



Building Resilient Communities

Funding PA 211 in 2025-26



**“The Resource Navigator
was kind, helpful,
and calming.”**

Wendy

**“211 changed
my life.”**

Danny

**“I got help with
things I’d never
even thought of
when I called
PA 211
Southwest.”**

William

Scan here



**for more
Success Stories**

OVERVIEW

Every day, individuals and families contact 211 for help connecting to local and statewide resources they can use to overcome challenges and stabilize through crisis. Whether they are calling for connections to food assistance, counseling services, health care, housing and utility payment assistance, disaster recovery, employment and education services, veteran services, or childcare or caretaker services, when they reach out, there is a knowledgeable, and experienced Resource Navigator to take that call and help provide guidance through a labyrinth of resources. It is this person-to-person connection, neighbor to neighbor, that is the core of PA 211, enabled by the vast database of **over 100,000 resources**.

Since 2017, PA 211 has been available statewide, 24/7/365, providing access to state and local supports, including publicly and privately funded services, for any need. In calendar year 2024, PA 211 engaged in **224,920 interactions (calls, texts, chats, etc)**, which resulted in **679,400 referrals**. In addition, those in need sought help by conducting approximately **1.6 million searches on pa211.org**. Funded mainly through local support, this local investment is a testament to the importance communities place on the personal connections and self-service options provided by PA 211 everyday.

In addition to the daily work, PA 211 is always prepared to respond to emergent community needs, especially during and after disasters. In 2024 alone, PA 211 was mobilized five times by state and local authorities to help communities recover from flooding, tornados, snowstorms, and other impacts. In total, PA 211 facilitated coordinated intake process for over **2,171 residents** of seven counties meeting them person to person, with calm and compassion, during their time of crisis.

PA 211 is a flexible and scalable platform for other local and statewide special projects. For example, during the 2024 tax season, PA 211 scheduled Voluntary Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program appointments for **24,970 households**. VITA results in improved tax filing rates, with taxpayers receiving skilled support to secure all the tax credits and benefits they are eligible for. This often leads to tax refunds which are re-invested in the local economy to meet household needs.



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OVERVIEW (continued)

In FY 2022-2023, PA 211 was awarded a one-time grant of \$4 million dollars, in addition to the historical state appropriation of \$750,000. Some of this funding was used for technological improvements that resulted in a statewide CRM system that improves PA 211's capabilities to provide high quality service consistently across the state, respond to natural disasters, and share data. PA 211 developed a chat translation tool which allows individuals who use web chat to communicate seamlessly in more than 75 languages.

The other investment enabled by the \$4 million grant was in PA 211's people resources, as more resource navigators were hired to provide connection and be the reassuring voice with expert resource navigation skills to help empower Pennsylvanians to address their own needs. During this period of increased capacity, 211 was able to **reduce wait times by approximately 8 minutes**, allowing us to speak with more callers and **reduce abandonment rates from 42% to 29%**. Simply put, over the two years that PA 211 spent this grant, thousands more Pennsylvanians were served, thanks to our people and technology investments, much more quickly than in any year prior.

In 2025, PA 211 relies on diverse revenues including special projects, community support, local United Way investment, state government funding, nonprofit partner in-kind contributions, and donations. Commonwealth investment accounts for a little less than 10% of the total revenue PA 211 receives annually. At the same time, local United Ways and nonprofit partners contribute nearly 20% of the revenue while each community faces its challenges with housing, childcare access, food insecurity, transportation, and basic needs access. PA 211 clients have the misfortune of encountering unmet needs due to a variety of reasons including lack of resources in rural areas, increasing rent and utility costs and shortage of homeless prevention or eviction diversion services. Unmet needs could be better addressed by freeing up flexible nonprofit funds to meet these gaps, and using additional Commonwealth investment in PA 211 to reduce disparities and assure the service remains available to all constituents.

In the current budget year, local United Ways are contributing 80% more than the Commonwealth for PA 211 operations. Unfortunately, those contributions are not equal across the board and some regions are better-funded than others. These PA 211 resource disparities follow the pattern of other shortages in rural communities with fewer funders and donors. The original intent of the PA 211 line item in the Commonwealth budget was to bring the service to every county in the Commonwealth.



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OVERVIEW (continued)

To address this and support PA 211 as the foundation of other strategic initiatives that help with disasters and economic opportunity, PA 211 needs additional financial support from the Commonwealth.

The data presented herein and available at www.pa211.org demonstrates that above and beyond the power of connection, PA 211 is also the most publicly accessible data set that illustrates real-time needs in all of the commonwealth's communities. Whether it is housing needs, food insecurity, utility assistance, or household essentials, PA 211 takes a holistic approach to helping every client.

