

211 IN PENNSYLVANIA



**211 is like 411, but for
health, human services,
and disaster relief.**

WHAT IS 211?

211 was designated for nationwide use as a health and human services information and referral dialing code by the Federal Communications Commission in 2000. Since then, 211 has been spreading state-by-state, throughout the United States. It is available to some residents in all 50 U.S. states and is now accessed equally by web and phone, with text contacts on the increase. In Pennsylvania, 211 will be available to all residents by June 30, 2019. People can also text their zip code to 898-211 for help.

The 211 system is funded by a combination of United Way support, grants and private contributions, and contracts. As of 2017, 211 received its first state budget appropriation to help strengthen the service across Pennsylvania. Leadership for the system is provided at the national level by United Way Worldwide and the Alliance of Information and Referral System in partnership with their state and local networks. In Pennsylvania, the United Way of Pennsylvania and the non-profit, PA 211, are partners supporting this community-strengthening service.

BENEFITS OF 211

211 is designed to serve three major objectives:

1. Connect people in need to health and human service assistance available through government programs and private non-profit organizations in their communities;
2. Provide assistance to communities in time of disaster, allowing 911 to work primarily with first responders; and
3. Connect volunteers and donors with organizations who can leverage these resources to meet the needs of the community.

Through 211 people connect to a wide range of services from disaster relief to utility assistance, senior citizen programs, emergency food, job counseling, youth programs, and much more. The information provided to people who contact 211 comes from one shared statewide resource database. The common software also records information about consumer contacts and needs. Thanks to local relationships in communities across the state, and a strong partnership with United Way, PA 211 is the single-most comprehensive source of assistance and volunteer information covering all sectors of service both private and public.



CURRENT STATUS OF 211 IN PENNSYLVANIA

Much has been accomplished by PA 211 since 2011:

1. Seven regions coordinate 211 service through five contact centers which have contracts with PA 211, and will cover 100% of the state's population by July of 2019. Currently, 97% of Pennsylvania's population is covered by 211;
2. All regions have database specialists working together to grow a comprehensive resource and data collection system using the same state-of-the-art software and data standards;
3. PA 211 usage increases each year by helping families, first responders and care givers. Our partners are also helping us get the word out to people who don't know about 211.

But much more needs to be done to achieve the promise 211 holds for people in need:

1. The partnership between PA 211 and state government should continue to strengthen. PA 211 is currently serving as the coordinated entry point for homeless services in more than half of the state, but can scale up capacity to handle more initiatives state agencies are considering to streamline services and become more efficient in information dissemination and data collection.
2. Additional state funding will help regional centers increase their capacity to handle growing contact volume, assure 211 services are available by phone, text and chat across the state, increase awareness through marketing and community outreach, and allow 211 to create a public dashboard that shows the needs and service gaps in every community across the state.
3. Professional statewide coordination must continue to make sure the whole PA 211 network is meeting national quality standards, and Pennsylvanians receive a consistent level of services regardless of where they reach out for help.

FUTURE USES FOR 211 AND ITS DATA

Emergency response - In other states, during disasters people are directed to 211 for their non-life-threatening emergencies so that 911 capacity is not overwhelmed. And the data collected from contacts to 211 can be used by community organizations to organize and target their response. A strong 211 system, available to everyone and coordinated statewide, is the partner the State and municipalities need for managing emergencies, including everything from a flood, snowstorm or tornado to the accident that shuts down a portion of a major highway for hours.

Reduce duplication/cost – Each year, government needs to get information out to the general public on a variety of topics including flu shots, energy assistance, lead poisoning, access to health care programs and numerous others. Either state workers or their contractors set up individual 1-800 numbers to transmit messages. The 211 system has the potential to be the portal the State can use quickly to get information out. It can be made available through mobile-friendly technology in addition to the current phone, text and web site access points. The data collected by 211 can be used by state and local government entities, which are responsible for planning. And 211 is a tool to connect people to resources in their community which may help them avoid the need for more costly levels of care.

