

Tennessee Regulatory Authority

GUIDELINES FOR TENNESSEE 2-1-1 PROVIDERS

TRA Approval Date: February 9, 2015

I. DEFINITIONS

Any term used in these Guidelines that has been defined by statute shall have the meaning given the term in the particular statute.

For the purpose of these Guidelines, the following terms shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly requires otherwise:

- (1) "AIRS" means the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems.
- (2) "AIRS Standards" means Version 6.0 or its successor of the AIRS Standards and Quality Indicators for Professional Information and Referral published by AIRS.
- (3) "Authority" or "TRA" when used to refer to an agency of the State of Tennessee means the Tennessee Regulatory Authority.

II. PURPOSE OF GUIDELINES

The TRA has established these Guidelines in an effort to establish statewide standards for 2-1-1 service. The TRA recognizes that there are vast differences in the size, structure, and availability of resources among the 2-1-1 Providers in Tennessee. Therefore, the TRA is not at this time requiring that 2-1-1 providers comply with all of these Guidelines. 2-1-1 providers; however, are expected to work proactively towards achieving the standards set forth in the Guidelines and report to the TRA and the 2-1-1 Advisory Council on their progress.

III. ROLE OF 2-1-1 ADVISORY COUNCIL

The 2-1-1 Advisory Council is charged with advising and assisting the Authority in establishing statewide standards that will ensure that the citizens of this state are served by an efficient and effective 2-1-1 service.

IV. LIMITATIONS ON 2-1-1 SERVICE

- (1) Any entity that seeks to provide 2-1-1 service must receive approval by the Authority prior to providing service.
- (2) The TRA shall approve only one 2-1-1 Service Provider for a geographic service territory. A 2-1-1 Service Provider may serve more than one service territory.

V. DUTIES OF 2-1-1 SERVICE PROVIDERS

A 2-1-1 Service Provider shall provide 2-1-1 service throughout its service territory.

VI. REQUIREMENTS FOR DESIGNATION AS 2-1-1 SERVICE PROVIDER

(1) Any entity seeking to provide 2-1-1 service in Tennessee shall file a petition with the Authority containing the following information:

- (a) The service area to be covered by the 2-1-1 Service Provider;
- (b) Documentation showing the applicant has sufficient financial capability to provide 2-1-1 service throughout its proposed service area;
- (c) A narrative demonstrating that the applicant has sufficient technical ability to provide 2-1-1 service. The narrative should include a specific discussion of the telecommunications and information technology infrastructure the applicant will use to provide 2-1-1 service;
- (d) A demonstration that the applicant has sufficient personnel resources to continuously provide 2-1-1 Service in accordance with AIRS and TRA standards related to operating hours and call answering standards;
- (e) A description of the extent and duration of the applicant's service to the local community;
- (f) A statement indicating that the applicant has the ability and willingness to comply with applicable Authority rules and policies;
- (g) A narrative describing efforts to comply with the TRA Guidelines; and
- (h) A description of its complaint resolution process.

VII. STANDARDS FOR 2-1-1 SERVICE PROVIDERS

(1) AIRS Accreditation

All 2-1-1 Service Providers shall work to meet the national AIRS Standards, and shall work to achieve AIRS accreditation, if possible.

(2) Call Handling

- (a) Within twelve (12) months of approval of these Guidelines, 2-1-1 Service Providers shall have fifty percent (50%) of eligible staff that have been answering Intake & Referral calls for one (1) year achieve AIRS certification. Volunteers and interns who answer 2-1-1 call center phones shall be trained and supervised by AIRS-certified staff.

- (b) All 2-1-1 Service Providers shall track call volume and service level. Call centers must strive to achieve or exceed a minimum service level of answering sixty percent (60%) of all calls received within sixty (60) seconds. All call centers must demonstrate progress toward achieving or exceeding this minimal service level annually in order to meet this standard.

(3) Other Standards

- (a) All 2-1-1 Service Providers shall comply with Title VI regulations and provide appropriate language services or interpreting services to callers who do not speak English within one year of the effective date of these Guidelines.
- (b) All 2-1-1 Service Providers shall use the same AIRS Standards-compliant software statewide to maintain resources, track referrals, and follow up with callers to ensure client satisfaction. Such software will be used by all 2-1-1 Service Providers for one hundred percent (100%) of their incoming calls within six (6) months of the approval of these Guidelines. This includes listing all available resources in this software and entering all calls in this software.

VIII. ABANDONMENT OF 2-1-1 SERVICE

- (1) In the event that a 2-1-1 Service Provider can no longer provide 2-1-1 Service in all or part of its service area, it shall not stop providing 2-1-1 Service until it has provided the Authority thirty (30) days written notice prior to discontinuing service.
- (2) The 2-1-1 Service Provider shall make all reasonable attempts to notify affected portions of its service territory that it will no longer provide service.
- (3) A 2-1-1 Service Provider that can no longer provides 2-1-1 Service in all or part of its service area shall make all reasonable attempts to transfer its authorization to another 2-1-1 Service Provider.

IX. TRANSFER OF AND AMENDMENTS TO 2-1-1 SERVICE AREA

- (1) A 2-1-1 Service Provider may transfer its authorization to provide 2-1-1 Service to another 2-1-1 Service Provider after filing a joint petition and receiving approval by the Authority.
- (2) A 2-1-1 Service Provider acquiring all or part of another 2-1-1 Service Provider's service area shall provide the following information to the Authority:
 - (a) Documentation showing that it has the financial capability to support the incremental increase in operation costs associated with the acquired service area;
 - (b) A plan showing how it will adjust staffing levels to meet the service quality standards set forth in these Guidelines after acquiring the additional service area;

- (c) A 2-1-1 Service Provider may provide service to the service area of another 2-1-1 Service Provider that has abandoned its service territory without prior approval by the TRA. The 2-1-1 Service Provider that has extended its service area shall petition the Authority for approval within thirty (30) days after extending service.

X. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- (1) Within six (6) months after approval of these Guidelines, all 2-1-1 Service Providers shall begin providing quarterly reports of call handling data sufficient to demonstrate compliance with TRA Guidelines. The quarterly reports shall be provided to the Tennessee Regulatory Authority and to the Tennessee 2-1-1 Advisory Council.
- (2) All 2-1-1 Service Providers shall provide an annual report containing the following information:
 - (a) Annual call handling data sufficient to demonstrate compliance with the TRA Guidelines;
 - (b) A narrative describing compliance with the call handling standards contained in the TRA Guidelines. If a 2-1-1 Service Provider does not meet a call handling standard, it shall provide a narrative explaining the cause of non-compliance and a plan to achieve compliance;
 - (c) Financial statements detailing the previous year's operation and a narrative describing the 2-1-1 Service Provider's access to financial resources to provide services for the next year;
 - (d) Total number of calls handled; and
 - (e) A summary of all complaints received and how the 2-1-1 Service Provider addressed such complaints.

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