



## BLUE PAGES/PHONE BOOK SURVEY

Prepared by 211 *info*

January 19, 2005

211 *info* surveyed callers who dialed in on our 2-1-1 lines to determine what their experience had been using the telephone book prior to contacting us. This reports the results of that survey.

### BACKGROUND

The survey was conducted because a petition is before the Oregon Public Utilities Commission requesting a ruling on the "Blue Pages" section of the printed telephone directories in the state. One argument opposing the petition suggests that 2-1-1 will meet the intended need. Anecdotal information gathered from other 2-1-1 providers across the country does not answer this argument conclusively.

211 *info* is the first and currently only provider of 2-1-1 services in Oregon. It has been answering calls on its 2-1-1 lines since May 2004.

It should be noted that the number "2-1-1" does not appear in print in any telephone book yet as a potential resource for callers in need. Therefore, anyone who dials 2-1-1 in this region has learned of the number from another source. This agency has existed for more than 25 years, and most callers still dial our ten-digit number. These callers were not included in the survey.

Our experience suggests that a significant number of callers have looked in the phone book before calling us on that line. Additionally, the information gathered from other providers across the country, both 2-1-1 call centers and generic information and referral centers, suggests that phone books continue to be a resource people use when seeking help.

### RESULTS

562 callers dialing 2-1-1 in the three-county<sup>1</sup> Portland metropolitan region were queried about their use of the telephone book between December 29, 2004 and January 19, 2005. Respondents were asked, "May I ask, just for our information, if you tried to find help in the phone book before calling us?" or "We're taking a survey about people who use the phone book. May I ask if you tried to find what you needed there?" The question was posed at a time during the interview to insure that it would not send the message to the caller that we don't want to help and thought they *should* have checked there first. For three possible answers, we asked staff to add comments to clarify. These were "Did not ask," "No, other," and "Yes, other." Comments were occasionally also added for some other callers but not all. These additional comments follow the report and provide helpful information.

- 44 callers indicated no phone book was available to them.
- 169 callers said, "No, it's just easier to call you."
- 260 callers said, "No," other (see comments to follow)
- 33 callers said, "Yes, but I couldn't find what I needed."
- 29 callers said, "Yes," other (see comments to follow)
- 27 callers were not asked to participate (see comments to follow)

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<sup>1</sup> Clackamas County, Multnomah County, and Washington County. It should be noted that currently no residents of Washington County are able to use 2-1-1 as negotiations with the primary telecommunications provider in that area are not yet completed.

*Additional Comments:* These are representative rather than complete. A complete listing of all comments is available upon request.

No phone book available (6 total comments):

- Got mixed up about 411 and 211
- Homeless
- Intended 411 instead of 211
- Just moved
- Caller has a family member who works for a community service
- Needs a large print one

No, it's just easier to call you (19 total comments):

- Referred by someone else – 7
- Caller states it was an urgent matter and calling us would be easier and faster
- Sometimes she looks in directory but today she's in a hurry
- Phone book hard to use
- Resource is listed in Street Roots
- Does not have a phone book where they are at
- Thought finding something as specific as low cost bed would be hard to find in phone book
- Called before

No, other (257 total comments):

- Called 211 before - 10
- Caller has eyesight problems and does not have large print phone book
- Caller is blind
- Caller said she just doesn't use the phone book
- Can't use her phone book—needs large print one
- Daughter works at David Douglas school and knew number
- Did not know/doesn't remember - 4
- Didn't know who to call—emergency need
- Does not read English very well.
- Harder to look in phone book for a lot of numbers
- Homeless
- I don't know how to use a phone book
- I wouldn't have known where to look
- Never uses phone book
- Referred by someone else – 217
- Someone told him about it on the MAX
- Static on call (phantom call) – 4

Yes, but I couldn't find what I needed (4 total comments):

- Looked under Family Services
- Qwest pages color coded
- Couldn't find it listed anywhere
- You can't find something if you don't know how to look it up

Yes, other (28 total comments):

- Wouldn't know where to look for what I need
- But I can never find anything in phone book so I call you
- I'm not going there. I'll end up spending three hours looking for something
- Yes but too hard to figure out which place to call
- Can't see
- Found City/County Info Line 823-4000 in Blue Pages and they told me to call you - 2
- Found our number in phone book - 3
- Not now but earlier in the morning. Couldn't find what I was looking for

- Phone book did not have community pages in it
- She could not see her phone book due to cataracts
- But was referred by her landlord
- Used it to find other places who referred them on to us - 12

Did not ask (26 total comments):

- An agency was just trying out the 211# to see what services we offered
- Caller did not want to give any information
- Regular caller from agency that has a phone list
- Static on call (phantom call)
- Caller hung up directly after receiving resources
- Caller was not able to understand my question
- Mentally confused, incapable
- Wrong number

### *SUMMARY*

The 27 callers who were not asked should be eliminated. This restricts our focus to the 535 callers who did or did not use the book and their reasons or comments.

