

An Overview of 211 Services In the Nation

CMAP Strategy Report

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Background

211 Service originated in Atlanta, Georgia and was launched by the United Way Atlanta just over a decade ago in 1997. Unlike 411 which provides directory assistance and can charge a fee for service, or 311 which provides information about non-emergency municipal services, 211 is a service line that provides callers with information and referrals only about human services and related community information. The United Way has categorized 211 referrals and they are listed in **Table 1**; the agencies that provide the human services are referral agencies. Throughout majority of the states, 211 services remain standard, with some variation.

Table 1

Referral Categories	Types of Referrals
<i>Human Needs Resource</i>	Food banks, clothing, shelters, rent assistance, utility assistance, emergency response, housing foreclosure
<i>Physical and Mental Health Resources</i>	Medical info lines, crisis intervention services, support groups, counseling, drug and alcohol intervention, rehabilitation, health insurance, programs, Medicaid and Medicare, maternal health, children's health insurance programs
<i>Employment Support</i>	Unemployment benefits, financial assistance, job training, transportation assistance, education programs
<i>Support for Older Americans and Persons with Disabilities</i>	Home health care, adult day care, congregate meals, Meals on Wheels, respite care, transportation, and homemaker services
<i>Support for Children, Youth and Families</i>	Quality childcare, youth programs, after school programs, Head Start, family resource centers, summer camps, recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring, protective services
<i>Volunteer Opportunities and donations</i>	Various community and local organizations

Source: United Way/AIRS 211 Foundation, <http://www.211.org/about.html>

The two leading sponsors for nationwide 211 services are United Way and AIRS (Alliance of Information & Referral Services). The United Way, a national network of nearly 1,300 local organizations, focuses on education, income, and health projects supporting their mission of community development (United Way). AIRS is a professional association for over 1,200 community information and referral providers (I&R) which specializes in creating and maintaining resource databases of programs and services that make information available through a variety of communication channels (AIRS). Additionally AIRS is the credentialing authority behind an accreditation program that measures an organization's ability to meet the AIRS Standards, and a certification program that evaluates the competence of I&R practitioners (AIRS). Both organizations have partnered to promote 211 services which align with their organizational missions.

Legislation

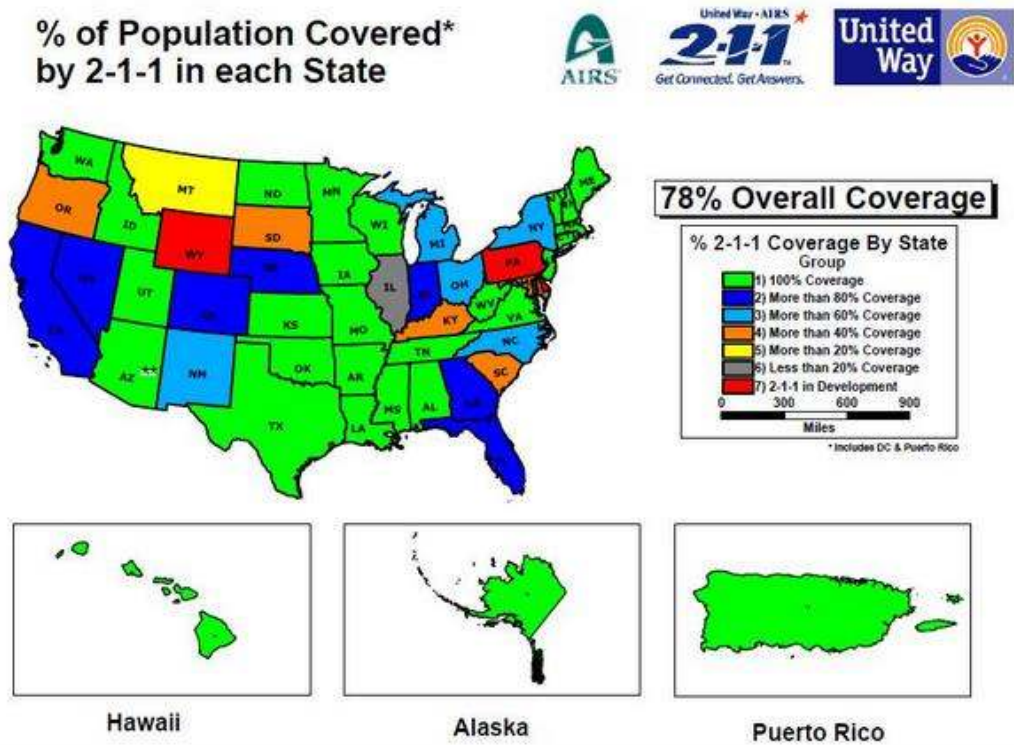
Although individual states and counties manage the 211 service, this service has been deemed a federal priority, especially after September 11th, 2001 and severe and devastating natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina. After the terrorist attack on September, 11, 2001 (9/11) Congress saw the potential for the system in emergencies and in 2002 granted states permission to use federal money for 211 systems intended to prepare for potential bioterrorism attacks (Strom, NY Times, Nov 2005). Seeing an opportunity to create federal funding assistance, the 211 Calling Act, co-

sponsored by Senators Elizabeth Dole (R-NC) and Hillary Clinton (D-NY), is legislation designed to authorize \$150 million for years one and two of 211 implementation, and \$100 million for years three through five through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to help implement and sustain 211 nationwide (211 Calling Act, United Way). States would designate, if they have not already, a lead entity for 211 which would develop a statewide plan for implementation and administration of the funds. States would be required to provide a 50% match in order to draw down the federal dollars (211 Calling Act, United Way). This bill was re-introduced in January 2007 and was referred to the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee and is still under consideration (GovTrack).