Support partnerships and policy to enhance 211, a service for all Pennsylvanians

Whether a Pennsylvanian's need is help for an aging parent, or figuring out how to pay the electric bill in order to avoid a utility shutoff, there are many partnerships needed to make a strong 211 system for Pennsylvania. United Ways remain committed to this life-changing service, and additional financial support is needed from state government for PA 211 to reach its full potential. Many county governments have stepped up to financially support 211 with direct funding or contracts. Human service providers, community groups, religious organizations and other people-serving nonprofits are all essential partners for a robust and up to date resource database. Corporate partners with a business interest related to helping connect people with resource to meet their needs can step up to become sponsors of 211 at a regional or statewide level.

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211 RESPONDS TO URGENT NEEDS



**211 assists in times of
disaster and widespread
need**

FACT

211 partnered with local VOAD and emergency management agencies to respond to highly localized flash flooding and other natural disasters in Pennsylvania.

During highly localized, but damaging flash flooding in the fall of 2018, PA 211 partnered with PEMA and local VOADs to gather damage assessment information needed to make the case for assistance and registered 69 callers into Crisis Cleanup. When the history-making snowstorm hit Erie in December 2017, PA 211 responded to 1,264 requests for help and were able to screen callers for eligibility for Team Rubicon snow shoveling services.¹

FACT

211 stood up a statewide text response to support employees impacted by the partial federal government shutdown who did not know when they would receive their next paycheck.

In January 2019, 187 individuals subscribed to text resource alerts which were pushed out by PA 211 daily to help connect people to help and identify their options to balance household needs. 237 people who identified themselves as impacted by the shutdown contacted 211 directly for assistance with food, utilities, housing payments, child care or transportation. United Way and 211 worked together to assemble a list of resources on a mobile-responsive web page, and more than 1,000 unique users accessed it.¹

FACT

PA 211 is part of a national network of contact centers who we can call upon to help Pennsylvania respond to large-scale regional or statewide disasters.

Pennsylvania 211 contact centers have come to the aid of other 211s in locations such as Florida to help in times of high need such as hurricane response through both phone and text support. During Hurricane Irma, several PA 211 centers were activated to help Floridians. 211s in the United States regularly provide assistance across state lines to respond to flooding, wildfires, hurricanes, and even man-made disasters such as the September 11 attack.

**PLEASE VOTE TO INCLUDE FUNDING FOR PENNSYLVANIA'S 211 SYSTEM IN THE STATE BUDGET TO
SUPPORT 211'S CAPACITY TO HELP OUR COMMUNITIES IN TIMES OF DISASTER OR GREAT NEED.**

211 HELPS PENNSYLVANIANS STRUGGLING WITH HOMELESSNESS



Homeless

**211 assists those who are
homeless or at risk of
becoming homeless to find
safe housing in their area**

FACT

PA 211 partnered with Connect To Home: Coordinated Entry System of Eastern PA to assist in housing services for individuals who are homeless or immediately at risk of becoming homeless for a 33 county region.

Coordinated entry is a strategy to connect people to the right services as quickly as possible, prioritize based on need and vulnerability, and enhance data-driven decision making for planning, resource allocation and performance evaluation.

FACT

Through our partnership with three Continuums of Care, we were able to help more than 1,000 households exit from homelessness to permanent housing stability through rapid re-housing or permanent supportive housing programs across the state.

Those contacting 211 receive a pre-screen to determine if they are homeless or immediately at risk, and then 211 will conduct an assessment to determine how to assist them with housing services.

FACT

Last year, 211 performed 4,819 screenings of individuals and families who called because they were genuinely worried about being homeless.¹

At least 246 callers were fleeing domestic violence. At least 2,660 callers received a vulnerability screening. 76 of the callers met the criteria for being chronically homeless and at least 1,218 have a mental health diagnosis. We talked with callers from 19 states plus Puerto Rico and received inquiries from all 36 counties in Pennsylvania¹

**PLEASE VOTE TO INCLUDE FUNDING FOR PENNSYLVANIA'S 211 SYSTEM IN
THIS YEAR'S STATE BUDGET TO HELP PENNSYLVANIANS STRUGGLING
WITH HOMELESSNESS.**



211 HELPS KEEP PENNSYLVANIANS SAFE IN THEIR HOME



**211 refers seniors and others
in need to agencies and
programs that keep them
healthy and independent**

FACT

Seniors age 60 or older will make up 29%, or 4 million, of Pennsylvania's population in 2030. This is an increase from the current 2.2 million seniors in PA.