It should be noted that in addition to the 62 people who did use the phone book at some point during their search, others who were categorized as "No," offered comments suggesting that their past experiences with the phone book have not been helpful to their searches.

### *INTERPRETATION*

The information gathered during this survey should be reviewed along with the anecdotal information gathered from the question posed to other 2-1-1 and information and referral providers in the country. Evidence suggests to us that the community continues to rely on the telephone book when seeking access for information, even when 2-1-1 is in place, but that its experience has not always been positive.

If the Oregon PUC determines that it is appropriate for the printed phone books to provide community resource help pages through the Blue Pages section and/or other sections, we would strongly encourage an established partnership be developed with the local 2-1-1 provider that would keep the information in the book current and reliable, and that would adequately compensate the 2-1-1 provider for that work.

## ADDENDUM

A screen print taken from our contact record showing the possible responses is attached.

The screenshot shows a software application window titled "IBR - BRM - Complete Information and Referral Software System". The main window is "Contact Entry Screen" for "Contact ID# 1999". It features several tabs: "Caller Data", "Media/Contact by", "Referrals/Needs", "Notes/Follow-up", and "Wilder Shelter".

Under the "Media/Contact by" tab, there are several input fields and checkboxes:

- Media type: [Dropdown]
- Media List: [Dropdown]
- Fed Poverty Level: [Dropdown]
- Insurance: [Dropdown]
- Spanish speaking caller:
- FS Outreach - Eligible:
- FS Outreach - Not Eligible:
- FS Outreach - Access Problem:
- FPP:  Financial Assistance Referral:
- PRMS:  Sunnier Fee:

Below these is a section titled "Who Made the Contact" with a note: "#the person who made the contact was not 'Self', fill in this section:". It includes fields for:

- Contact Name: [Text]
- Position or Relation: [Text]
- Telephone: [Text]
- Work Address: [Text]
- Comment: [Text]

At the bottom of the form, there are fields for "Referral" (value: U-19-1), "Time Next" (value: 05/28/04), "Time of Call" (value: 09:00:10), and "Media ID" (value: 1-1-0). Buttons for "Save Incomplete", "Save Data", and "Abandon" are located at the bottom right.



**RESPONSES FROM QUERY TO AIRS NETWORKER LISTSERVE  
REGARDING I&R'S AND PHONE BOOKS  
(Sent to listserve of approximately 700 I&R professionals in US and Canada)**

*ORIGINAL REQUEST, Dated December 7, 2004::*

Many phone books have sections that list Community Resources. It appears the Blue Pages, which some of us also have, originated from an individual in our region over 25 years ago. He is now asking our state PUC to make a ruling that the phone companies are required to provide accurate Blue Pages. The phone companies, in turn, are saying 2-1-1 will answer that need and it's not necessary. The PUC wonders if there's a need, but has agreed to listen to arguments.

1. Have any of you had experience working with phone companies around their community resource and/or blue pages?
2. Have any of you done surveys of your callers where you asked if they've looked in the phone book?

We're looking at doing a one-month survey of our 2-1-1 callers to help the PUC make a decision. We would use a script like, "Yes, we can give you referrals. May I also ask, just for our Information, if you tried to find help in the phone book before calling us?" We DON'T want to send the message that we think the caller should look there first, so we're going to be careful about how and when we ask it.

If this is a new exercise we'll be glad to share the results universally, but if others have done it your data would add weight to ours when we go back to the PUC. Thanks.

Jeri Shumate  
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*(From an I&R Center)* We are working towards 211, but for many years we have worked with the phone book to keep blue pages updated. They send me a copy before they go to print and I update any phone numbers that have changed. They in turn list my number as a place to call for additional information. We then keep track of how a caller found out about us and many times it's because they couldn't find what they needed in the blue pages.  
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*(From a 2-1-1 Center)* We have done the Community Services Listing for four years and have had nothing but a hard time. We usually get 1 week to compile the info - then it gets published...sometimes there are typos in the publishing translation - which receives a lot of complaint calls to us (mainly from the agencies we are trying to refer people to). This year - being short on staff - we opted out - maybe they will offer us a better deal in 2005.

As for the Blue Pages - ours are so mixed up and incorrect - we could probably do a better job of making referrals - but anytime someone wants to compare 2-1-1 with 3-1-1, there needs to be some serious discussion about financial compensation. Our local County Government takes approximately 3,000 calls per day (just Information calls). I know they do not track the same stats our 2-1-1 tracks - and probably

should not....if we are going to take the blue pages place (and ultimately the city and county governments operator's place) I think there needs to be some sort of compensation. If your Blue Pages is different than ours (Government Department Information)- I apologize for the worthless discussion!