National Status of 211

As of April 2008, of 50 states, 46 states and Washington DC and Puerto Rico were providing 211 service, although at various stages of implementation and activity as shown in **Diagram 1**. Of the 46 states, 27 states and Washington DC and Puerto Rico have fully implemented 211 service which means service is accessible to the entire population. Only four states are considered “in development”, including Illinois, Pennsylvania, Arizona, and Wyoming. The first statewide 211 service line was developed by Connecticut, Infoline 211, and the state provided the bulk of the funding for full implementation. However, funding has been one of the biggest challenges for many other states. As stated by the United Way, “211s have struggled to obtain sustainable funding.” Therefore, some states are forming private and public partnership models for funding; typical funding sources include local United Ways, community foundations, and federal and local governments.

Diagram 1 (produced by United Way of America, November 2008)



Produced by United Way of America: November 2008

* Coverage is defined as population with landline telephone access to 2-1-1 dialing code.
 ** Arizona has coverage in case of disaster or emergency.

Status of 211 in Illinois

The State of Illinois passed the Human Services 211 Collaboration Act in 2003. The Act recognizes 211 as a potential tool for collaborating human services into an information and referral network. When the legislation passed it created the Human Services 211 Collaboration Board which has nine members appointed by the Governor (ILGA). The following state agencies are represented on this collaborative board:

- 1) Office of the Governor
- 2) Illinois Commerce Commission
- 3) Department of Children and Family Services
- 4) Department of Healthcare and Family Services
- 5) Department of Human Services
- 6) Department of Public Health
- 7) Department on Aging
- 8) Department of Employment Security
- 9) Department of Human Rights

Furthermore, the Human Services 211 Collaboration Act identifies four important tasks that the Board must complete.

- One task is to implement 211 services within Illinois, which is a non-emergency telephone system that provides information and referrals for human services. The referrals may also be part of a web database.
- The second task is to establish standards for 211 deliveries in Illinois that are consistent with human referral service standards established by the National 211 Collaborative Board and the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems. These standards require suitable technology for delivering 211 calls as well as meeting the terms of the American Disabilities Act.
- The third task is to establish pilot projects within Illinois that will serve as operational examples of how to implement 211 as a human services information and referral number. The Board was given permission to select up to six pilots. In fact, three pilots were selected and endorsed.
- The fourth task is reporting, which is an annual requirement of the Board. The Board is to report to the Department of Human Services, the Governor, and the General Assembly on the use of 211 services in Illinois.

(Source: ILGA)

Although, a statewide plan for 211 services has not yet been developed, three pilots are expected to begin during the winter of 2009. The three pilots are being directed by local United Ways in three different areas within Illinois: 1) Quad Cities (East Moline, Moline, and Rock Island), 2) East St. Louis, and 3) Bloomington. In the Quad Cities and East St. Louis the 211 pilots are expansions of existing systems in Iowa and Missouri, respectively. In Bloomington, a new system is being created. These pilots are scheduled to run up to two years. It is the goal that the pilots will give the Collaborative Board and the State insight on how 211 could potentially operate across Illinois.

The 2040 Regional Vision

In 2008, the CMAP Board of Directors approved several vision statements for the 2040 Regional Comprehensive Plan reflecting the goals of the northeastern region of Illinois. 211 is an integral human services information and referral tool that aligns specifically with some vision statements.

Regional Visions that align with 211 Development in Illinois

1. The region will be strengthened by taking an active approach to **equity**. The benefits and burdens caused by the region's investments and policies will be fairly distributed to all parts of the region. In addition, these benefits and burdens will be shared between groups of people, regardless of age, gender, income, race, ethnicity, culture, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or disability status. All residents will have the opportunity to access the region's economic, educational, housing, and other assets. Also, the diversity of the region's many cultures will be celebrated as one of our strengths. **<211 would make access to human services equitable which increases the opportunity for residents to improve their economic, educational, and housing circumstances>**
2. The region will embrace **innovation** and use creative strategies to meet our challenges and opportunities. Our innovation will drive economic growth and keep our region competitive in the changing global economy. It will also allow us to address environmental, energy, social, and infrastructure problems. The region will be on the forefront of developing new technologies, with innovative approaches to providing public services and increasing cooperation between public and private sectors. **<211 would involve technology and innovation on improving provision of public services, including web interface and regionally integrated databases >**
3. The region's governance systems will be characterized by high degrees of **intergovernmental coordination and planning**. Leaders will recognize the interdependence of our communities and will work across political boundaries to address issues affecting multiple jurisdictions. While celebrating the diversity of our municipalities, the region will plan collaboratively for mutual benefit to promote efficiency and equity in planning our region's economic, environmental, social, educational, and infrastructure systems. Planning for physical infrastructure and the use of land will be coordinated, creating links to social systems like health care, public safety, education, and social services. **<211 would challenge local governments to work together to build a beneficial service for residents, governments, and public servants such as emergency first responders >**
4. Regional planning decisions will consider and **improve the health of residents of our region**. Residents across our region will choose healthy lifestyles that benefit from the availability of open space, transportation and recreation options, healthy food, clean water, and clean air. The region's residents will be able to access our strong system of health care and medical institutions, protecting public health, social development, and economic competitiveness. **<211 is an information and referral system that could improve access to health resources and facilities in various communities>**

Source: 2040 Regional Comprehensive plan, Regional Vision for Metropolitan Chicago

211 can be considered one of many potential outcomes from working toward achieving these visions. The region can also consider how 211 could unify existing agencies with the purpose of streamlining the delivery of human service information and referrals to the public. The remainder of this strategy report will describe 211 within a national context.

Operating 211

The 211 system involves both the county and state governments because in order for the system to be operational, the right model must be adopted and partnerships should be formed. There are three primary models that were created to describe how 211 service could operate throughout the country:

- 1) Centralized Administration/Single Call Center
 - 2) Decentralized Administration/Multiple Call Centers
 - 3) Centralized Administration/Multiple Call Centers
- (Telecommunications and Information Policy Institute, Feb. 2002).

