

In October, Vermont 2-1-1 temporarily had to scale back providing 24/7 service due to increased costs to provide 24/7 coverage, just when temperatures began to drop, when the holidays were almost upon us, and when parts of the State were in recovery from flooding and wind damage during the “Halloween storm.” This unfortunate combination of circumstances may well have proven to be critical, but Vermont 2-1-1 and AHS responded quickly to avoid any potential crisis by agreeing to ramp up 2-1-1 staffing to temporarily cover after-hours emergency housing in response to Vermonters’ winter shelter needs and to collect individual damages information from the storm.

In November, Vermont 2-1-1 and Vermont’s Agency of Human Services found a solution for the reinstatement of Vermont 2-1-1’s invaluable service that Vermonters have come to rely on.

Currently, Vermont 2-1-1 is 24/7. The goal is to have 24/7/365 service in State...Vermonters helping Vermonters. Until then, 2-1-1 is providing 24/7 coverage using an out of state call center. The dependency on this contractor will ween off as Vermont 2-1-1 recruits, hires and trains additional staff. However, funding for these positions runs out in April and we will have to revert back to using the contractor if funding is not restored.

The ripple effect this October disruption in service had ran deep throughout the state. Certainly, the most impacted were people experiencing homelessness, looking for emergency housing resources. The impact on the well-being of Vermonters is clear enough and the economic impact of people turning to 911 and law enforcement services instead of being able to contact 2-1-1 did not go underestimated.

Vermont 2-1-1 has a positive impact on the quality of life for so many Vermonters and has a beneficial economic impact of building a statewide system that is capable of responding to a broad spectrum of emergent crises. Vermont 2-1-1, with the support of many local and statewide partners, changed the way Vermonters access human services. It has been standardized and streamlined. It is efficient and saves lives. Now, more than ever, we need the support of our partners to be able to continue our mission and to offer this immeasurably important resource for Vermonters.