We have never done a survey - but a few years ago when we asked how people heard about us - 30% said the phone book....probably on those pages or the Yellow Pages - so it was pretty good advertising. Just as an FYI.

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*(From a 211 Center)* Hi -- a long time ago - more than 10 years ago, [we] used to put together community resource pages -- I think it was a two page spread, for [our local East Coast Bell affiliate] that they used in our local phone books. I think this was before the introduction of the Blue Pages. We were delighted at this opportunity, and made sure we had top billing. We used to advertise that we were the very first number in the phone book -- and we were.

And then the blue pages came out, and the phone company scaled back the community resource pages, and stopped asking for our help. I don't know why they stopped asking us - just assigned the job internally I guess. Now they (phone book company) sometimes call -- but very infrequently -- when they are updating the community resource pages. We are listed in a box, listed prominently compared to the other listings, and that's fine. Although we did lose our top billing to 9-1-1.

The phone companies should be required to have accurate blue page info - or at least promise to make the effort. Lots of people use them (including me). I sometimes ask people where they got our number, but have never asked if they tried the phone book first....

You can quote me if you like in your report -- "The phone book is a valuable, oft used tool, by many customers of the phone company. The PUC has a responsibility to do its best to help insure its (phone book) accuracy."

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*(From an I&R Center)* We provide the information for the Community Service numbers in [our East Coast] area.

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*(From an I&R Center)* I have been working in I&R and specifically [here] for 17 years...soon to be 18. Ever since I've been here, [we have] annually updated the resources found in the "blue pages" of our local telephone directly for the local phone company. What has changed within that time is that we are getting paid for doing the update. When I first joined the organization, we were doing the update but there was no financial compensation for doing so. Our state organization...worked very hard to see that [we] would be financially compensated for their work. That is the relationship that exists today. I cannot comment on a survey but can tell you that quite a few of our callers tell us they found us in the "blue pages". People in our community are using those blue pages. So personally I feel very strongly that the information contained within must be accurate and updated on a regular basis. Let me know if you have any other questions.

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*Follow-up:* Here goes: "[Phone company] has agreed to compensate the organizations and/or groups that canvass for the Guide to Human Services. The amount of this compensation will be \$200.00 per published Guide To Human Services page. The terms of this agreement shall be for one (1) year and will be automatically extended for subsequent terms of one (1) year unless terminated by either party. Also, the total number of pages published shall not exceed the previous years count unless specifically authorized by the [Phone Company's] Blue Pages Manager or their designate."

[The Phone Company] also includes a page and a half of general guidelines...totaling 12 to be exact. If you would like to see those, I'd be happy to make a copy and mail to you.

Also, I should make something clear. Our phone book has a total of 19 "blue pages" divided into 5 sections: (1) Guide to Human Services (2) Local Government (3) County Government (4) United States Government (5) Schools. We only update the "Guide to Human Services" section. And I can tell you that I don't think anyone updates the other sections. We are always getting organizations listed in those other sections wanting us to make changes for them. They have difficulty understanding why we can't. I have tried to get a point of contact for them from my contact but to no avail. Seems within the world of telephone companies one arm has no idea what the other arm is doing. It's frustrating to everyone. More importantly I do believe those other sections get reprinted each year with no attempts to make the contents correct.

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*From the same state, a person in a leadership position (an I&R center):*

...We have a long history of working with the phone companies to develop the Guide to Human Services. In fact, our statewide association long ago negotiated a payment per page (\$200/page and holding for a number of years). This does not mean that the number of pages in the guide is open-ended!

Our logo and phone number are at the top of every page and are the largest on the page. Our HelpLine receives 50% of our calls from this marketing effort so it's well worth our time.

We do the community service pages for other telephone companies. One has provided us with a free one-page ad as a thank you.

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*Follow-Up:* Our Community Service pages are PUC mandated which means the phone company is loathe to invest any dollars into the process. There is one person who seems to do the guides for the whole state and she and I have developed a good working relationship so I generally get lots of notice on deadlines.

Some things to watch out for (depending on where you are in the process):

1. Initially, proofing was a problem. If you are designing a system, insist on a proof copy before the changes are final. If you need to proof it within three hours, do it.
2. The phone company should send all folks interested in new listings to you. (We had one phone company that would add listings to what we sent.)

We had to work on our relationship with the phone company. Initially, we would find that not all changes were made. That they wanted to change subject headings, etc.

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*Follow-up:* Please don't pass this around. Since we are completing work on one of the guides right now, I thought I would share this with you.

This is our review copy. The process we used this year was new. In the past, we were required to submit adds, changes and deletes which took a lot of time. This year, we submitted an electronic file of how we want the guide to appear. The new method saves us time and is the method I encourage you to consider. Until now, the phone company did not have the technology to handle a new guide every year. They were basically just updating a Word document that contained their typesetting codes. (This goes back to the issue of the dollars they were willing to invest into process.)

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