



2-1-1 Big Bend
P.O. Box 10950 ♦ Tallahassee, FL 32302-2950
Administration 850.617.6348 ♦ Fax 850.561.3443
Hotline 2-1-1 or 850.617.6333
www.211bigbend.org

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Randy Nicklaus
Phone: 850-617-6317
rsnicklaus@211bigbend.org

2-1-1 BIG BEND BEGINS NEW HOTLINE FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

Tallahassee, FL – A new specialized statewide hotline has been launched this month by 2-1-1 Big Bend, Inc. and other 2-1-1 hotline centers in Florida to assist Floridian military personnel and/or their families who have been impacted by deployment to Iraq and/or Afghanistan. This new service, called the BrAlve Hotline, will be answered by trained counselors and is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The toll-free number is 1-877-BRAIVE-8 (1-877-272-4838). All calls are free and confidential.

“Our counselors are well trained to assist anyone who calls our hotlines” said 2-1-1 Big Bend President, Randy Nicklaus. “However, we know that the needs of our military families can be very different than other families. To help our counselors understand these needs better, we have added additional counselor training for this hotline. Callers will receive services such as crisis counseling, supportive help, information and referral to other local social services, and follow-up assistance.”

Florida is home to 1.8 million military veterans more than any other state except California. There are eleven active military bases and several other military installations. When personnel are deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, their families face many unique challenges. Upon return home, the process of reintegrating to civilian life creates additional challenges. A multi-tiered system of help is slowly being created throughout the country to help serve the unmet needs related to these transitions. However, these services are fragmented and inconsistent from one community to another so a central hotline and resource directory of services are required to help military families find the help that they need.

The BrAlve project is funded by three community foundations in Florida – The Community Foundation in Jacksonville, The Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice, and The Dade Community Foundation. These foundations have provided grants through the BrAlve Fund to organizations throughout Florida to help our military families. The BrAlve Hotline will connect people to these new services as well as other existing community services. For example, in Tallahassee, Workforce Plus and the American Red Cross Capital Area Chapter have been granted BrAlve funds to provide specialized support to military families.

2-1-1 Big Bend is serving as one of four Regional Centers that will operate the Florida BrAlve hotline. Each Regional Center also answers a local 2-1-1 hotline. All four Centers are accredited by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems as well as by the American Association of Suicidology. In addition to the four Regional Centers, several other 2-1-1 hotline organizations in Florida are participating in this project by contributing local community resource information to the BrAlve statewide resource directory. This free, public searchable directory will be available at www.floridabraive.org.

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“There are hundreds of programs in our communities that can help our military as well as non-military families,” according to Nicklaus. “I encourage the families affected by deployments to Iraq and/or Afghanistan to call our new BrAlve Hotline for help. We are proud of our military personnel and want to do whatever we can to support them and their families.”

2-1-1 Big Bend answers more than 60,000 calls each year through its five, and now six, hotline programs. The regional 2-1-1 helpline program is a 24/7 service that helped more than 25,000 callers last year. Thousands of people have sought help for unemployment, utilities, food, rent, and mortgage payments. Mental health counseling and domestic violence calls are also common to the hotline. Callers to the hotline can remain anonymous and all calls are confidential. Anyone can dial 2-1-1 for help with these issues and other concerns.

For more information about 2-1-1 Big Bend and the BrAlve Hotline program, visit www.211bigbend.org. 2-1-1 Big Bend is a United Way Agency.

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