As PA 211 Resource Navigators assist with more complex requests, and the number of people reaching out to them increases daily, we are presented with a capacity challenge that left unaddressed will have detrimental consequences for individuals and families, and by association, entire communities. **Accordingly, United Way of PA is requesting the General Assembly to increase PA 211's state appropriation to \$2.5 million to address call wait times and abandon rates across the whole state, secure the ongoing availability of this service in rural areas, and allow nonprofits to quantify and address unmet needs.**



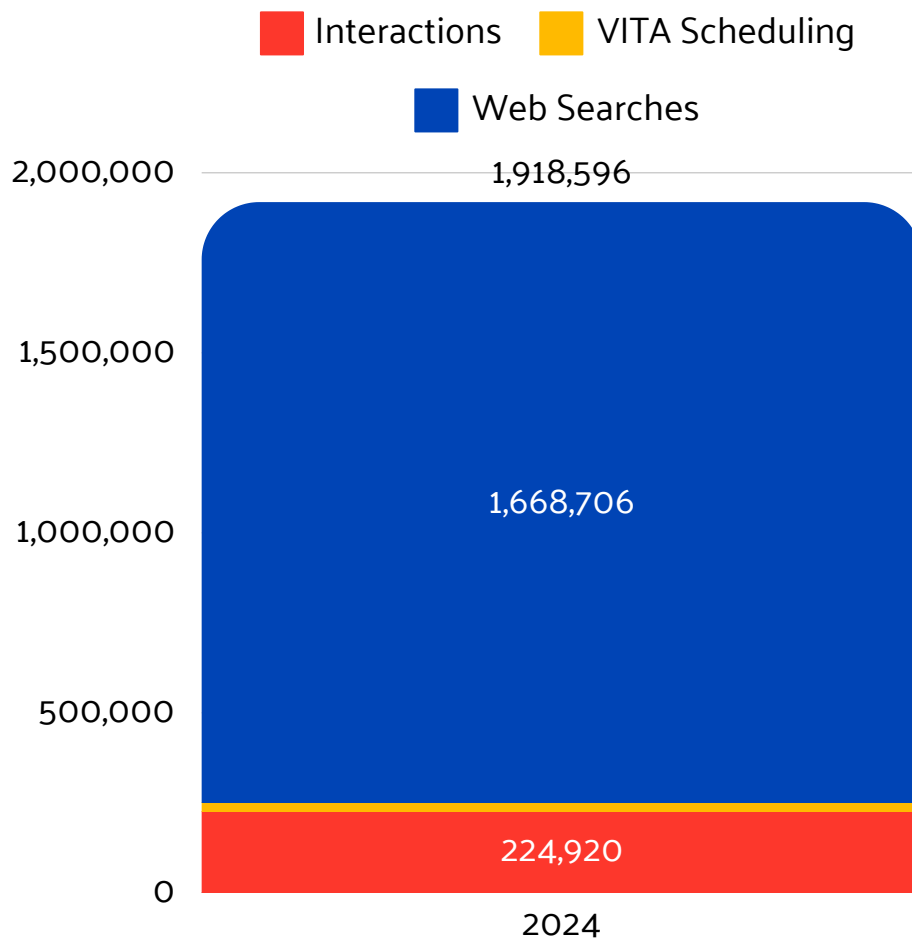
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INTERACTIONS IN 2024

In calendar year 2024, PA 211 engaged in 249,890 interactions, which includes calls, texts and chats. In addition, those in need sought help by conducting approximately 1,668,706 searches using the PA 211 online database. In total, about 1.9 million Pennsylvanians sought help from PA 211 in 2024.

Interactions for 2024 also included 24,970 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance scheduling calls. Currently, PA 211 conducts VITA scheduling in five-out-of-seven regions - East, Northwest, South Central, Southeast, and Southwest. VITA programs are operated by either community partners or local United Ways.

