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**VIA E-MAIL AND U.S. MAIL**

December 18, 2025

Linda C. Bridwell  
Executive Director  
Kentucky Public Service Commission  
P.O. Box 615  
211 Sower Boulevard  
Frankfort, KY 40602-0615

**RECEIVED**

**DEC 18 2025**

**PUBLIC SERVICE  
COMMISSION**

RE: Annual Status Report regarding United Way 211 Implementation

Dear Ms. Bridwell:

Pursuant to the Administrative Case No. 343 dated August 17, 2004 designating United Way of Kentucky as lead agency for implementation of the 211 dialing code in Kentucky, enclosed please find our annual report on the progress of the United Way 211 initiative.

We appreciate the ongoing support for statewide 211 by the Commission.

If you have any questions about the report or need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Middleton", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Kevin Middleton  
President and 211 State Executive  
United Way of Kentucky

**KENTUCKY 211**

**Status Report to the**

**Kentucky Public Service Commission**

**from**

**United Way of Kentucky**

**211 Statewide Implementation**  
**Administrative Case No. 343**

**December 18, 2025**

## **Introduction**

In July 2000, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reserved the abbreviated 211 dialing code nationwide for accessing health and human service information and referral (I/R) services.

In 2001, following informal meetings convened by the Kentucky Public Service Commission (PSC) to discuss the assignment of 211 within the Commonwealth, United Way of Kentucky (UWKY) submitted a petition to the PSC requesting the assignment of the 211 dialing code to UWKY and its affiliated organizations. UWKY proposed serving as the lead agency for the statewide implementation of 211 in Kentucky. The PSC granted UWKY provisional authority over the 211 dialing code for a three-year period to develop a pilot program and required UWKY to report on its progress at the end of that period.

In 2004, UWKY submitted its progress report to the PSC, which included a comprehensive business plan for Kentucky 211.

On August 17, 2004, the Kentucky Public Service Commission issued an order designating UWKY as the permanent lead agency for the statewide implementation of 211 in Kentucky. The Commission also mandated that UWKY provide annual progress reports on the 211 initiative.

### **Kentucky's 211 Service Delivery through October 2025**

United Way of Kentucky (UWKY) is dedicated to the continuous development, maintenance, and delivery of high-quality, standards-driven, statewide 211 services. By late 2020, the existing Kentucky 211 contact centers in Lexington, Louisville, Bowling Green and Northern Kentucky had expanded to cover additional regions and have since been providing information and referral services to residents across all 120 counties in the Commonwealth.

#### **Background:**

An original plan was submitted to the Commission in 2004 and restructured in 2009 to incorporate advancements in technology, updated pricing, and national expansion models. At this time 47% of the state's population was covered by three contact centers. This updated plan provided an opportunity to present new possibilities to the administration and legislators, reintroduce them to 211, and seek their support. While meetings with state leaders were well-received, funding was not available at that time.

Between 2018 and the summer of 2019, a planning committee comprising United Way of Kentucky (UWKY) staff, board members, and representatives from the now four 211 contact centers serving the state, following the launch of the final center in Bowling Green in 2016, collaborated with leadership of state government agencies, particularly within the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS). These efforts focused on evaluating the system's capacity to provide contracted services to the Commonwealth in support of the CHFS Kynect Resources project.

In April 2020, UWKY entered into a contract with CHFS to facilitate the implementation of "closed-loop" referral services in Kentucky. This initiative leverages 211 resource data to offer residents, for the first

time, a seamless online platform where they can manage their health insurance, referral, and public benefits records. Simultaneously, agencies assisting these individuals gain the ability to create referrals and review referral data, ensuring the efficient and effective delivery of human services statewide.

In Summer 2021, a privately-funded four-part strategic planning series was held with Kentucky's 211 contact centers to address barriers to consistent service delivery, user experience, and data sharing. Discussions focused on national quality standards, delivery efficiency, and growing interest from state agencies and partners. The series facilitated collaboration among the centers, resulting in agreed strategies for shared systems to ensure a consistent user experience statewide.

Building on this effort, UWKY submitted a proposal in October 2021 to support expanded outreach and onboarding for the CHFS/Kynect Resources project. The proposal emphasized enhanced data-sharing, technology, and personnel supports to better serve Kentucky residents.

Subsequent contracts have renewed and expanded the partnership through FY 2026. UWKY invested in the expansion of 211 information and referral services to the final 62 "uncovered" counties, and now features 13 FTEs for resource specialist positions covering that expansion and performing both inbound call management and outbound follow up, and supported awareness initiatives. In 2023, we launched an incentive program in partnership with CHFS to support community partner engagement. The partnership has also funded the creation of a statewide interactive, multi-language voice response (IVR) platform to ensure that 211 can be quickly activated for additional statewide call center needs, such as eligibility and enrollment supports for public benefits programs, disaster response, and more. Finally, UWKY also invests in a statewide Director of 211 Initiatives, Andrea Brown, to increase our internal capacity to continue our work in support of Kentucky communities.