Each of these models has some unique qualities and participating states have selected the best models suited for their needs, but Model 2 has been selected as the best fit for majority of the states. **Table 2** describes these models and their differences. Once a state decides that it wants to implement 211 services, a few key issues that require consideration are: telecommunication access through local and regional carriers, development of databases with human services resource information, operational staff and coordinators, sponsoring governmental and private agencies, and physical and web call centers.

Table 2: 211 Operational Models

	Model 1 Centralized Administration/ Centralized Costs	Model 2 Decentralized Administration/Community Resources	Model 3 Centralized Administration/Mixed Transparency in Technology
Model Description	Simplest model, a single call center and single Information and Referral body. 211 services are only available to a locality which is a small to medium-sized region or a metropolitan area) or a small state.	Multiple call centers are utilized and individual I&R providers may each administer their own call centers which lead to negotiating independent contracts with LECs.	Multiple call centers, one organizational body, centralized administration.
Database function	Database is housed at call center; Costs are lowest of three models	Databases are generally housed at respective call centers and managed there too. There are varying degrees of how and if databases are shared among call centers.	Database is operated centrally and has statewide data and likely to be linked via a WAN (Wireless Access Network). Call centers are responsible for their own "section" of the database.
Identified States by type of model most applicable	CT, RI, NH are a few of the states that would benefit most from this model.	CA, FL, NC, NY are a few states that could benefit most from this model type.	MA, OR, TX, and WA are a few states that could benefit from this model.
Other notes about models	Since the model is centralized, community specialists are often staffed who have familiarity with specific areas	211 collaboration and partnerships are often common under this model to assist with 211 implementation and call center development.	

Data Source: Telecommunications and Information Policy Institute, University of Texas at Austin, Feb. 2002

As seen in **Diagram 1**, 211 services are being implemented at different rates across the country. Additionally with current technology, communication options are being maximized. In fact, based on 2006 data, forty states have a website available, eleven states have wireless accessibility, and thirty

seven states, including DC and Puerto Rico, provide traditional land line accessibility (Public Policy Associates, June 2006).

211 Web Database

Development of an online web interface for 211 users is an important part of providing information and referral resources. On many 211 websites users can log on and search a statewide, regional, or city database for services by entering their zip code, city location, or type of service being requested. The web interface allows users to find quick referrals and information without contacting an operator.

Operational Challenges

During and after the process of implementing 211 services there are some common operational challenges that states have been facing. One challenge is whether or not the state will take the lead role in rolling out and standardizing 211 or decide to decentralize efforts, leaving it to individual local governments. Another challenge is determining whether or not call volume and budget justifies 24 hour coverage, despite AIRS 211 standards which require it (Public Policy Associates, June 2006). Of course, the most significant challenge is sustainable funding, as seen in the Ventura County, California example.

Financing 211: The Case of Ventura County, California (Editorial Review)

In the case of Ventura County, California, 211 services are operated at a county level. The CEO of the United Way of Ventura County has expressed concern about sustainable funding for 211 Services, despite some of the recent contributions and grants that have been received by the County (**Table A**). In an Op-Editorial in the Ventura County Star Paper (July 2008), the CEO made reference to a recent resolution passed by the California State Associations of Counties which supports the goal of obtaining state funding for 211. Additionally, a strategy is forming to request beneficiaries of 211 services to make financial contributions, such as county fire department s, mental health facilities and other human service agencies. The idea is that in order to keep 211 a free service for the public, the state of California and more public service oriented agencies will need to financially support 211.

Table A

Funding Source	\$ Amount
Ventura County	\$35,000
United Way	\$810,000*
First 5 Ventura County	\$100,000 through 2011
Interface Children Family Services	\$900,000
Total Funding	\$1.845 million**

*\$210k pending for 2008-09 fiscal year
** Total Funding does not represent all funding received by Ventura County but it is a representative sample of funding recently received.

Source: VenturaCountyStar Online Newspaper, Op-Ed 6/29/08

Ventura County is located just north of Los Angeles County and has an estimated population of almost 800,000 residents (U.S. Census). At the present time the County has only offered financial support that covers 5% of total 211 operational costs- which compared to other surrounding counties is minimal (**Table B**). However, Ventura County, like many other counties around the nation is reaching out to more public and private agencies to find innovative ways to obtain funding, which would secure 211 for the future.

Table B

County	211 Financial Support by County government
Ventura	5%
Los Angeles	75%
San Bernardino	25%
San Diego	27%
Kern	46%

Source: VenturaCountyStar Online Newspaper, Op-Ed, 6/29/08

Sources:

David Smith, CEO of United Way Ventura County, "211 Help line a solid investment for Government", VenturaCountyStar, Op-Ed, 6/29/08

U.S. Census, State & County Quickfacts, (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/06/06111.html>)

Costs

What are the projected costs of a Nationwide 211 System?

- **Mixed Model Scenario**- \$160.8 million for first year and \$1.687 billion over ten years
- **Single Model** - \$172.5 million for first year and \$1.808 billion over ten years
- **Decentralized Model**- \$285.4 million for first year and \$2.992 billion over ten years
- **Hybrid Model**- \$94.7 million for first year and \$993.38 million over ten years

more detail can be found in the Appendix on pg. 20

Data Source: Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, University of Texas at Austin, National Benefit/Cost Analysis of Three Digit-Accessed Telephone Information and Referral Services, December 2004 (pages 53-57)

A report released by the University of Texas at Austin emphasizes that the benefits could outweigh the costs for nationwide implementation of 211 services. However paying the costs of implementing and operating 211 for several states and counties is an obstacle. Some states have initiated 211 operations but have ceased operations or decreased capacity due to budget cutbacks. For instance, in New York, for FY 2007-08 \$6.3 million was set aside in the state budget for 211 services. NY 211 has been operating statewide since 2007, covering more than 70% of the population (211 New York). One year later, in

July 2008, a 92% budget cut was announced for 211 services leaving only \$500k allocated to 211 (Associated Press, July 2008).

