

BEFORE THE NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Commission,) Application No. C-3277/
on its own motion, concerning a) PI-88
request by the United Way of the)
Midlands for the use of 211 as a) GRANTED
dialing code for the First Call)
for Help Services for Dakota) Entered: February 1, 2005
County.

BY THE COMMISSION:

On October 13, 2004, the Commission opened a docket to consider the request by United Way of the Midlands based on a request from the United Way of Siouxland for use of "211" as the dialing code for First Call for Help (FCFH) services in Dakota 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-3223/PI 81, entered on September 21, 2004 for use in numerous counties throughout the state. Another application for the use of "211" in Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster Counties is currently pending in Docket No. C-3327/PI-90 and set for hearing on March 9, 2005.

A hearing on the present matter was held on January 25, 2005, at 3:00 p.m. at the Commission Library in Lincoln, Nebraska with video links to Omaha, Nebraska and South Sioux City, Nebraska.

Letters of support were filed with the Commission by South Sioux City Area Chamber of Commerce on November 19, 2004; the Superintendent of Schools of the South Sioux City Community Schools on November 19, 2004; the Mayor of South Sioux City on December 1, 2004; and the City Administrator of South Sioux City on January 25, 2005.

Jamie Moore, Vice President of Volunteer and Community Services for United Way of the Midlands testified that "211" service will provide increased easy public access to Health and Human Services in Dakota County. Callers to "211" will reach trained and certified information referral specialists who will provide information and referrals to an appropriate service provider in their area including governmental agencies, non-profit groups or faith-based organizations. Referral specialists are available seven-days-a-week and 24-hours-per-day. She further testified that "211" works cooperatively with local emergency management agencies and "911" call centers. The types of services that "211" will link callers to are basic human needs resources, physical and mental health resources,

employment support, support for older American and Americans with Disabilities, support for children, youth and families and volunteer opportunities and donations.

Ms. Moore further testified that as of December 21, 2004, 63 percent of Nebraska's population in 18 counties has access to services by dialing "211." In February, 2005 another 36,617 citizens in Scotts Bluff County will join the "211" system. With the addition of Scotts Bluff County and Dakota County to the preexisting counties where "211" exists in Nebraska, 72 percent of the population will have access to the service. Nationally, 102 million Americans, or 34 percent of the population have access to "211" through 141 active "211" systems in 29 states and the District of Columbia.

Finally, Ms. Moore testified, in response to a question from Commissioner Rod Johnson, that the United Way will inform the citizens of Dakota County of the new "211" service through press releases and by placing advertisements on HyVee grocery bags.

Tim Stiles, President of the United Way of Siouxland, also testified in support of the application. Mr. Stiles testified that the United Way of Siouxland not only services Nebraska, but also Iowa and South Dakota. Mr. Stiles further testified that although "211" services exist in northwest Iowa and has been advertised, the Dakota County residents did not have access to the service. Finally, Mr. Stiles testified that the United Way of Siouxland has the equipment and staff in place for "211" to be operational through the center of Siouxland.

Also testifying in support of the application was Jan Klimiadas, President and CEO at the Center for Siouxland. Ms. Klimiadas testified that "211" in her area went active officially last July, and it was modeled of the Omaha "211" call center. Since "211" went live, Ms. Klimiadas's site has seen a 25 percent increase in calls. Marketing has been limited until all the counties are on line. A Spanish-speaking referral specialist has also been hired to assist callers.

Further testimony in support of the application was provided by Steve Rector, Superintendent of Schools, South Sioux City, Nebraska. Mr. Rector testified that of the approximately 3,400 students attending school in the district, 57 percent are minority students and 45 percent meet the federal guidelines to receive free and reduced lunch. Mr. Rector testified that "211" would provide easy access to social services to assist low-income individuals and those with limited English proficiency.

Pat Anderson, President of the South Sioux City Chamber of Commerce, also testified regarding the need for "211".

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 and the United Way of Siouxland should be expanded to Dakota County. 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 Dakota 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 Dakota 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 **May 1, 2005**, should be the deadline for "211" routing for Dakota 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 and United Way of Siouxland for a referral service in Dakota County.

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

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

MADE AND ENTERED in Lincoln, Nebraska on this 1st day of
February, 2005.

NEBRASKA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

COMMISSIONERS CONCURRING:

Chairman

ATTEST:

Executive Director