

Facts about the Stronger Hearts™ Helpline

What Is It?

The **Stronger Hearts™ Helpline** provides people who have heart failure with access to community resources that can help them understand and manage their disease. This new 24/7 free call-center resource will serve people in San Bernardino County, where heart failure is particularly prevalent.

Stronger Hearts Helpline offerings include:

- Referrals to medical professionals and clinics
- Educational information about heart failure and its treatment
- Referrals to services such as exercise programs, nutrition advice and mental health programs
- Transportation to a health clinic and/or doctor's appointment

Additionally, the **Stronger Hearts Helpline** provides patients leaving a hospital or physician's office with a valuable tool to help them feel more confident in their ability to manage the disease, including following the treatment plan their doctor prescribed.

The bilingual (Spanish) helpline is a pilot project sponsored by the National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention and is an addition to the county's existing 2-1-1 helpline, which provides a variety of health and community resources to local residents. The National Forum hopes to expand the **Stronger Hearts Helpline** program across the country.

Who Can Use It?

While the 2-1-1 community helpline is available to all San Bernardino County residents, the **Stronger Hearts Helpline** offering is specifically designed for people with heart failure, their families and/or caregivers and healthcare professionals. The helpline is bilingual, free and available 24/7 as part of San Bernardino County's existing 2-1-1 telephone helpline.

How to Use It?

Residents in San Bernardino County can connect to the Stronger Hearts Helpline by simply dialing 2-1-1 (or 888-435-7565) from any phone at any time. A live operator will answer the call and then callers should ask for the **Stronger Hearts Helpline** by name or mention that they are looking for heart-failure resources. Operators will guide these callers to the related free or low cost programs and resources.

Why Launch the Stronger Hearts Helpline San Bernardino County?

Although San Bernardino County is nicknamed "The Heart of Southern California," the hearts of its residents deserve more attention and support:

- The county has the second-highest rate of heart-failure treatment in the state, with nearly 20 percentⁱ of Medicare beneficiaries in San Bernardino County being treated for the disease. *Overall, the national and state rate is at 14 percent for treatment.*ⁱⁱ
- Each year, an estimated 740 residents per 100,000ⁱⁱⁱ aged 65 or older die from heart failure in San Bernardino County.

- *In the state of California, 605 residents per 100,000 aged 65 or older die from heart failure per year.*^{iv}
- *Nationally, 619 residents per 100,000 aged 65 or older die from heart failure per year.*^v
- About 18 percent^{vi} of San Bernardino residents are at or below the poverty rate, which can make access to heart-failure care particularly challenging.

Why Is a Heart Failure Helpline Needed?

Heart failure is a complex condition with several causes and symptoms, and, thus, can be difficult to understand and manage properly – especially for those who are newly diagnosed. Treatment compliance is a significant issue with heart failure and, in some cases, hospitalization could have been prevented through increased information. Heart failure affects more than 5.1 million people in the United States, and the healthcare costs are significant. Nationwide, heart-failure treatment and complications account for more than \$30.7 billion^{vii} in spending annually, a sizable portion of the overall cost burden of cardiovascular disease.

What Is Heart Failure?

Heart failure^{viii} occurs when the heart cannot pump enough blood to the rest of the body, resulting in increased blood pressure and fluid retention in the limbs and/or organs. Heart failure is caused by a variety of conditions that weaken the heart, including coronary artery disease, diabetes, heart attack, high blood pressure and congenital heart defects. Treatment for heart failure begins with a combination of medication, lifestyle changes and maintaining healthy blood pressure to prevent the condition from advancing. If it worsens, more advanced treatments—such as surgery—may become necessary. According to the National Institutes of Health, heart failure is most common in people age 65 and older and is the No. 1 reason older people are hospitalized.

Who Created The Stronger Hearts Helpline?

The **Stronger Hearts Helpline** was created and launched by the National Forum for Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention, a non-profit organization whose mission is to build a collective voice for a heart-healthy and stroke-free society through collaborative policy and programmatic efforts. Stronger Hearts builds on San Bernardino County's existing 2-1-1 helpline, which provides a variety of services to the local community.

Programs of the National Forum are a collaborative effort through partner support from more than 75 national and international organizations that represent public and private healthcare organizations, as well as those in faith, advocacy, academic and policy settings. The **Stronger Hearts Helpline** is made possible through unrestricted funding from Novartis.

ⁱ Healthy San Bernardino: Better health through community. Retrieved January 27, 2015, from

<http://www.healthysanbernardinocounty.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=NS-Indicator&file=indicator&iid=11376205>

ⁱⁱ Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Prevalence State/County Level: All Beneficiaries by Age, 2008-2012. Retrieved January 27, 2015, from

http://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Statistics-Trends-and-Reports/Chronic-Conditions/CC_Main.html

ⁱⁱⁱ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Interactive Atlas of Heart Disease and Stroke. Retrieved January 27, 2015, from

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/DHDSPAtlas/detailedreports.aspx?county=06071&themeSubClassId=14&filterIds=4,3,2,7,10,9&filterOptions=2,1,1,1,1,1>

^{iv} Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Interactive Atlas of Heart Disease and Stroke. Retrieved January 27, 2015, from

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/DHDSPAtlas/reports.aspx?geographyType=county&state=CA&themeSubClassId=14&filterIds=4,3,2,7,10,9&filterOptions=4,1,1,1,1,1#report>

^v Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Interactive Atlas of Heart Disease and Stroke. Retrieved January 27, 2015, from

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/DHDSPAtlas/reports.aspx?geographyType=county&state=CA&themeSubClassId=14&filterIds=4,3,2,7,10,9&filterOptions=4,1,1,1,1,1#report>

^{vi} United States Census Bureau. Retrieved January 27, 2015, from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06071.html>

^{vii} Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics-2014 Update. Retrieved January 27, 2015, from <http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/129/3/e28.extract>

^{viii} Healthy San Bernardino: Better health through community. Retrieved January 27, 2015, from

<http://www.healthysanbernardinocounty.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=NS-Indicator&file=indicator&iid=11376205>