



211 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is 211?

211 is an easy to remember, 24-hour information and referral helpline. It's designed to reduce time and frustration by acting as a central access point to the health and human services in Lake County, Illinois.

211 is **the** place with the answers you need to live well in Lake County, Illinois.

211 is Lake County's free one-stop shop for help:

- It's a telephone helpline.
- It's a texting chatline.
- It's also searchable online.

211 is always open, always confidential, and always free. Speak to a live person when you call in English or Spanish. The 211 team will also interpret to more than 150 languages.

Who can use 211?

211 is open and available for everyone in Lake County, Illinois.

How do I access 211?

You can connect with 211 by:

- Calling **211** from any phone.
- Texting your zip code to **898211** (not just 211).
- Visiting 211LakeCounty.org.

Right this very minute, there are people at our contact center waiting for your call or text. United Way of Lake County has trained them to guide you to the help you need.

If you are outside of Illinois looking for help in Lake County or having an issue reaching United Way of Lake County's 211, call **1-855-677-5253** toll free.

What hours is 211 available?

211 is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year.



Is 211 available in languages other than English?

211 is multi-lingual with English and Spanish speaking staff, and a professional 24-hour phone interpretation service for over 150 languages. Two-way texting is available in English and Spanish.

Who answers the phone or responds to texts?

United Way of Lake County has a contract with Interface Children & Family Services, a leading nonprofit with extensive 211 experience, to be our contact center. 211 is staffed by highly-trained, accredited professionals who follow national standards of excellence. 211 expert navigators who work at the contact center are standing by to take your phone calls and texts.

What types of resources are included in the 211 database?

211 helps individuals, families, and providers navigate and connect with a wide range of local health and human services, including:

- Mental health services
- Addiction support and rehabilitation
- Crisis counseling
- Supplemental food programs
- Shelter and affordable housing options
- Employment and education support
- Financial support
- Disaster information and relief

...and much more!

How can an agency or organization be included in the 211 Lake County resource database?

211 works with health and human service providers from all across Lake County, Illinois, to provide accurate, concise referrals for residents. We invite providers of health and human services for Lake County residents to join in as a 211 partner.

Apply to add your organization, programs and services to the 211 resource database by completing a [211 Service Provider Application Form](#). Be sure to read the [211 Lake County Inclusion Policy](#) to see if your organization is eligible to be listed.



How can I request an update to information about my agency or organization?

Service providers are encouraged to update information about their organization, programs and services frequently so that together we can provide the most complete and accurate information and referrals. Updates can be provided to 211 at any time throughout the year.

We recommend providers update their information within 48 hours of a program addition, change or closure. Updates can be sent via email to 211LakeCounty@icfs.org.

Do I have to pay to use 211?

No. 211 is always free and completely confidential. It's also anonymous—you do not need to give your name or provide personal details to get information.

How is United Way of Lake County's 211 funded?

211 is a true community-wide initiative. United Way of Lake County leads 211, but many other health and human services providers in our county, including the Lake County Government, contribute time, talent and money to make it run smoothly.

United Way of Lake County raises funds from a variety of sources in the public and private sector to operate 211. We do not receive financial support for 211 from the State of Illinois or Federal government. To view a list of our 211 funding partners, [click here](#). We are grateful for their generous support to help improve the lives of so many people in our local community.

What if I have trouble connecting to 211?

If you're a Lake County resident in need of help and calling from a cell phone outside of Lake County or if you're having trouble connecting to 211, call **1-855-677-5253**.

If you have trouble calling 211 at work, contact your information services staff to change permissions on the telephone system to allow 211 dialing access.

- Telecommunications may need to be modified to work with complex phone systems that go through private switches to reach an outside line.
- Organizations have found success establishing a 211 infrastructure by mimicking 911 implementations at a high level by calling 211 from multiple types of phone connections.



If you have trouble calling 211 at home, please email Deanna.Olmem@uwlakeco.org with the following information (your phone number, whether the phone is a landline or cell phone, phone provider, where you were physically located when you made the call/text).

If you're looking for help in another area outside of Lake County, Illinois, visit 211.org to find a list of toll free numbers to call.

Still having trouble connecting?

If you're still having trouble connecting to United Way of Lake County's 211, please email Deanna.Olmem@uwlakeco.org with the following information (your phone number, whether the phone is a landline or cell phone, phone provider, where you were physically located when you made the call/text).

What is 211's service area?

United Way of Lake County's 211 service covers Lake County, Illinois.

211 is also available in some other Illinois counties, including nearby Kane and McHenry. Through 2018, more than 94% of the United States had access to 211. United Way of Lake County is proud to join in.

Note: Municipalities that border McHenry County, such as small portions of Fox Lake, Fox River Grove, Spring Grove, and Wauconda, could potentially be routed to McHenry County's 211. Also, if you are calling from a cell phone near the border of Kenosha or McHenry counties, your phone will get pinged to the closest tower which may be outside of our service area.

How does 211 work with 911?

Residents should call 911 for police, fire or medical emergencies.

211 is meant to complement 911 by filling the gap between emergencies and non-public safety needs like food and shelter.

211 helps relieve the burden of non-emergency calls to 911, and reduces time and frustration for residents by acting as a central access point to the health and human services in our community. That means less time is spent calling around trying to find answers. 211 also reduces the burden on health and human services providers and creates efficiencies by helping individuals find the right solution in one call. This approach increases accurate referrals to service providers.



What role does 211 play in the event of a disaster?

211 is available for everyday challenges and during times of crisis and disaster. United Way of Lake County works with local partners and government to help you connect to up-to-date information and available services.