

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Commission,) Application No. C-3256/
on its own motion, seeking) PI-87
comment on the request by United)
Way of the Midlands to be)
assigned the use of "211" in)
Scotts Bluff County for access) ORDER GRANTING APPLICATION
to First Call for Help (FCFH), a)
comprehensive information and)
referral service.)
)
) Entered: November 3, 2004

BY THE COMMISSION:

On August 31, 2004, the Commission opened the present docket in response to a request by United Way of the Midlands for use of "211" as the dialing code for First Call for Help (FCFH) services in Scotts Bluff County. The Commission previously assigned "211" to United Way of the Midlands in Application Nos. C-2621/PI-53, entered on February 20, 2002; C-2732, entered on July 23, 2002; C-3061/PI-75, entered on February 10, 2004; C-3066/PI-76, entered on February 10, 2004; C-3099/PI-77, entered on March 30, 2004, and C-3221/PI-81 entered on September 21, 2004 for use in numerous counties throughout the state. Additionally, Application No. C-3277/PI-88 is currently pending.

A hearing was held on October 21, 2004, in the Commission Library and by video conference in Scottsbluff, Nebraska, and Omaha, Nebraska.

Letters in support of the application were submitted by United Way from United Way of Western Nebraska; Scottsbluff/Gering United Chamber of Commerce; the Mayor of the City of Scottsbluff; Region I Office of Human Development; J.G. Elliot Insurance Center; Horizons West Medical Group; and the Star Herald. Copies of these letters of support were entered into the record as Exhibit 4.

Ms. Jamie Moore, Vice President of Volunteer and Community Services for the United Way of the Midlands testified in support of the application. A written copy of her testimony was admitted into evidence as Exhibit 3. Ms. Moore testified that First Call for Help, a program of the United Way of the Midlands Volunteer Resource Center, is a comprehensive information and referral service with an easy to remember three-digit dialing code. Ms. Moore testified that in 2003, the "211" Resource Center hosted by United Way of the Midlands became the eighth information and referral center to be accredited and that in 2004, it received certification from the American Association of

Suicidology. Certified information and referral specialists and resource specialists answer calls seven-days-per-week, 24-hours-per-day. Ms. Moore further testified that as of December 2004, 65 percent of Nebraska's population, representing 18 counties, will have access to "211." Ms. Moore testified that during the first three quarters of 2001, the call center received 13,310 calls. During the first three quarters of 2004, the call center received 25,024 calls, an 88 percent increase over the number received in 2001. Call volume has increase 25.5 percent from 2003 to 2004.

Rick Kuckkahn, city manager for Scottsbluff also testified that a wide range of human and social services are necessary in the panhandle region that involve federal, state and local agencies. In the absence of "211," many calls are made unnecessarily and inappropriately to "911" and other county and city government offices that may not be properly equipped to respond to or direct these calls. He testified that "211" would resolve the issue by providing a single source for information and direct callers to the appropriate governmental or private agency.

Jim Trumbull, president of United Way of Western Nebraska also testified in support of the application. He stated that there was an overwhelmingly positive response locally to the "211" initiative.

Gary Bien, CEO of Horizons West Medical Group, also testified that had "211" been in place during the recent shortage of the flu vaccine it would have assisted greatly in the dissemination of information and eliminated some of the mixed messages received by the public.

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 Scotts Bluff County. As with the preceding applications, "211" calls can be routed 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 Scotts Bluff County, 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 Scottsbluff County. The public must have easy directory access to "211" and other public interest numbers in order to maximize the benefit of such designations of scarce numbering resources. The Commission continues to strongly urge all carriers to require their directory publishing companies to display all public interest numbers such as 211, 511, 711 and 911 in a common and easily accessible location in the directory such as inside the front cover.

The Commission finds that **February 1, 2005**, should be the deadline for "211" routing for Scotts Bluff County.

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 for a referral service in Scotts Bluff County.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that **February 1, 2005**, is the deadline set by the Commission for implementation of "211" routing for Scotts Bluff County.

IT IS FINALLY ORDERED that carriers seeking recovery of costs associated with routing "211" calls for Scotts Bluff County submit cost recovery plans to the Commission for approval.

MADE AND ENTERED in Lincoln, Nebraska on this 3rd day of November, 2004.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

Chairman

ATTEST:

Executive Director