Table 3 (p.15) shows a comparison between Connecticut, Texas, and Washington on funding sources and operating budgets that support 211. As seen in Table 3, costs can vary significantly between states based on cost drivers and therefore it is difficult to assign a nationwide standard cost of operations for 211. As an example, in Texas a cost-benefit analysis on the Texas I&R network (O'Shea, Kegler, King, 2000) shows the variation between budget assumptions made in 1998 vs. 2000, highlighting the more significant cost drivers (**Diagram 2**). The more significant drivers that increased costs by year 2000 were the change in call volume, telecommunication costs and the cost of operating the area information call centers.

Overall, 211 service costs vary based on population size of service area, maintenance costs of the telecommunication network, referral database development, operational staff, cost centers, and other inputs that affect annual operations. Additionally, when 211 services are dependent on annual budget allocations, availability of funding can fluctuate greatly for some states. The primary goal of the 211 Calling Act is to designate the federal government as a reliable funding source to ensure that each state has an opportunity to operate 211.

Diagram 2
Sources of Cost Increases and Cost Savings

		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Telecommunication	1998	\$241,400	\$355,568	\$481,908	\$481,908	\$1,560,784
	2000	\$506,037	\$759,055	\$1,012,075	\$1,012,075	\$3,289,242
	Difference	\$264,637	\$403,487	\$530,167	\$530,167	\$1,728,458
I&R Centers	1998	\$3,000,000	\$5,400,000	\$7,400,000	\$7,400,000	\$23,200,000
	2000	\$4,113,000	\$5,838,000	\$7,365,000	\$7,365,000	\$24,681,000
	Difference	\$1,113,000	\$438,000	(\$35,000)	(\$35,000)	\$1,481,000
Set up and Engineering	1998	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	2000	\$107,874	\$53,937	\$53,937	\$0	\$215,748
	Difference	\$107,874	\$53,937	\$53,937	\$0	\$215,748
Capital Outlay (Software)	1998	\$400,000	\$300,000	\$200,000	\$0	\$900,000
	2000	\$321,000	\$231,000	\$195,000	\$0	\$747,000
	Difference	(\$79,000)	(\$69,000)	(\$5,000)	\$0	(\$153,000)
Other	1998	\$157,904	\$376,904	\$590,904	\$1,340,404	\$2,466,116
	2000	\$259,352	\$478,352	\$692,352	\$1,441,852	\$2,871,908
	Difference	\$101,448	\$101,448	\$101,448	\$101,448	\$405,792
Annual Total	1998	\$3,799,304	\$6,432,472	\$8,672,812	\$9,222,312	\$28,126,900
	2000	\$5,307,263	\$7,360,344	\$9,318,364	\$9,818,927	\$31,804,898
	Difference	\$1,507,959	\$927,872	\$645,552	\$596,615	\$3,677,998

Source: Texas I&R Network Proposed 211 System Budget (1998, 2000).

p.3 , *The Value of a Comprehensive Texas Information and Referral Network: August 2000 Update*, University of Texas at Austin, Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources

Benefits

Emergencies strike at any time and any place and September 11th was a prime example of a national and an international state of emergency.

What are the benefits to society of a nationwide 211 system?

- **Mixed Model Scenario Net Value to Society=** \$69 million first year and \$603 million over ten years
- **Single Model Net Value to Society=** \$58 million first year and \$492 million over ten years
- **Decentralized Model Net Value to Society=** Net Loss of \$47 million first year and Net Loss of \$602 million over ten years
- **Hybrid Model Net Value to Society=** \$129 million first year and \$1.246 billion over ten years

more detail can be found in the Appendix on pg. 20

Data Source: Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, University of Texas at Austin, National Benefit/Cost Analysis of Three Digit-Accessed Telephone Information and Referral Services, December 2004 (pages 57-62)

Ambulances, police, firefighters, construction workers, doctors, teachers, and many more social and human service providers were called to duty. This terrorist attack was an awakening that 911 emergency services are not enough. 211 services were spotlighted as a potential communications solution soon after September 11. Also 211 could improve the way people connect everyday to human services in their communities. Some of the identified benefits of 211 for individuals, referral agencies, taxpayers, and society are: access to community

information, shared data collection among communities, enhanced information for community planning and collaboration, reduced burden on 911 system, and better and more efficient response to human needs (Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, Dec. 2004). The California Wildfires, Florida Hurricanes, and Hurricane Katrina are real cases of natural disasters when 211 services played a critical role in emergency services (Case Studies Section, pg. 16).

Why do people contact 211 operators or web call centers?

Table 1 (p.2) describes the types of referrals made by 211, but depending upon the region where 211 offers services, the popularity of referrals vary. For instance, between two counties in Southeastern Michigan the top two service referrals in December 2007 were #1 Food Pantries and #2 Holiday Gifts & Toys in Wayne County vs. #1 Rent Payment Assistance, and #2 Food Pantries in Oakland County (United Way for Southeastern Michigan, 12/2007). **Table 4** displays an overall summary of the most popular referrals provided by 211 services based on selected state data.

Table 4

211 Call Referrals by Categories and by Region (Selected Data)							
211 Referral Categories	Denver, Colorado	Vermont	Connecticut	San Bernardino, California	Southeast Michigan	Ranking	Total Calls
Shelters/Housing	10,458	1,371	39,090	869	19,194	1	70,982
Utility Bill Assistance	19,085		37,998	1,939		2	59,022
Rental Assistance	24,620			1,235	26,762	3	52,617
Community Information		459	35,608	849		4	36,916
Outpatient Medical Care			33,454			5	33,454
Food Pantry	9,880			1,525	19,200	6	30,611
Substance Abuse			29,561			7	29,561
Holiday Programs					10,665	8	10,665
Seasonal *	7,945					9	7,945
Employment Information					7,152	10	7,152
Tax orgs & services		1,481				11	1,481
Temp Financial Aid		722				12	722
Legal Assistance		511				13	511
Total Calls	71,988	4,544	175,711	6,417	82,973	14	341,633

**Seasonal calls include Christmas and Thanksgiving assistance, summer camps, school supplies, tax assistance, and flu shot*

Data Sources: Call Data was retrieved from several 211 Statistical Reports, please see Appendix

As shown in **Table 4**, housing/shelter is the most frequently requested 211 referral, second is utility bill assistance and third is rental assistance. Although **Table 4** only shows a sample of call data across the U.S., the ranking of referrals also follows a national trend in relation to housing affordability and skyrocketing energy costs. Within the top five categories there is consistency among selected states, but there is also deviation. For instance, in Vermont legal assistance and tax organizations and services are popular but not for any other state in the table. This deviation emphasizes the importance of varying needs based on location. Of course, a further profiling of callers would be required to better assess calling patterns.

