



EMBARQ, FLAIRS and the State of Florida develop a 2-1-1 solution

Innovative EMBARQ™ Hosted IVR system connects wireless callers with critical community resources

When the Florida Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (FLAIRS) needed a way to standardize how wireless calls were routed to its 2-1-1 Network Centers throughout the state, EMBARQ partnered with the State of Florida Vendor Team to deliver a solution that exceeded expectations. Working with the Florida Department of Management Services (DMS), Enterprise Information Technology Services (EITS), community-based centers, telecommunications partners and more, EMBARQ was able to bring everything together to turn FLAIRS' vision into a reality. The result was the creation of an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) solution that satisfied the technical demands and cost requirements of all parties involved.

Expanding wireless access

The Federal Communications Commission has reserved 2-1-1 to provide community information about human services. In February 2007, 2-1-1 was available to approximately 196 million Americans – over 65 percent of the U.S. population – with 212 active 2-1-1 systems covering all or part of 41 states (including 19 states with 100 percent coverage) plus Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico. Through 2-1-1, people can get connected to information about critical resources such as emergency financial assistance, crisis hotlines, food, shelter, child care, jobs, mental health support and more. The service is supported by a number of local and national agencies, including the United Way. However, many wireless callers in Florida could not always get the help they needed. Some calls would be routed to the wrong center; others would not go through at all. FLAIRS, the association that oversees 2-1-1 service in Florida, wanted to ensure a ubiquitous, positive experience for wireless users all across the state. After all, mobile phones are more likely to be used by people in vulnerable situations, such as hurricanes and domestic violence. Reliance on mobile phones is even more prevalent in Florida due to the seasonal influx of elderly snowbirds and college students.

EMBARQ brings it all together

When FLAIRS requested vendor proposals for a comprehensive 2-1-1 solution, EMBARQ had the partnerships with the State of Florida (DMS) and EITS, and the technology in place to deliver a world-class solution. We teamed with our Hosted IVR partner, PATLive, to develop a system utilizing automated speech recognition to determine what city the caller desires. After the location is determined, the system sends the call back out to the toll-free service provider and EMBARQ™ Hosted IVR, which then routes it to the appropriate 2-1-1 Network Center. Next, we contacted the Florida DMS, which agreed to give FLAIRS access to its existing state toll-free service provided by

“EMBARQ helped us think outside the box. They captured the essence of our vision, found a way to make it work and followed through.”

- Janet Bard Hanson, Ph.D.
Project Director, FLAIRS Operation Wireless

“EMBARQ has been more of a partner than a vendor. They've contributed great ideas, helped us manage our resources and gotten people from all over the state to work toward a common vision.”

- Randy Nicklaus
President, 2-1-1 Big Bend

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Deltacom. By utilizing existing state contract procurement vehicles for hosted service offerings, FLAIRS was able to avoid the cost and complexity of purchasing and maintaining costly IVR equipment to support an unknown and ever-changing traffic volume. The EMBARQ™ solution provides for virtually unlimited scalability – both up and down – as well as priority service restoration in the event of a network failure.

Beyond expectations

FLAIRS and its member agencies awarded the contract to EMBARQ, PATLive and the State of Florida Vendor Team to expand wireless access to 2-1-1 service throughout the state. Not only did our solution meet the technical requirements of the project, but it also delivered several additional benefits. EMBARQ helped FLAIRS lower its costs and obtain service on a highly secure network. PATLive and EMBARQ™ Hosted IVR utilize speech recognition to properly route calls to the FLAIRS call centers. Being sensitive to the needs of a multicultural population, services were also provided in Spanish and Creole. Since our solution does not require the use of a telephone keypad, distressed 2-1-1 users can easily access the services they need. And the system is designed to easily accommodate additional call volume during emergency situations.

The project was made possible as a result of funding generously provided to FLAIRS by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida. So far, the system has performed beyond expectations. FLAIRS estimates it will receive about 260,000 wireless calls in the first year, and that volume is expected to grow approximately 10 percent annually. FLAIRS also plans to expand from 16 active call centers to more than 19.

“We’re all trying to make a better solution for the callers and a more efficient solution for those that fund it,” noted Randy Nicklaus, President of 2-1-1 Big Bend. “EMBARQ really made it happen.”

Do more with EMBARQ.

Built on a rich heritage that spans more than 100 years, EMBARQ is one of the largest and most financially secure local communications companies in the United States. EMBARQ offers your business exceptional value by providing comprehensive and reliable communications services that combine innovation and common sense. This practical ingenuity has guided us in developing an exceptional suite of integrated business communications offerings – including local and long distance voice, data, Internet, wireless, and entertainment. Whether in the office or on the go, you can access innovative solutions that can help enhance the productivity and effectiveness of your business. And it’s all backed by our responsive service, robust network security and reliability. Join us on our journey as we reshape the future of integrated communications.

EMBARQ is publicly traded on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE: EQ).