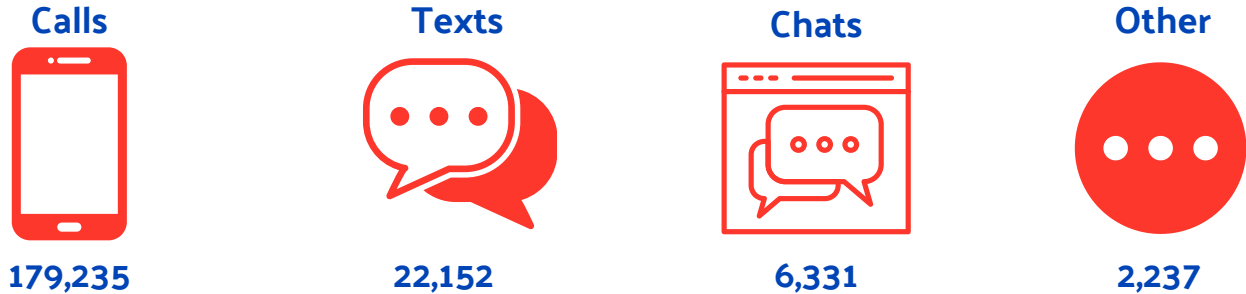
2024 PA 211 Total Engagements



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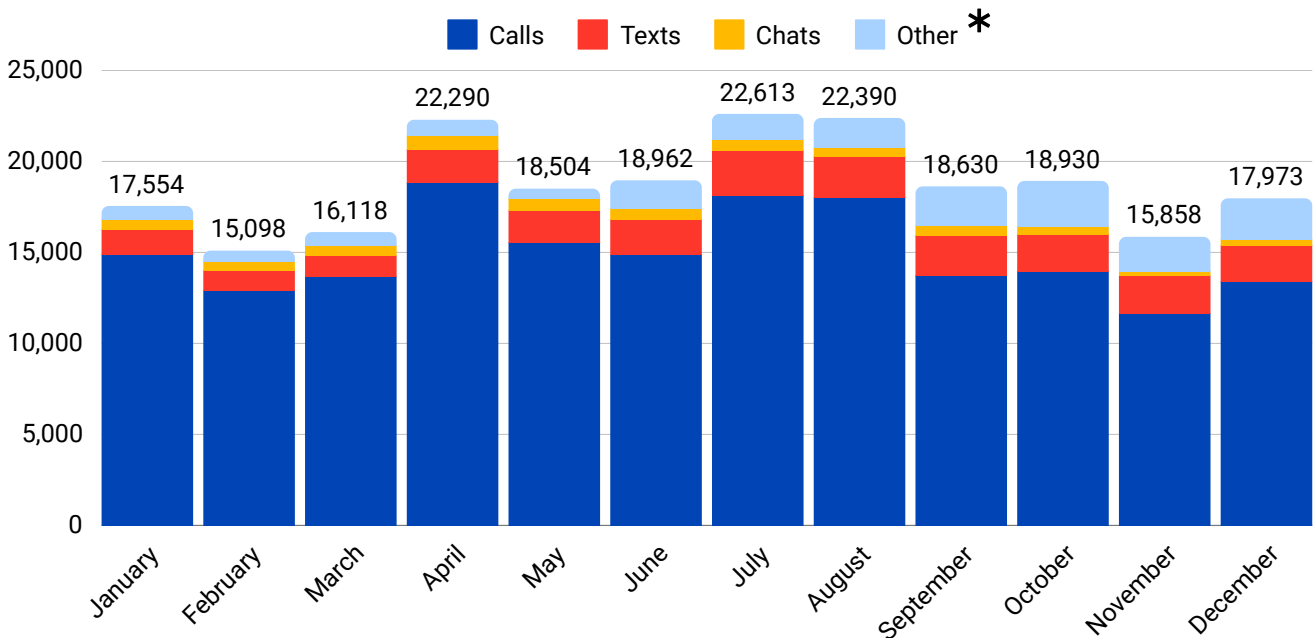
INTERACTIONS IN 2024 (continued)

Interactions by Mode of Contact



The primary modes of contact by which a client can reach PA 211 continue to be call, text, and chat. For many clients, web searches have become immensely popular as well. In 2024, PA 211 contact centers were also engaged in a variety of new ways by clients who sought help including email, social media/online, walk-in, letter/US Post, and in the community at an event or meeting.

Volume of Interactions by Mode of Contact (2024)



* Includes emails, social media/online, walk-in, letter/US Post, outbound phone, community/community organization meeting, and unspecified.



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INTERACTIONS IN 2024 (continued)

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Scheduling

For individuals who make \$67,000 or less, persons with disabilities, and limited English-speaking taxpayers, the Volunteer Income Assistance (VITA) Program offers basic tax preparation services. Since 2023, PA 211 has been offering statewide VITA scheduling services, however, some contact centers have engaged in scheduling for many years at both the county and regional levels.

In 2024, PA 211 scheduled 24,970 appointments with the largest number of appointments scheduled in Lancaster (8,377) and Allegheny (6,736) Counties. In total, PA 211 VITA scheduling led to a total of \$35,382,490 in refunds in 2024 to eligible filers. **The average filer received a refund of about \$1,427.29 from a PA 211 scheduled VITA appointment in 2024.**

For low-income working families especially, VITA connects eligible recipients with vital tax credits such as the federal Earned Income Tax Credit, the Child Tax Credit, and the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit. For these households, tax credits can significantly reduce tax liability and enhance refunds, which are used to pay for basic needs and offset living expenses.