This growth will represent an increase in the number of contacts to 211 for referrals for utility assistance, meals, and transportation, among others.

FACT

Housing a senior in a Pennsylvania nursing home costs between \$108,847 and \$116,800 annually.¹

It is burdensome for seniors and other family members to bear the costs of living in nursing homes or assisted living. These costs will only continue to rise. 211 provides other alternatives the help keep seniors and others independent in their own homes.

FACT

211 referrals assist seniors and those unable to leave the home easily with home modifications, meals, legal aid, transportation, and utility assistance that can help them remain independent.

In 2018, 7,138 seniors age 60-85 in Pennsylvania, were provided basic needs assistance through 211 referrals, keeping them healthy and self-sufficient.²

**PLEASE VOTE TO INCLUDE FUNDING FOR PENNSYLVANIA'S 211 SYSTEM IN THIS
YEAR'S BUDGET TO HELP PENNSYLVANIA SENIORS AGE SAFELY IN THEIR HOMES**

¹ Pennsylvania Health Care Association, Cost of Care Study, 2016
² 2-1-1 Data



211 PROVIDES ADDICTION HELP IN PENNSYLVANIA



**211 connects Pennsylvanians
in need of help with opiate
and other drug addiction
services**

FACT

211 resource navigators are trained in active listening to help those battling addiction.

211 resource navigators are not just answering calls and making referrals. They are trained to be active listeners, which can be impactful in working through addiction problems. They can listen to the caller's problems, and then make referrals for the best places to receive help to address the issues.

FACT

Only 1 out of 8 addicted persons in Pennsylvania receive needed services to fight their addiction.¹

In 2018, there were approximately 2,307 contacts on opiate and other drug abuse problems.²

The 211 database has numerous resources throughout the state, both private and public, to which addicted persons or family members can be connected. This includes support groups as well as treatment options.

FACT

PA taxpayers spend approximately \$430 per capita on drug and alcohol addiction problems.¹

In order to reduce these costs in the future, addiction prevention needs to be a top concern for PA. 211 provides Pennsylvanians with opportunities to find community supports and treatment which fight addiction and support recovery.

**PLEASE VOTE TO INCLUDE FUNDING FOR PENNSYLVANIA'S 211 SYSTEM IN THIS
YEAR'S BUDGET TO SUPPORT CITIZENS AND THEIR FAMILIES AFFECTED BY
SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS**

¹ Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs
2 2-1-1 Data

211 SERVES VETERANS IN PENNSYLVANIA



211 connects veterans and their families to financial, health, employment and other services

FACT

There are over 800,000 veterans in Pennsylvania and 211 is committed to connecting these veterans and their families with services they need to transition into a civilian lifestyle and maintain self-sufficiency.¹

Services like 211 can facilitate re-integration by encouraging help-seeking behaviors, providing a safe and supportive environment for veterans to call and access appropriate aid when they are in need.

FACT

Last year, 6,568 211 referrals were made to veteran contacts providing them with critical services like utility assistance, tax preparation, food assistance, housing, and health resources.²

The statewide 211 database houses all of these resources. The Southwest 211 call center has a veteran on staff who is familiar with the various services available to that population and are able to answer the diverse needs.²

FACT

Between 5.6% and 7% of Pennsylvania veterans are living in poverty. In addition, 4.9% of PA veterans are unemployed.

It is important to provide opportunities for our veterans to receive the services and help they need when they return home from duty. Income tax preparation, utility assistance, employment and training, as well as traditional veteran healthcare information is all available through 211.

PLEASE VOTE TO INCLUDE FUNDING FOR PENNSYLVANIA'S 211 SYSTEM IN THIS YEAR'S STATE BUDGET TO HELP OUR VETERANS

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Services, 2017
² 2-1-1 Data