

## **Community Voice Mail Fact Sheet**

Open Access Connections provides free Community Voice Mail to homeless and low-income Minnesotans lacking reliable phone access. With this basic communication tool, homeless and low-income people are able to find employment, obtain housing, and achieve economic stability.

Since our founding in 1994, we have provided free voice mail to more than 70,000 low-income Minnesotans. In a typical year, we provide free voice mail to 2,700 people. 1,200 people are on our Community Voice Mail system at any given time.

94% of voice mail users are unemployed and 73% are homeless. 28% of clients are parents receiving MFIP.

63% of voice mail users looking for housing are able to find a home and 60% of voice mail users looking for employment are able to find a job.

We partner with 315 non-profit and government agencies to distribute our free voice mail services. 40 of these partner agencies are located in Greater Minnesota.

19% of voice mail users are under the age of 25, 52% are between the ages of 26-44, 26% are between the ages of 45-59, and 3% are over the age of 60.

66% of our voice mail users are people of color. 12% are disabled. 7% are veterans.

Since receiving state funding in 2013, we have been able to provide Community Voice Mail trainings to 235 partner agencies. 59 of these trainings occurred in Greater Minnesota and 40 of these partnerships were new.

Passing HF 1870 will allow us to continue providing this cost-effective communication resource to our most vulnerable citizens, as well as expand our presence in Greater Minnesota.

### Community Voice Mail User Stories

We recently asked our clients what it means to have access to Community Voice Mail. These are their responses:

“I have been tremendously blessed by this service. It’s kept me in communication with **employers** and with my **parole officer** and other vital sources I wouldn’t have actually been able to do without. Thank you.”

“I would like to say that I’ve benefited greatly from Community Voice Mail. And it has helped to stay in touch with people in **emergency situations** and with family and friends and it has helped me in obtaining **employment**. It has helped me in keeping track of appointments and many different things. And I really do appreciate this. I have a cell phone, but I have a limited number of minutes per month and I have to share this phone with another person. So having a place where people can just leave me a message to get in touch with me and to let me know of things that are important that are coming up is very useful to me.”

“Availability has helped me stay in contact with family and friends while I was experiencing **homelessness** and **joblessness**. God has helped me to get back on my feet and Open Access Connections Community Voice Mail was a part of that, and I thank you for your help. Thank you. God bless.”

“Community Voice Mail is really helpful because I could not really afford to pay a phone bill. I only receive \$95 of personal care fund a month. This lets me make **doctor appointments**. It lets doctors leave messages and nurses leave messages on my voicemail. It lets the **pharmacy** leave messages on my voicemail that I can check. I really need this.”

“Your voicemail service has been helping in every regard starting first with respect to being able to have connection to family and friends. It has been foundationally supportive of that, and to be able to be reached by **medical people** and by people regarding my involvements of the life of the community. There have been times when I did not have voicemail and not being able to be reached and missing messages was just very disruptive of a lot of things that I needed to have my life **healthy and stable**. It has been invaluable.”

“Voicemail has been a lifesaver to me. I have been able to get feedback on my resumes. I have been able to schedule **job interviews**. I have been able to find out about job prospects. Voicemail has been a great tool. Thank you!”

“I’d like to say that Open Access Connections has been a life saver for me in **my job** search, my **medical appointments**, my contacts with friends, in a time of crisis.”