



VT 211 Testimony: Public Budget Hearing, February 12, 2026

Alison Lamagna, Executive Director, United Ways of VT/VT 211

The Governor's proposed FY27 budget reduces VT 211's funding by \$332,000. We are requesting sustainable, level funding of \$1,638,029 in FY27, consistent with FY26. VT 211 is the front door to Vermont's health and human services system. We provide free, statewide access to community resources through expert personalized assistance by phone and text, as well as a searchable online database available 24/7. Our service is confidential, nonjudgmental, and barrier-free, including interpretation for callers who speak languages other than English. VT 211 helps community members navigate a maze of agency phone numbers and eligibility rules. In doing so, we reduce strain on overstretched town offices, police departments, community organizations, and emergency services. And, VT 211 is Vermont's only nationally accredited information and referral service, operating in accordance with national standards.

Today, our database includes 1,160 agencies, 3,270 programs, and more than 11,900 services. In 2025 alone, VT 211 responded to 61,654 contacts and provided 22,015 referrals, most often for housing, utilities assistance, tax preparation, public benefits, and individual and family supports. We also connect veterans, older adults, and people with disabilities to essential services. Call volume continues to grow year over year, with peak demand between 4:00 and 10:00 p.m. We operate seven days a week, including weekends and holidays.

VT 211 is also an integral partner in disaster response and recovery. From Tropical Storm Irene to COVID-19 and the flooding events of 2023 and 2024, the state has relied on 211 to deliver accurate, real-time information and coordinated referrals. Vermonters are told to call 211 in times of need – during extreme weather, natural disasters, or policy changes affecting programs like SNAP and Medicaid – and demand continues to rise as federal shifts and funding cuts impact our communities.

VT 211 is essential public infrastructure. At a time when families, communities, and state agencies are under increased pressure, the state relies on VT 211 to absorb growing demand, adapt quickly, and ensure Vermonters can access accurate information and timely referrals.



United Ways of Vermont

We recognize this is a challenging funding cycle and we are seeking level funding, not an increase. However, the Governor's proposed reduction to VT 211's funding by \$332,000 will directly jeopardize our ability to support the General Assistance program, activate during disasters, and respond to policy changes. We need sustainable funding in order to maintain adequate staffing during our highest call volume times (4pm-10pm) to reduce wait times and call backs. We urge you to support full, level funding of \$1,638,029 for VT 211 in FY27 so Vermonters can access help when it matters most.