

## Kodiak Residents Get the 411 on United Way's 211

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Much like 4-1-1 acts as a directory for local names and businesses, 2-1-1 is a service run by United Way of Anchorage that allows callers to access information about various social services offered in their area. Representatives from United Way were in town Monday to promote and monitor the service as it pertains to Kodiak. Sue Brogan is the vice president for community engagement with United Way of Anchorage, she said the service receives more than 100 calls per day and 20,000 per year.

-- (United Way 1 : 21 "Well we came down today to talk about Alaska 2-1-1. Which is a statewide system for health and human services. You can call 211 and get information on where to find a food pantry, where to get childcare. It's statewide and it's got a toll free number associated with it and a website as well.")

Majority of the calls come from the heavily populated areas like Anchorage and Fairbanks, but Brogan said Kodiak makes up about 4 percent of their call base. In general, most people call with regards to housing.

-- (United  
Way 2 : 20 "Rent  
and utility assistance. Well, we categorize that all in basic needs. So it  
could be rent, it could be utility assistance, it could be providing some sort  
of food assistance. It could be health, looking for healthcare, those are  
probably the highest requests that we get for information.")

Brogan said the low vacancy and  
high rental rates that Kodiak residents struggle with are felt statewide. Based  
on the calls they get, United Way  
is able to document the needs of Alaskans and work with local and state  
organizations, like Alaska Housing Finance, to provide better opportunities. In  
the same manner, their database of needs is vital information for legislators  
to understand where services are lacking for their constituents.

-- (United  
Way 3 : 31 "We  
usually go down, we try to make a trip a couple times a year. And this past  
January was actually the first time that we held training for the constituent  
managers in the legislator offices to use our database. And that was really  
well, it wasn't well attended, but hopefully when we go back this year we'll  
get a few more folks in. But we talked to the Legislative Affairs Office here  
about, because everybody gets calls from their constituents looking for  
information.")

Brogan said the program asks  
users to provide feedback, allowing them to ensure quality. In general, she  
said more than 80 percent of the callers actually seek out the services that 2-1-1  
operators suggest.

Looking to  
the future, Brogan said the program could see a spike in use, especially if health  
care continues to change and people are left with questions or looking for  
coverage.

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