Caller Profiles: Who calls and benefits from 211 services?

There are a number of factors that will determine a caller’s profile when dialing into a 211 call center including geography, accessibility to human services information, and awareness about 211, or even disastrous conditions. However, when determining benefits of the 211 system it is important to consider characteristics of callers and how they benefit from the 211 service. Some 211 organizations are tracking caller profile data so they are able to best ascertain the needs of receiving communities.

Below is a comparison of selected statistics from caller profiles for 211 Regional Areas in Southeastern Michigan and San Bernardino County. San Bernardino and Southeastern Michigan are very different regions but there are still some similarities between the backgrounds of callers profiled during the timeframe of the report. **Caller profile data is self-reported and not representative of all callers therefore the data represented below is only based on available information to operators.**

Geography: Southeast Michigan

Major City: Detroit

Of Counties: 7

Total Population Estimate (2007): 4,879,000

Sources: United Way for Southeastern Michigan, Monthly Report 06/2008, 211 San Bernardino County, Monthly Report 06/2008

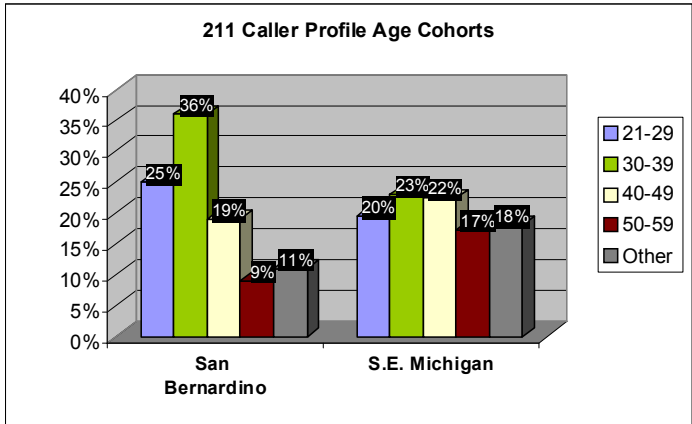
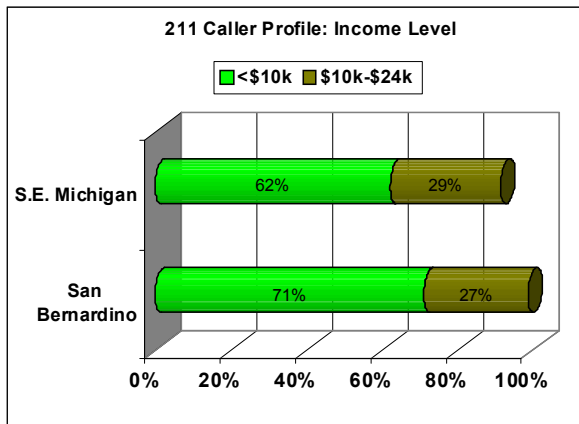
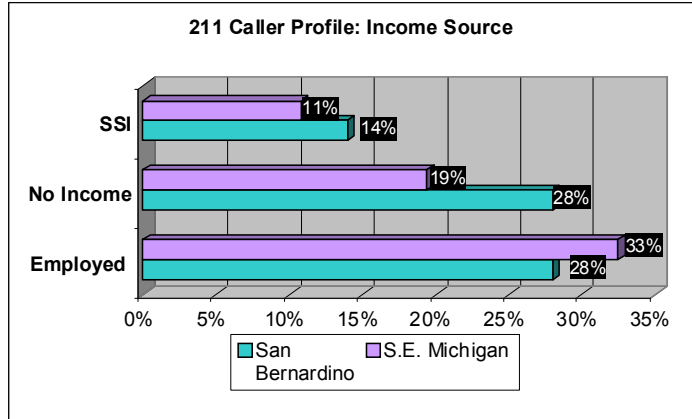
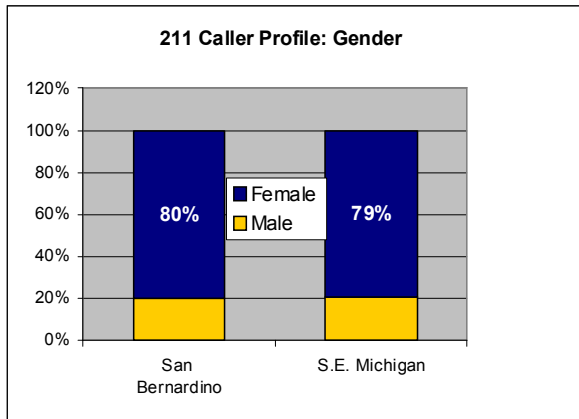
Geography: San Bernardino, California

Major City: San Bernardino

of Incorporated cities: 24

Total Population Estimate (2007): 2,028,013

**211 Selected Statistics for Caller Profiles of Southeast Michigan and San Bernardino
Monthly Call Data: June 2008**



Important Notes

* S.E. Michigan Age cohort is 18-29 instead of 21-29

**San Bernardino County income level is \$10k-\$29k instead of \$10k-\$24k

*** All income sources are not represented on the graph. On graph San Bernardino totals 70% of callers, S.E. Michigan totals 63% of callers based on data

****SSI= payments to people with low income who are age 65 or older or are blind or have a disability.

This is helpful information in determining the needs of communities however generalizations or conclusions cannot be made. If 211 became a fully operational national system then collecting national data could be helpful in quantifying and measuring the benefits of referrals made by 211 around the country.

