Center partnership provides volunteer and internship opportunities for social work, psychology, and sociology majors from Santa Rosa Junior College and Sonoma State University. The utilization of these interns, many of whom are bi-lingual, allows the program to stretch its assets far beyond the constraints of its fiscal resources and develops a cadre of program ambassadors in the community. The Volunteer Center maintains responsibility for the operation of the program.

A 2-1-1 Steering Committee has been in place since early 2007. The Committee has been exploring the most effective, efficient and sustainable means of implementing 2-1-1 in Sonoma County. Members of the 2-1-1 Sonoma County Steering Committee include the Executive Directors of United Way of Sonoma-Mendocino-Lake, Community Foundation Sonoma County, the Volunteer Center, and the Assistant Director of Human Services and the Deputy Public Health Officer with the County of Sonoma. A local consultant with deep ties to the community has been engaged to guide the planning process.

The local social service providers and community leaders have been included in the planning process with meetings, forums, and printed updates. United Way has made 2-1-1 the focal point of its most recent fundraising campaign.

The Volunteer Center is a member of the Alliance of Information and Referral Services (AIRS) and CAIRS, two professional Information and Referral associations dedicated to the advancement of this work. The Volunteer Center's I&R program operates largely in accordance with AIRS standards, with a goal of achieving AIRS accreditation by 2010.

Volunteer Center's application indicates that staff and key managers have many years of experience either directly in comprehensive I&R service, or in similar human services planning and information management. All staff has participated in onsite and online training utilizing AIRS conferences.

Volunteer Center provided a five year budget. Volunteer Center's budget and financial statements indicate a stable and solvent financial position. It appears that Volunteer 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 two of the Volunteer Center application indicates that it does not and will not receive fees from referred organizations for referrals and no fees or charges are levied to providers listed in its database. Furthermore, Volunteer Center's I&R services have been provided free of charge to callers since the inception and will remain that way upon implementation of 2-1-1. Volunteer Center currently provides services five days a week from 8a.m. to 5p.m. Volunteer Center is exploring contract options with other 2-1-1 providers to cover after hours calls.

Volunteer Center staff currently provides I&R services in English and Spanish along with a subscription to a multi-lingual translation service. TTY and TDY service are in place. These options will continue to be available with the implementation of 2-1-1. As additional employees are hired, an effort will be made to increase the Spanish-English bilingual staff.

In the third section of the prescribed application, the applicant must demonstrate its understanding of and must agree to adhere to the standards for delivery of I&R services as established by AIRS. Volunteer Center's I&R program has internal protocols to ensure calls are handled consistent with guidelines developed by AIRS. AIRS' guidelines are the basis for the service delivery standards associated with use of the 2-1-1 dialing code as specified by the CPUC Decision 03-02-029. Volunteer 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 meet the standards established by AIRS.

In the fourth section of the prescribed application, the applicant demonstrates its level of community support by including letters of endorsement from organizations and agencies that are stakeholders in the health and human services network in its community. Volunteer Center included in its application letters of endorsement from sixteen different organizations and agencies in a broad range of health and human service fields throughout Sonoma County. These endorsements demonstrate broad community support.

In processing Volunteer Center's 2-1-1 application, Communications Division considered the input of the Sonoma County government because it 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 Sonoma 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. Mike Kerns, Chairman of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, sent a letter on January 18, 2008 endorsing Volunteer Center's application to serve as the 2-1-1 provider of Sonoma County residents and employees. The Commission values the input of the Sonoma 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 Sonoma 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 Sonoma County could 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 Communications Division concludes that the application letter filed by Volunteer Center of Sonoma County 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) and Rule 14.6(c) (2) of the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, the otherwise applicable 30-day period for public review and comment is being waived.

### **Findings**

1. Volunteer Center of Sonoma County sent its application letter for certification as the 2-1-1 service provider for Sonoma County to the Commission on March 14, 2008.
2. CAIRS submitted written comments in support of Volunteer Center's application. No other comments were submitted.
3. Volunteer Center's application provides sufficient information to meet the four major sections of the 2-1-1 application process required by D. 03-02-039.
4. The Chairman of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisor sent a letter to the Commission on January 18, 2008, endorsing Volunteer Center to serve as the 2-1-1 provider for Sonoma County.
5. CD concludes that the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County application meets the requirements established by D. 03-02-029 to use the 2-1-1 dialing code.

### **THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED that:**

1. Volunteer Center of Sonoma County is granted the authority to use the 2-1-1 abbreviated dialing code to provide information and referral (I&R) services to all of Sonoma County.
2. This authority is granted for an indefinite term, and is subject to review upon showing sufficient grounds to revise or rescind the term. Any process to contest,

revise, or rescind this authority shall provide notice to all affected parties and an opportunity to be heard.

3. If Volunteer Center of Sonoma County cannot implement 2-1-1 dialing within a year after the Commission's approval of Volunteer Center of Sonoma County 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 Volunteer Center of Sonoma County shall lapse so that another I&R provider may apply to offer service in a service territory containing Sonoma County.
4. Volunteer Center of Sonoma County shall notify the Director of the Communications Division in writing of the date 2-1-1 service is first rendered to the public, within five days after service begins.

This Resolution is effective today.

I hereby certify that the Public Utilities Commission at its regular meeting on September 4, 2008 adopted this Resolution. The following Commissioners approved it:

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/s/ Paul Clanon

PAUL CLANON  
Executive Director

MICHAEL R. PEEVEY  
President  
DIAN M. GRUENEICH  
JOHN A. BOHN  
RACHELLE B. CHONG  
TIMOTHY ALAN SIMON  
Commissioners



### **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I CERTIFY THAT I HAVE, BY E-MAIL, THIS DAY SERVED A COPY OF a Notice of Availability informing the parties of record in R. 02-01-025 of the availability of draft Resolution T-17145 for public comments. The documents can be located on the Commission's website <http://www.cpuc.ca.gov>.

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August 25, 2008, at San Francisco, California

/s/ Katherine Morehouse

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Katherine Morehouse

### **NOTICE**

Parties should notify the Communications Division, California Public Utilities Commission, 505 Van Ness Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, San Francisco, CA 94102, of any change of address to insure that they continue to receive documents. You must indicate the Resolution number on the service list on which your name appears.