

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Commission,)	Application No. C-3061/
on its own motion, seeking)	PI-75
comment on the request by United)	
Way of the Midlands to be)	GRANTED
assigned the use of "211" in)	
Hall, Hamilton, Howard and)	
Merrick Counties for access to)	
First Call for Help (FCFH), a)	Entered: February 10, 2004
comprehensive information and)	
referral service.)	

BY THE COMMISSION:

On December 16, 2003, the Commission docketed a request by United Way of the Midlands for use of "211" as the dialing code for First Call for Help (FCFH) services in Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties. On the same date, the Commission also docketed a request by United Way of the Midlands for use of "211" as the dialing code for First Call for Help (FCFH) services in Dodge, Washington and Saunders Counties, in Application No. C-3066/PI-76. First Call for Help is a comprehensive information and referral service.

The Commission previously assigned "211" to United Way of the Midlands for use in Douglas and Sarpy Counties by order entered February 20, 2002, in Application No. C-2621. In that application, the Commission held a workshop and a hearing to facilitate the potential implementation of a "211" system. Additionally, United Way of the Midlands applied for authority to use "211" in Dodge and Cass Counties, and that application was granted on July 23, 2002, in Application No. C-2732.

A hearing on the above-captioned matter was held January 28, 2004, at 10:00 a.m. in the Commission Hearing Room, Lincoln, Nebraska, and was conducted jointly with the hearing in Application No. C-3066/PI-76.

At the hearing, Ms. Jamesena Grimes Moore testified as follows: United Way is requesting the use of "211" in Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties so that their citizens, especially their vulnerable populations, can have easier access to health and human services. The "211" movement has gained momentum nationally. "211" is a critical piece of the infrastructure for disaster preparedness and an effective response system. With the addition of Hall, Hamilton, Howard, Merrick, Saunders and Washington Counties to the pilot, 45 percent of Nebraska's population will have "211" coverage.

Lynn Murray Smith of Nebraska Children and Families Education Foundation of Grand Island, testified as follows: Nebraska Children provides programs to reduce child abuse, preserve families and make communities better places to live. This is a chartered chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America. There are several of resources and supportive services in Hall County; however, she reported that the general public doesn't always know about these services. The Prevent Child Abuse Nebraska and Nebraska Children and Families Education Foundation view the "211" system as an opportunity to coordinate services and resources within the county to allow the population to receive the assistance that they need.

Karen Rathke testified as follows: She serves the Hall, Howard, Hamilton and Merrick Counties. Ms. Rathke testified that a "211" system is a means to allow people to find the assistance that they need. Additionally, in implementing "211," they will be able to better track the calls and monthly needs of the community.

Gayland Alukonis of Qwest Corporation testified as follows: Qwest provides service in the Howard, Hall, Merrick and Hamilton County areas. One of the communities, Silver Creek, is in Merrick County. They also have customers in Nance and Polk Counties which are served by the Silver Creek exchange that would be able to call through to the "211" system.

Steve Meradith of Alltel testified as follows: Mr. Meradith expressed a concern as to whether the "211" number would still continue to translate to the 800 number that is currently in use. There could potentially be a problem with wireless routing if another 800 number is used at some point.

Gene Hand of the Public Service Commission testified that due to the fact that there is only one call center being utilized, there will not be a problem with wireless routing.

Jamie Moore further testified to address concerns expressed by other witnesses. United Way would accept calls from Qwest's Silver Creek exchange and direct them appropriately. Ms. Moore additionally testified that information is also available on a website and e-mail requests can also be made.

No other parties testified.

O P I N I O N A N D F I N D I N G S

The Commission finds that use of "211" by United Way of the Midlands should be expanded to Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties. As with the original application, "211" calls that can be routed locally in Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties should be routed to 402-444-6666, or in the alternative, to 866-813-1731. The contact person for United Way of the Midlands is Jamesena Grimes Moore, who can be reached at 402-522-7930.

Consistent with the original applications, it is the Commission's preliminary belief that individual carrier costs for "211" access will not be significant. If, however, a carrier seeks recovery of costs associated with routing "211" calls for expansion of "211" access to Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties, the Commission requires that plans for cost recovery be submitted to the Commission for approval.

The Commission will make available suggested language for directory listings and bill inserts. Affected telephone companies must use, at minimum, the information contained in these materials to inform their customers of the availability of "211" service. Affected telephone companies include those that serve Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties.

The Commission finds that July 1, 2004 should be the deadline for "211" routing for Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties.

O R D E R

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED by the Nebraska Public Service Commission that "211" is hereby, designated for use by United Way of the Midlands First Call for Help for Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that **July 1, 2004**, is the deadline set by the Commission for implementation of "211" routing for Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties.

IT IS FINALLY ORDERED that carriers seeking recovery of costs associated with routing "211" calls for Hall, Hamilton, Howard and Merrick Counties submit cost recovery plans to the Commission for approval.

MADE AND ENTERED in Lincoln, Nebraska on this 10th day of February, 2004.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

Chairman

ATTEST:

Executive Director