



## VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

**For immediate release:**

**Contact: Joron Planter**

**(804) 726-7934**

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### **2-1-1 VIRGINIA Celebrates 10 Years of Service to Virginians!**

*A decade of dialing 2-1-1 has changed how Virginians access resources*

**Richmond, Va.** – Today marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 2-1-1 VIRGINIA, a free, 24-hour service, that has now become the Commonwealth's largest information and referral network available to citizens for health and human services.

In a celebration today, hosted by Virginia Department of Social Services' (VDSS) Office of Community and Volunteer Services, Governor McAuliffe congratulated 2-1-1 VIRGINIA on this milestone anniversary, and recognized the excellent service provided to the Commonwealth's citizens over the years. On February 11, 2006, then-Governor Tim Kaine placed the very first call to a contact specialist, officially kicking-off the launch of 2-1-1 VIRGINIA. Today, Governor McAuliffe kicked off the second decade of 2-1-1 VIRGINIA, as he placed what has now been recorded as the 1.4 millionth call to a 2-1-1 contact specialist.

Awareness of the service has grown tremendously over the years. Each year, contact specialists answer more than 160,000 calls resulting in 222,000 referrals. VDSS' partnership with more than 6,000 non-profit and government agencies allows 2-1-1 VIRGINIA to maintain a database of more than 21,000 individual program listings.

The free services of 2-1-1 VIRGINIA are available to all Virginians on a 24/7 basis. "We encourage everyone to dial 2-1-1 for information about human services. From child daycare to home health providers, up-to-date information is available," said VDSS Gail Harris, Director, VDSS Office of Volunteerism and Community Service. "The most frequent calls, about 70%, are from citizens experiencing crisis situations such as homelessness or the need for emergency food. While the 2-1-1 contact specialists can't solve the problems, they can arm callers with accurate, timely options to get the help they need."

Through new partnerships and collaborations, 2-1-1 VIRGINIA has significantly expanded its service-offering since its early stages of operation. 2-1-1 VIRGINIA serves as a central information source during health scares like Ebola, operates the Patient Locator system to aid in family reunification during large-scale disasters, and works closely with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) during emergency situations. 2-1-1 VIRGINIA also participates in nuclear emergency practice drills with Dominion Virginia Power and works with the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) to help support deinstitutionalized Virginians.

“2-1-1 VIRGINIA is constantly evolving,” said Harris. “Our calls reflect the immediate needs of the communities we serve, so we are always exploring new ways to leverage our network, services and partnerships. I look forward to what we can accomplish over the next decade.”

*2-1-1 VIRGINIA is a free, 24-hour information and referral service of VDSS, provided in partnership with the Council of Community Services, The Planning Council, the United Way of Central Virginia, and the United Way of Greater Richmond and Petersburg.*

*Calls and referrals are confidential and dialing 2-1-1 connects Virginians to a trained professional who can evaluate requests for assistance and make referrals to available resources. Those seeking help can also search 2-1-1 VIRGINIA’s extensive database at [www.211virginia.org](http://www.211virginia.org).*

*Government, nonprofit, and civic organizations that meet community health and human services needs or offer volunteer opportunities are encouraged to register their services. To list your agency, follow the "[Update/Add Your Agency](#)" directions on the 2-1-1 VIRGINIA home page.*

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