Conclusion

The national status of 211 services is a positive indicator that the country has taken this type of service seriously. The purpose of the 211 service is to make information about community, local, and statewide

human services available to everyone. Although the federal government has not passed the 211 Calling Act yet, many states have passed legislation that authorized the development of a 211 statewide system and some states have designated funding to support 211. The benefits of a 211 system at a national level are yet to be fully realized, but the benefits at local levels have already been accounted. On a daily basis across the U.S thousands of calls are made to 211 call centers to connect with public services and non-profit organizations that specialize in improving human conditions. Even though emphasis has been placed on 211 as an emergency response network, the benefit of a 211 system year-round is also important. Although the biggest obstacle of operating a 211 system has been sustainable funding, 46 states and Washington DC and Puerto Rico have found a way to work around this obstacle. Therefore, it is possible that in the future 211 may become a truly national network.

Table 3: 211 Budget & State Comparison Table

STATE	TOTAL BUDGET	FUNDING AGENCIES	FUNDING %	NOTES
Connecticut	\$4.0 million**	Department of Social Services Welfare Reform, Child Care Infoline, Department of Health Suicide prevention training, Health Maternal & Child Health, Area Agency of Aging, Department of Justice Project Safe Neighborhood	90% State funding with some federal matching funds. 10% United Way State and federal funding comes for allocations distributed among funding agencies.	After legislation passed in 1998, Connecticut 211 was launched and became the nation's first statewide service in 1999, replacing a previous 1-800 number. Furthermore, Connecticut 211 was a public/private partnership formed by United Way and the State of Connecticut dating back to 1976.
Texas	\$8.5 million**	Department of State Health Services, Department of Aging and Disability, Department of Assistance and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Family and Protective Services, Health and Human Services Commission	55% federal funding 45% state general fund revenues	211 Texas is housed under the Texas Health and Human Services Department. There are twenty five area information centers (similar to Model 2) which coincide with designated regions within the state. FY 2007 was projected to grow to \$11.7 million, a 38% increase from the prior year. Direct operations and Telecom and Database were the main cost drivers.
Washington	\$7.5 million**	Initially WIN 211 received funding from state and private foundation funds; \$1million was authorized to be taken from the Washington Department of Health and Human Services' capital budget, but this was short term, only available until June 2007. An additional \$2.5 million, which also expired in June 2007, was appropriated through state legislature and this funding was noted as a separate line under the Emergency Management Division of the Washington Military Department. Finally, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation gave a three year grant worth \$987k/\$329k per year in early 2006 to fund data management positions at the call centers.	<i>Anticipated 33% state, 33% United Way, 33% Department of Homeland Security, Federal Government</i> <i>This funding % breakdown was based on 2006 data.</i>	Washington Information Network (WIN) 211 is an acting nonprofit corporation of local providers for information and referral services; legislation was passed in 2003 to support 211 and enact WIN 211 as the leader. WIN 211 is pursuing ways to integrate 211 into the Washington State Bioterrorism Plan; this would make WIN 211 eligible to receive funding from the Department of Homeland Security.

Data Source: State of Michigan 211 Study: Interim Report, June 2006

** State budget numbers are based on data collected during a study (State of Michigan 2-1-1 Study: Interim Report, June 2006) and are not representative of final budgets or current budgets. CT and TX were based on actual budget numbers in 2006. The Washington budget was based on projected annual operating costs. This information was collected during an interview process with 211 directors and executives.

National Examples of 211 as an Emergency Response System

In September 2008, Hurricane Ike caused significant rain in the Midwest over a period of days, which led to flooding along and around the river banks. In Illinois the amount of rain was considerable causing flash flood alerts all over the northeastern region and across Illinois. In a particularly hard-hit area, Wheaton (DuPage County) received 10.51 inches of rain in a two day period (Midwestern Regional Climate Center). Even rainfall near O'Hare International Airport amounted to 6.64 inches in one day, setting a record (Midwestern Regional Climate Center). This weather event is an example of when an entire region could benefit from an information and referral system like 211. For instance in New Orleans and in Corpus Christi, Texas, 211 assisted in evacuation procedures.

- *New Orleans, LA* – Hurricane Gustav, a tropical cyclone, was a potential threat to Louisiana especially around the gulf coast in late August 2008. On the day before the Hurricane was anticipated to hit inland, the Department of Social Services urged citizens to dial 211 if they were seeking shelter within Louisiana. (Hurricane Gustav Resources)
- *Corpus Christi, TX* - Hurricane Ike was a destructive tropical storm throughout the Caribbean, mainly in Cuba and Haiti, and also caused significant damage along the coast of Texas. 211 was utilized by the State as a way to assist in evacuating special needs residents, pets, and all other residents who dialed 211 to identify themselves (MSNBC).

Additional examples of 211 being used as an emergency response tool are below.

211 Service during the California Wildfires, October 2007

In late October 2007 twenty separate wildfires consumed the land, and six counties that were declared disaster areas in Southern California: Los Angeles, Riverside, Orange, San Bernardino, San Diego and Ventura.

- **In October 2007:** As of October 29, 2007, the fires had burned 518,000 acres in the seven southern counties, or two percent of the counties' total land area, but 13.7% of San Diego County. 369,000 acres burned in San Diego County, accounting for 71.4 percent of the burned acreage in the counties eligible for federal aid. (Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics)

211 Service makes a difference

211 served as a reliable source of information for residents and county departments which informed people on evacuations and best routes to safety, especially after several highways were closed down. When 9-1-1 was overwhelmed with calls, 211 was the alternative to assist with emergencies.

In a matter of 5 days between October 21-25th, 2007

- 130,000 calls were handled by 211 operators, with one day peaking at 41,000 calls
- Majority of the reasons for calls were split between: Evacuation (27%), Safe to return home (22%) and Information on fire updates (19%)

In October 2007 211 was a fully operational system that provided two-way communication during the disaster. With the system in place, timely information was available to residents and emergency responders. One key benefit also highlighted was that 9-1-1 was relieved by 211 and 911 focused mostly on responding to emergencies rather than providing emergency information to callers.

