



Hello,

Welcome to the 31st edition of our 211 newsletter, where we share information on 211 services and benefits, funding updates, and opportunities for you to become an advocate for 211.



Mental Health Awareness Month

May is Mental Health Awareness Month and every year the goal is to fight stigma, provide support, educate the public, and advocate for policies that support people with mental illness and their families. According to Mental Health America, 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime. Mental Health Month raises awareness of trauma and the impact it can have on the physical, emotional, and mental well-being of children, families, and communities. Mental Health Month was established in 1949 to increase awareness of the importance of mental health and wellness in Americans' lives, and to celebrate recovery from mental illness. Mental health is essential for a person's overall health. Prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can recover from mental disorders and live full and productive lives.

In the wake of the pandemic, millions of people are facing mental health issues – many for the first time – and millions more have had their existing challenge exacerbated. The pandemic has accelerated the already dire mental health crisis, giving way to what many mental health professionals have called the “second pandemic.” By calling **211** or texting your zip code to **898211**, anyone can connect with a trained resource navigator to learn about the mental health and other human service resources available in Lake County. It's free, confidential and available 24/7 in English, Spanish and 150 other languages.

Human-Services Emergency Logistics Program (HELP) Act Advocacy

United Way is proud to support the HELP Act, legislation that provides federal funding for 211 and the national suicide prevention line to scale up the response to the mental health crisis in the country. By diverting non-emergency, non-fire and non-criminal calls from 911 to 211 and suicide prevention systems, we can connect more people in communities with the homelessness, human services and mental health resources they need while reducing the call and response burden on local and state law enforcement agencies.

We need your voice as a mental health champion! Join us in calling on Congress to pass the HELP Act. **Send a tweet** to your representative asking them to support this important legislation today. Now, more than ever, it is crucial that we take a comprehensive, community-based approach to address the range of mental health challenges impacting Americans. **Take Action Now.**



211 Advisory Council

The 211 Advisory Council meets quarterly to review progress toward 211's long-term strategic goals, and to provide advice and expertise toward the accomplishment of those goals. The Council met on May 7th to review 211 program results for the first quarter of 2021, including key metrics by goal, trend information on 211 contacts and needs presented, and specific 211 project results. There was a discussion on service gaps in the community and how 211 might be able to assist in the future.

The Council also received updates on 211 marketing and outreach, Illinois 211 Statewide Plan proposal, HELP Act advocacy, the Federal Emergency Rental Assistance Program (FERA) and how Lake County has scaled up rental assistance to address growing needs. 211 has become a centralized resource to help people with the FERA application process and guide them to appropriate referrals for rental assistance.

We would like to recognize the **211 Advisory Council members** who have participated this past year, and acknowledge those who are leaving: Alex Carr, Maria Colunga, Megan McKenna, Michael Munda and Carmen Patlan. The Council will reconvene in August.



The Illinois Rental Payment Program

Last week, the state announced the **2021 Illinois Rental Payment Program (ILRPP)**, an emergency rental assistance program designed to support households in Illinois that are unable to pay rent due to the pandemic. The program is open for landlords only **now through Monday, June 7**. Tenants have until **Monday, June 14** to complete their portion of a landlord-initiated application.

Applicants are eligible for up to **15 months of assistance**. The grant can cover the past due rent from the previous 12 months and future rental assistance for the next three months, if deemed necessary. The **maximum grant amount is \$25k**. The emergency rental assistance is provided by the Federal government and is free to tenant and housing provider. If approved, the grant will be paid to the housing provider in the form of a check.

So, what are the similarities and differences between Lake County's new FERA program and the ILRPP?

Similarities

- Limited to: 1) Income below 80% Area Median Income (AMI), 2) Financial hardship due to the pandemic, 3) At risk of homelessness or housing instability.
- Priority for those with household income below 50% or who have been unemployed for 90+ days.
- Can provide forward rent not more than 3 months.
- Online application.
- Immigration status is not an eligibility factor.

Differences

FERA	ILRPP
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rent <i>and</i> utility assistance.• Maximum of 12 months (arrears plus up to 3 months forward rent).• Rolling applications – applicants may apply for 3 months then return multiple times until the maximum of 12 months.• Application should be initiated by tenant, in some cases landlord may apply before tenant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rental assistance only.• Maximum of 15 months (arrears plus up to 3 months forward rent).• Application open for a short window of time. Assistance is a one-time grant.• Application must be initiated by landlord.

Note: Individuals should only apply to one program – either FERA or ILRPP.

For Homeowners

Get connected to help with utilities from other programs on 211:

- Community Action Partnership - utility assistance
- Community Action Partnership - LIHEAP, PIPP, and Weatherization Energy Assistance Program
- Catholic Charities - Emergency Assistance Program
- Township Emergency Assistance (different by township)
- Other programs

Get connected to Mortgage Forbearance Housing Counseling from other programs on 211:

- CPAH's Mortgage Forbearance Counseling Program
- Consumer Credit Counseling - Mortgage Foreclosure and Default Counseling
- Nineteenth Judicial Circuit Court - Mortgage Foreclosure Mediation Program

To learn more about these programs, including who is eligible, call **211** or text your zip code to **898211**. 211 is here to help!



211 Provider Feedback Survey

We solicit regular feedback from 211 service providers to assess and continually improve United Way of Lake County's 211. This Spring, our quarterly survey was moved to bi-annually and several changes were made to both strengthen the survey and increase participation.

As a result, we received 166 completed responses, the most we have ever received. Here's a sampling of results:

- **78%** of respondents always or usually receive appropriate referrals from 211.
- **77%** of respondents strongly agree or agree that 211 has helped their staff's efficiency and effectiveness.
- **82%** of respondents strongly agree or agree that 211 is a trusted resource.

“We love this central clearinghouse for Lake County resources.”

-Advocacy Specialists of Lake County

“I think it’s a wonderful supplemental resource to have a referral service in Lake County that our clients can use for any service needs.”

-Arden Shore Child and Family Services

United Way of Lake County staff conduct follow-ups with many service providers which often lead to great discussions and opportunities. It is one of our staff’s favorite times of the year! The survey results and follow-up conversations are shared with the 211 Advisory Council and staff to improve 211 services. If you didn’t have a chance to take the survey and want to share your feedback on 211, [click here](#).



Reminder for 211 Service Providers

Now is a great time for updates! Community services and hours of operation are continuing to change as we return to a new normal. Thank you to all the service providers who have been sharing regular updates with our 211 Resource Team to ensure accurate 211 information and referrals. As a reminder, providers are encouraged to send regular updates to 211LakeCounty@icfs.org so that together we can keep Lake County informed of available services.

Supporter Spotlight



“211 Lake County is a valuable resource connecting residents to important information and community services in Lake County. Comcast is proud to support United Way of Lake County’s programs and services year-round and to partner with 211 Lake County to help area families connect to the Internet at home through Internet Essentials.”

Frank Deuel, Comcast’s Senior Manager of Community Relations in Lake County

Our Community of 211 Donors

Thank you to our community partners and individual donors for their generous financial support in bringing 211 to our community. [View our full list of funding partners here.](#)

How Can You Help?

1. Share this email and encourage your network to [opt-in to 211 communications](#).
2. [Help to sustain 211 in its second year!](#)
3. Follow United Way of Lake County on social media to receive more timely 211 updates.



Best regards,

Deanna Olmem

Manager, 211 and Safe & Stable Families