In mid-2024, 211 specialists began assisting Medicaid applicants with interpreting/completing the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) Screenings/Assessment as a part of Medicaid applications as a new state and federal requirement. In addition, the state applications are branded with a message to call 211 for assistance with the assessments as needed, and the 211 shared IVR was updated with an additional prompt to support callers seeking assessment support.

In late-2024, the 211 Spanish language line was launched to assist callers with navigating the 211 platform. Spanish speaking callers are the second highest population served by Kentucky 211 contact centers. We will continue to make additional improvements to ensure easy and efficient access to 211 by every resident in the Commonwealth.

In early 2025, UWKY drafted a statewide 211 Disaster Response Plan that features both local 211 and state-level operational guidelines and activation protocols during natural disasters. This plan is currently under review by the state's 211 contact centers, and UWKY is proceeding with contractual support from a peer center sufficiently outside any potential incident footprint of Kentucky-specific disasters to ensure that at a moment's notice, even if one or more Kentucky-based centers are impacted, Kentucky 211 can continue to be supported 24/7 with live answer service and up-to-date disaster resources. UWKY and Kentucky 211 also formed a partnership with the Airbnb Foundation to support disaster impacted communities with options to ensure that families impacted by

disaster would have options for non-congregate shelter, with priority support for the elderly, disabled, and families with young children. By summer 2025, UWKY had sheltered over 250 disaster impacted families through this partnership.

In mid-2025, Metro United Way shifted its contact center services, which are now provided through a contractual relationship with United Way of the Bluegrass 211.

Throughout this period, UWKY has supported public awareness campaigns for both 211 and the Kynect Resources closed loop referral platform throughout the Commonwealth, including PSAs, billboards, email newsletter, social media marketing and communications implementation and in-person awareness events.

In summary, through this UWKY's leadership, one hundred percent of Kentucky residents have ready access 24/7, 365 days a year, to the largest electronic health and human resources information and referral database (collectively) in the Commonwealth through full 211 service by phone, chat, text, email, web search, and a closed loop partner referral platform.

UWKY will continue its work with our 211 contact centers to support the provision of services through sustainable funding sourced through contract services, legislative avenues, and grant opportunities, and to seek additional public/private partnerships.

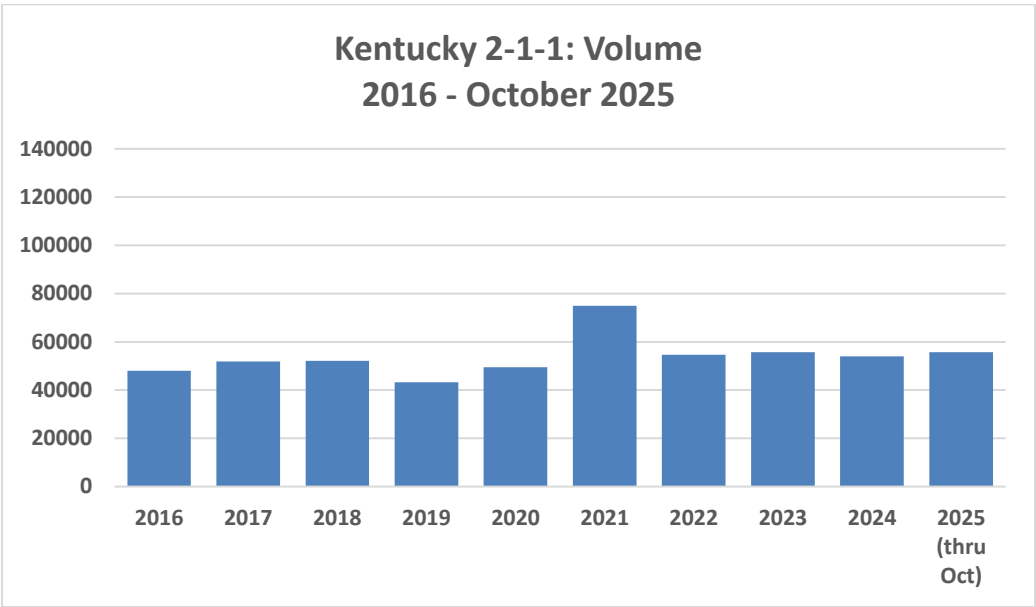
### **Usage Volume**

In 2024, referral volume in Kentucky was 53,999\*, but 211 has seen a significant increase in volume over the course of the first 3 quarters of 2025, with 55,667 referrals by October 1. Figure 1 below shows statewide call volume. In 2024, for those reporting individualized totals, calls for basic needs, such as housing, utilities, and food made up over 72.5% of all calls for services (see Figure 2 below). Final 2025 figures will be updated in next year's report.

