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Statewide 211 Program to Expand Coverage for All Illinoisans
Illinois to join rest of nation in making it easier for people to find available resources



LAKE COUNTY, ILLINOIS (April 14, 2022) The Illinois 211 Board today announced that \$1.8 million has been allocated in the state's FY 2023 budget for a statewide 211 program. Today, 211 serves more than 96% of America's population but less than 36% of the population of Illinois.

211 is an easy-to-remember phone number that connects people during moments of need to a wide range of essential health and human services. From food assistance and help paying bills, to health care answers and mental health resources, 211 guides people who are struggling but might not know where to turn, regardless of the language they speak, the time of day or where they live. All calls are free, confidential and can be anonymous. The one-stop helpline does more than simply patch people through to agencies. 211's expert navigators are trained specialists who will listen, identify underlying root causes, and guide people to available resources.

The plan is to expand 211 coverage through accredited contact centers to every county across the state so that all Illinoisans have easy access to quality information, resources and assistance.

The funding will allow the Illinois 211 Board to plan and prioritize the launch of 211 in uncovered counties, with full state coverage by 2024. The funding also will provide increased financial stability for existing 211 contact centers to adapt to an evolving 211 and to align with statewide 211 standards.

The Illinois 211 Board will also be able to hire an Executive Director to lead and manage this effort and technology staff to focus on building a statewide resource database for services in every county, developing unified ways for all contact centers to extract and report data, as well as analyzing needs and gaps in services.

“We are grateful to State Senator Melinda Bush for her tremendous leadership and to all the legislators who have supported a statewide 211 system,” said Kristi Long, Chair of the Illinois 211 Board and President & CEO of United Way of Lake County. “Many more lives will be improved and saved through this expansion. Lake County is proud to help lead the way to bring 211 services to all Illinois communities and serve as a model 211 program.”

“I’m proud that Lake County has a 211 program, but I’m especially thrilled that in this budget we have allocated \$1.8 million for a statewide 211 program,” said State Senator Melinda Bush. “With this funding, we can provide Illinoisans all across the state with easy access to the resources they need.”

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ABOUT UNITED WAY OF LAKE COUNTY AND 211

United Way of Lake County's mission is to unite leadership and resources to create lasting change that will improve lives in Lake County, Illinois. In 2019, United Way of Lake County launched 211, a free, confidential, 24-hour information and referral helpline, providing personalized help guiding individuals and families in Lake County to available health and human services. Lake County is the largest county in Illinois to have implemented 211 for its community members.

Through the support of our partners and supporters, we are transforming communities by delivering programs and services that are timely, effective and scalable, with results we can measure. For more information, visit LIVEUNITEDlakecounty.org or 211LakeCounty.org.