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2004 Florida Hurricanes

The Florida Senate Bill 1276, state legislature passed in 2002, authorizing the implementation of a statewide 211 network. In 2004, Florida was hit by five "tropical cyclones" in a single year. This was devastating to residents and their property, the economy, and the landscape of Florida.

The five storms were:

- **Tropical Storm Bonnie**- a tropical storm but no casualties or damage recorded
- **Hurricane Charley**- Category 4 hurricane, hit southwest coast of FL and central FL peninsula, 9 deaths, storm damage estimated at \$15 billion
- **Hurricane Frances**- Category 2 hurricane, hit the east coast of FL, caused a lot of flooding; responsible for 20 deaths and approximately \$16 billion in damages.
- **Hurricane Ivan**-Category 5, hit southwest of Pensacola, FL; responsible for 52 deaths in the U.S.. Most of the severe damage was done in the Caribbean; estimated damages of \$20 billion.
- **Hurricane Jeanne**- most devastating in Haiti and the Caribbean causing approximately 4,500 death. Hit Central FL, caused 11 deaths in US and estimated \$12 billion in damages.

(Data Source: Trial by Fire: How 2-1-1's Regional Response to the 2007 Southern California Wildfires Underscored the Need for a Statewide Network, United Way & CAIRS, February 2008)

211 Response Outcomes

Call volume tracking was difficult during this time so it is estimated that 211 operators handled more calls than actually documented. Orlando 211 mapped call distribution by zip code to create a visual representation of most need during the time of Hurricane Charley. Additionally, the Orlando 211 operating center categorized calls by volume: Disaster-related commodity shortages (17%), Canteen Services (13%), Emergency Water and Ice and Disaster Relief Assistance (24%). These descriptions were the reasons for more than half of the calls received in Orlando during the hurricanes. 211 service centers all over Florida recognized that the nature of the 211 calls fell into four main categories: pre-storm, during the storm, immediate aftermath, and recovery.

Call Volume Tracking Examples

- **Lee County**- estimated 60,000 calls in six days during Hurricane Charley= 10,000 calls per day
- **Orlando**- a 300% increase over normal call volume, 19,552 calls during Hurricane Charley and Frances.

Lessons Learned

The purpose of the study conducted after the Hurricanes (FL-AIRS, United Way) was to evaluate how 211 could be better and how Florida could form a statewide network. A few key lessons learned in the aftermath were the following:

- 1) 211 service centers have to be integrated into emergency response plans because of the burden removed off of first responders and front-line disaster relief organizations (p.13)
- 2) Key partnerships developed with agencies such as the Red Cross, United Ways, and local volunteer agencies are critical during despair because 211 must be able to make referrals while also disseminating information to partners who can provide immediate assistance.
- 3) 211 service call centers must have adequate funding so that resource capacity is available when it needs to be such as trained personnel, ability to call on volunteers, technology, access to data etc.
- 4) Emergency management plans could be very beneficial to 211 staff and partners so that there is a plan of action.

Importance of Statewide Network

In Florida, a state that has encountered numerous natural disasters, there is strong support for a 211 statewide system. Currently, Florida does not have full coverage across the state but instead has more than 80% coverage operating with a decentralized model. One major issue that has been encountered is that 211 is not an established statewide number so during emergencies statewide coordination was limited. Additionally, eligibility for funding from FEMA requires 211 to act as a major emergency system which has to be coordinated at the state level.

Key benefits of 211 services as an Emergency Service Response

A key benefit of 211 services is the fact that it provides response to callers; additionally data collected can be useful in identifying unmet needs and gaps in services. Also, the intensity of calls usually does not end after a disaster but instead increase or remain high which shows that callers are in need even after an emergency. 211 service can provide an intake service for the public sector for human service agencies by conducting initial screenings. Finally, 211 service not only serves as a referral and emergency system but also works with local volunteer agencies. *For instance, 8800 volunteers were mobilized two weeks after Hurricane Charley in DeSoto County, Florida.*

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Hurricane Katrina & Hurricane Rita benefit from 211

Hurricane Katrina, one of the most devastating hurricanes in history, followed a couple of weeks by Hurricane Rita were both very disastrous for the people of Louisiana, Mississippi and in Alabama and Texas. Due to the level of displacement that the storms caused, all surrounding states were affected. Three years later, in 2008, Louisiana is still in recovery. One very critical factor that was pushed beyond its limits was emergency response- the 911 system was overwhelmed and was not available to thousands of people.

211 during the Hurricanes

The Louisiana 211 system was established in 2003 but when the Hurricanes hit, the 211 system was inoperable in many places including New Orleans, one of the hardest hit cities. Mississippi did not have a 211 system and as a result many victims had to call 911 to find out information, as well as had to reach out to more than 200 individual agencies until a 1-800 phone line was set up (GovTech). It was in Monroe, Louisiana, a small town with less than 60,000 people, where 211 was operable and became a primary resource for surrounding communities. The call center which was held in a local United Way office expanded to a full time staff of 12 people and installed fifty additional phone lines a day after Katrina hit (Chronicle of Philanthropy). Volunteers from other states flew into Monroe, LA to assist in providing aid. Between September and December 2005, the 211 call center in Monroe, LA handled 111,000 calls (Chronicle of Philanthropy).

211 Around the Country: An example

A good example of the benefits of 211 being a nationwide system is the fact that 211 provides standardized services no matter where the system is operating. 211 added value to a network of existing non-profit organizations and churches that played a role in recovery and response. During and after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita there was response by 211 systems as far away as Southern California, over 1,000 miles away. 211 San Bernardino County sent call specialists to Monroe, Louisiana to assist staff. 211 San Diego worked with the American Red Cross to recruit volunteers to answer thousands of calls that came through the Red Cross Volunteer Hotline. During a period of 2 weeks (8/31/05-9/11/05), 4,275 calls were handled at American Red Cross in Southern California (211 San Diego News Release 2005). Furthermore, 211 centers worked with hundreds of evacuees who traveled to Southern California.