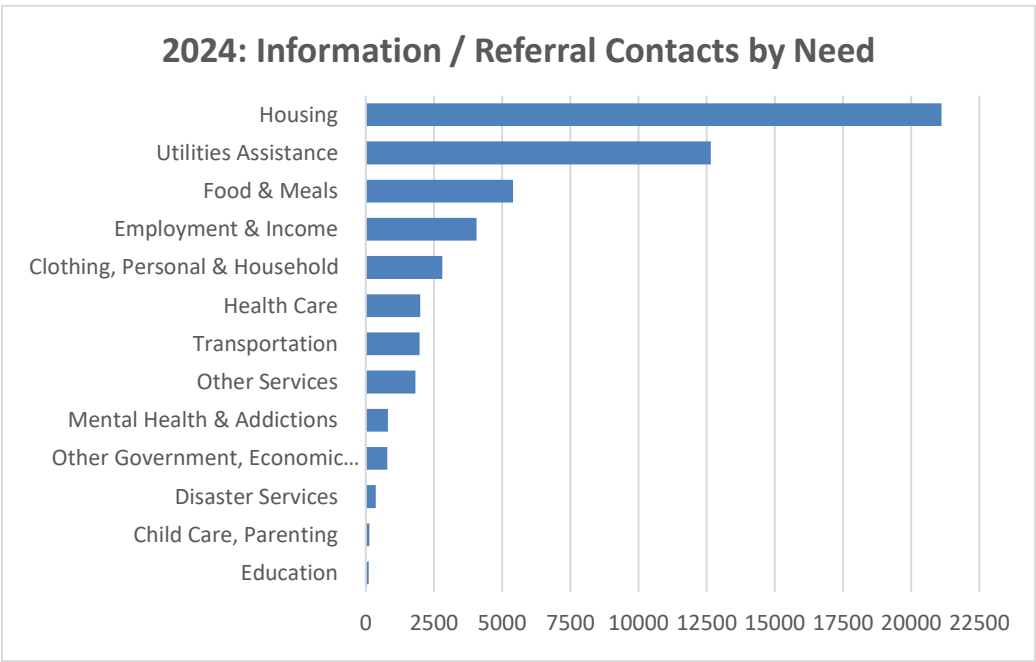
*\*(Northern Kentucky referral volume is estimated by percent of Kentucky population vs total population covered, including Ohio coverage area, applied to total volume for United Way of Greater Cincinnati 211 for 2024)*

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**FIGURE 1**



**FIGURE 2**



## **Community Partnerships and Special Projects**

Beyond its day-to-day information and referral services, United Way 211 has demonstrated its value through its contributions to various community partnerships and special projects.

**Kynect Resources** – Kynect Resources makes it easier than ever to not only connect people with available resources, but to track outcomes and collaborate with community partners. UWKY, in coordination with our contact centers across Kentucky, has partnered with the Commonwealth to populate the resource data that underpins the service. This partnership has allowed for the expansion of 211 to 120 counties. Every Kentuckian can now dial 211 or text their zip code to 898-211 to access services 24/7/365. Since 2022, UWKY has also provided 211 centers with dedicated resource associates to further develop and maintain a robust database of resources and expand usage of Kynect. Through community partner site visits, regional workgroups, community events, and survey outreach, these associates collect new and revised resource information and updates for the resource database. The associates also actively collaborate with CHFS Kynect Resources project managers and the 211-database software teams to improve the data transfer between Kynect and the 211 data platforms. Trained by CHFS, they act as referral specialists for Kynect Resources, monitoring requests in the portal from community organizations to claim their sites, and are providing training and support as partners onboard and receive referrals within Kynect, as well as managing outstanding referral closures. As noted above, 211 specialists now also support Medicaid SDOH screenings/assessments.

**Disaster** – 211 has played a vital role in disaster response in recent years, connecting affected individuals with critical resources, coordinating with community partners, and supporting recovery efforts to help stabilize communities, such as serving as the Crisis Cleanup hotline in the later months following the 2021 tornado disaster, and the new Airbnb disaster housing partnership developed in 2025 as referenced above. We continue to support our state network to ensure appropriate engagement in helping affected families with up-to-date resources, and as of 2025, UWKY staff serves as Secretary for KYVOAD.

**Veterans** – 211 continues to connect veterans and their families with essential resources, including benefits assistance, healthcare enrollment, education and employment opportunities, and community-based programs.

**Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** – United Way 211 connects low-income individuals and families with information about free tax assistance sites across the Commonwealth. Partnering with organizations like the Louisville Asset Building Coalition (LABC) and Louisville Metro Government, MUW 211 works to increase awareness of and access to the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). At a time when many families face financial challenges, EITC refunds can help reduce debt and improve stability. MUW 211 refers callers to Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites, where trained volunteers offer free tax preparation and ensure filers receive all eligible credits. By dialing 211, callers can learn about VITA locations, schedules, and eligibility criteria. In Greater Lexington, UWBG promotes financial stability by helping families and individuals access the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). This credit supports needs like savings, home repairs, education, and bills. Through coordination with 211, VITA sites prepare taxes for eligible individuals at no cost, with trained volunteers ensuring maximum

credits. In Northern Kentucky, United Way of Greater Cincinnati provides resources on free tax preparation services through United Way, and uses 211 and a dedicated email to offer personalized support. Similarly, United Way of Southern Kentucky 211 promotes VITA services and local tax assistance programs in its region.

**Housing and Homelessness** – United Way 211 has provided support to homeless programs like Louisville's Coordinated Shelter Access through the Coalition for the Homeless, which tracks open shelter bed space, and has historically supported the point in time count to ensure adequate services can be provided to this at-risk population.

**Federal Legislative Initiatives** – Although the "Human-services Emergency Logistics Program Act of 2023" (HELP Act) was not advanced during the 118th Congress, there is renewed momentum in the 119th Congress.

The HELP Act, would strengthen the 211 network by:

- Increasing the availability, reliability, sustainability, and responsiveness of 211 services across the country.
- Strengthening the coordination of 211, 988, and 911 services, including reducing the use of 911 for calls not related to law enforcement, fire, or medical emergencies.
- Broadening public awareness of the 211 helpline and more efficiently connecting individuals with needed resources to meet basic needs, including homelessness and housing supports, veteran's services, hunger, disaster response and recovery, workforce development, mental health care, caregiver supports, and domestic violence.

This legislation is critical to ensuring the 211 network has adequate funding to help people receive the social service supports and mental health resources they need.

**National View and Summary** – In 2024, the 211 network in the United States was the 24/7 go-to resource that connected millions with locally available help. Like in our Commonwealth, expert, caring call center operators supported 99% of the U.S. population. In 2024, the *national* 211 network:

- Responded to more than 16.8 million phone calls, texts, web chats, emails, and in-person requests for help.
- Made more than 18.1 million total referrals to help.

**Top Needs** – Local 211 specialists helped with virtually every need facing families, but the majority of requests that 211s received at the national level mimicked what we saw in Kentucky – they were for essential needs like food and shelter. In 2024, nationally, 211 specialists made:

- 5.6 million connections to help to reduce and prevent housing insecurity and homelessness.
- 2.9 million connections to utilities assistance.
- 2.5 million connections to help to reduce hunger and food insecurity.



## **From the 2024 National 211 Impact Survey Report Housing**

- Housing referrals continue to increase, now at nearly double pre-pandemic numbers.
- Housing referrals are up 16% since 2022.
- The volume of referrals for housing support has effectively doubled since 2019, from 2.9 million to 5.6 million, increasing along with total call volume.
- Recent data from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development shows that the number of people experiencing homelessness jumped 18% last year in the U.S., further corroborating that housing is a pressing need for many.

### **Referrals for utilities and food assistance steadily increased, too.**

- Utility assistance referrals are up 12% since 2022, as many struggle to pay routine bills.
- Food assistance referrals, including access to food pantries, are up 5% since 2023.
- These needs can have a compounding effect; without reliable housing, food and transportation, it's extremely difficult to pursue an education or hold down a job.

### **Referrals for disaster-related assistance spiked in 2024, increasing by over 50% from 2023 to 2024.**

- There was heavy volume of disaster referrals in North Carolina, California and Texas.
- The 211 network was there for individuals and families impacted by hurricanes and flooding in the southern U.S. throughout 2024 by assessing needs, convening services and supports, and mobilizing resources. More recently in early 2025, for example, trained 211 Community Resource Specialists referred local residents and tourists to mental health services after tragedy struck New Orleans and helped renters and homeowners recover from the Los Angeles County wildfires.

"While the annual 211 Impact Survey provides a valuable snapshot of community challenges – greater public and private investments in 211 would enable us to better understand and address community needs in real time," said Dr. Nicole M. Cooper, EVP, Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer at UWW. "We are currently looking for partners to collaborate with us to create the first-ever national dashboard that integrates locally collected 211 data to provide insights into community needs – like housing, food, and transportation – allowing partners across sectors to more quickly and effectively develop solutions at the national and local level."

### **SUMMARY NOTE**

In the 25 years since the FCC assigned the 211 number for health and human services information and referral, it has repeatedly proven its impact and value. In Kentucky, United Way 211 remains steadfast in upholding the highest standards in the industry while fulfilling its mission to ensure 211 is accessible to every Kentuckian. Our commitment to connecting individuals with vital resources continues to strengthen communities and transform lives across the Commonwealth.