Lessons Learned

Mississippi now has a 211 system, established in July 2006. The president and chief executive of the Jackson United Way stated that "It would have been so much more manageable here if one phone call was all that was needed to send people to the right place with the right information; instead it was chaos." (United Way Nashville)

Conclusion

Although Hurricane Katrina and Rita were unforgettable natural disasters that affected the entire country, there were many lessons learned about emergency response, as well as how to create and improve state, national, and local level plans for emergencies. 211 is not a resolution by itself, but it served a critical role as a relief to 911 in disseminating critical information, linking people in need to organizations that could help, and mobilizing volunteers for further assistance.

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APPENDIX: Call Statistics

Denver, Colorado

Source: United Way Denver
211 Statistics, 2007 Annual
Total Calls=109,900

Top 5 Referrals

- Rental Assistance (24,620) 22.4%
- Utility Bill Assistance (19,085) 17.3%
- Shelters/Transitional Housing/Housing Assistance (10,458) 9.5%
- Food (9,880) 9%
- Seasonal (7,945), 7.2%

http://www.unitedwaydenver.org/site/c.rwL8KjNULrH/b.4119499/k.8D4F/211_Metro_Denver_Colorado_Mile_High_United_Way.htm

State of Vermont

Source: 211 Vermont
211 Statistics, January to June 2008
Total Calls=10,646

Top 5 Referrals

- Tax Organizations & Services=1,481, 13.9%
- Housing/Shelter= 1,371, 12.9%
- Temporary Financial Aid=722, 6.8%
- Legal Assistance/Services=511, 4.7%
- Org/Community Info Services=459, 4.3%

<http://www.vermont211.org/images/stories/Documents/monthly2008.pdf>

State of Connecticut

Source: 211 Connecticut
211 Statistics, 2007 Annual
Total Calls= 338,685

Top 5 Referrals

- Housing/Shelter=39,090, 11.5%
- Utilities/Heat=37,998, 11.2%
- Information Services=35,608, 10.5%
- Outpatient Mental Health Care=33,454, 9.8%
- Substance Abuse Services=29,561, 8.7%

<http://www.infoline.org/Professionals/Statistics/stats07.asp>

San Bernardino County, California

Source: 211 San Bernardino County, Inland Empire United Way
211 Statistics, October to December 2007
Total Calls= 13,243

- Utility Bill Assistance/Heat=1,939
- Food=1,525
- Rent Assistance=1,235
- Shelter=869
- General Information Services=849

<http://www.211sb.com/publications.htm>

* October calls including disaster (fire) calls= 10,911

Southeastern Michigan, Region coverage includes Detroit, MI

Source: United Way of Southeastern Michigan
211 Statistics, June-December 2007
2007 Total Calls=163,659

Top 5 Referrals

- Utility Assistance= 26,762
- Food=19,200
- Housing=19,194
- Holiday Programs= 10,665
- Employment=7,152

http://www.uwsem.org/research/index_211.html

APPENDIX: 211 Cost/Benefit Model Detail

The detail in this appendix section supports the costs and benefits dollar figures described within the report. All of the data and information comes from a 211 Cost/Benefit Analysis researched and completed by the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources at the University of Texas at Austin. The report is the "National Benefit/Cost Analysis of Three Digit-Accessed Telephone Information and Referral Services", December 2004. <http://www.211.org/documents/costbenefitanalysis.pdf>

Costs

Cost Estimate Calculations

Cost per call and anticipated call volume form the basis of the total national cost estimate.

Costs are totaled from:

1. Cost per call associated with each site
2. Cost per call associated with each model
3. Total costs under four national cost estimation approaches

A unit cost for each model was calculated by aggregating call volume and total costs for the sites that represent each model. Estimated costs for each model include all operating expenses for a call center.

National call volume multiplied by the cost per call provides the national cost estimate.

There were three primary perspectives used for analyzing both benefits and costs in the *Cost Benefit Analysis* conducted at the University of Texas at Austin.

1. *Participants*, include individuals and families, employers, and local information and referral centers, as well as health and human services providers;
2. *Taxpayers (or government)*, are primarily state and local public funds, but including federal, as well; and
3. *Society as a whole* is simply the sum of participants and taxpayers, net of any taxes and/or transfers between them.

Cost by Perspectives

Participants incur costs burdened by all non-profit entities that operate the 2-1-1 call centers and organizations that contract with them and the donors who support them.

Taxpayers incur costs through public contracts, grants, and investments, as well as direct services that the public sector provides to the 2-1-1 network.

Society incurs the sum of costs burdened by participants and taxpayers net any taxes or transfers between them.

Benefits

Benefits were estimated by modeling anticipated national call volumes as a function of call volume to population rates in more mature 211 sites which included the following cities and states, Hawaii, Connecticut, Houston, TX, Minnesota, Salt Lake City, Utah, Albuquerque, New Mexico, Grand Rapids, MI, Atlanta, GA, Sioux Falls, SD, and Jacksonville, FL. The major assumption for the model was that the penetration rate would be equivalent in a fully operational national 2-1-1 network.

Beneficiaries by Category

Participants/Individuals & Families: Value of Time Saved Value of Tax Assistance, Value of Taxes Recovered, Value of 24/7 Access

Organizations: Volunteer recruitment, Value of 24/7 Access, Participants Subtotal, Taxpayers

Planning and Management: Misdirected calls (time saved), Certification Readiness, Value of 24/7 Access, Eliminated I&R Duplication, Non-Reimbursed Services, 911 Redirection Benefit

Net Value

Net Value is the difference between costs and benefits and is the preferred evaluation for policy makers. All models except for the decentralized model create a positive net value and therefore a positive Cost/Benefit ratio (a ratio greater than 1).

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