\$35,382,490
in total refunds from
PA 211 VITA
scheduling in 2024

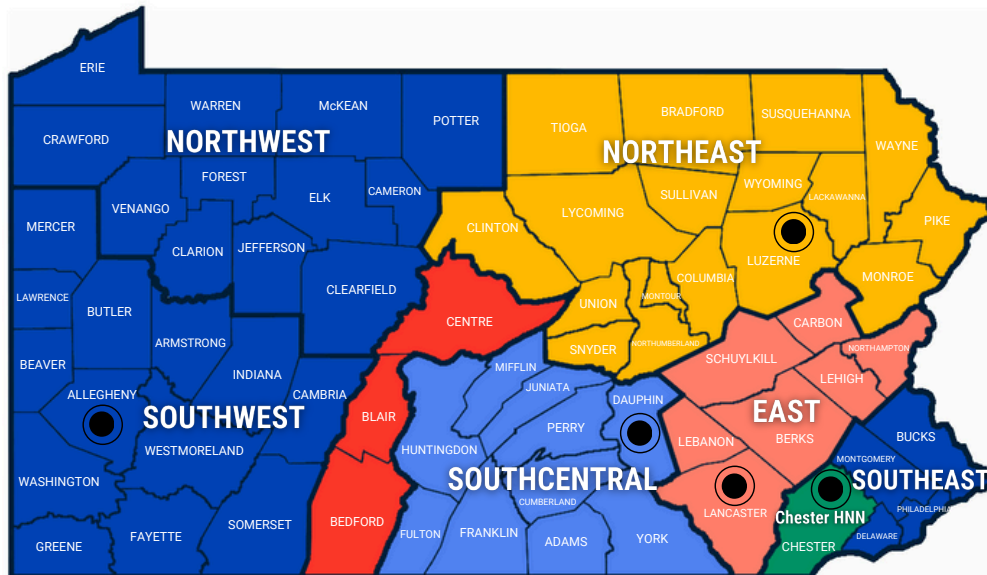
\$1,427.29
The average refund
an eligible filer received
from a PA 211 scheduled
appointment in 2024



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INTERACTIONS IN 2024 (continued)

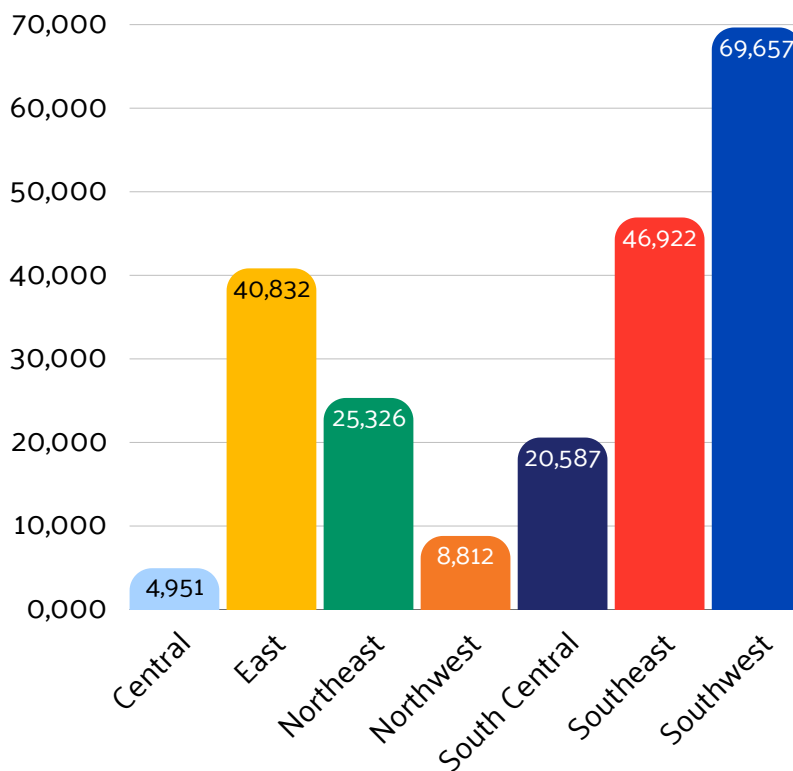
PA 211 REGIONAL CONTACT CENTERS



Interactions By Region

On a region-by-region basis, interaction volume differs based on the footprint and population density each region covers. The interactions also reflect community awareness, which is highly correlated with local support - in the form of both dollars and promotion of the service. The service is also longest-established in the Southwest, Southeast and East regions, whereas service did not launch for the full Northwest region until 2017, enabled by the first PA 211 state appropriation.

2024 PA 211 Interactions (by region)

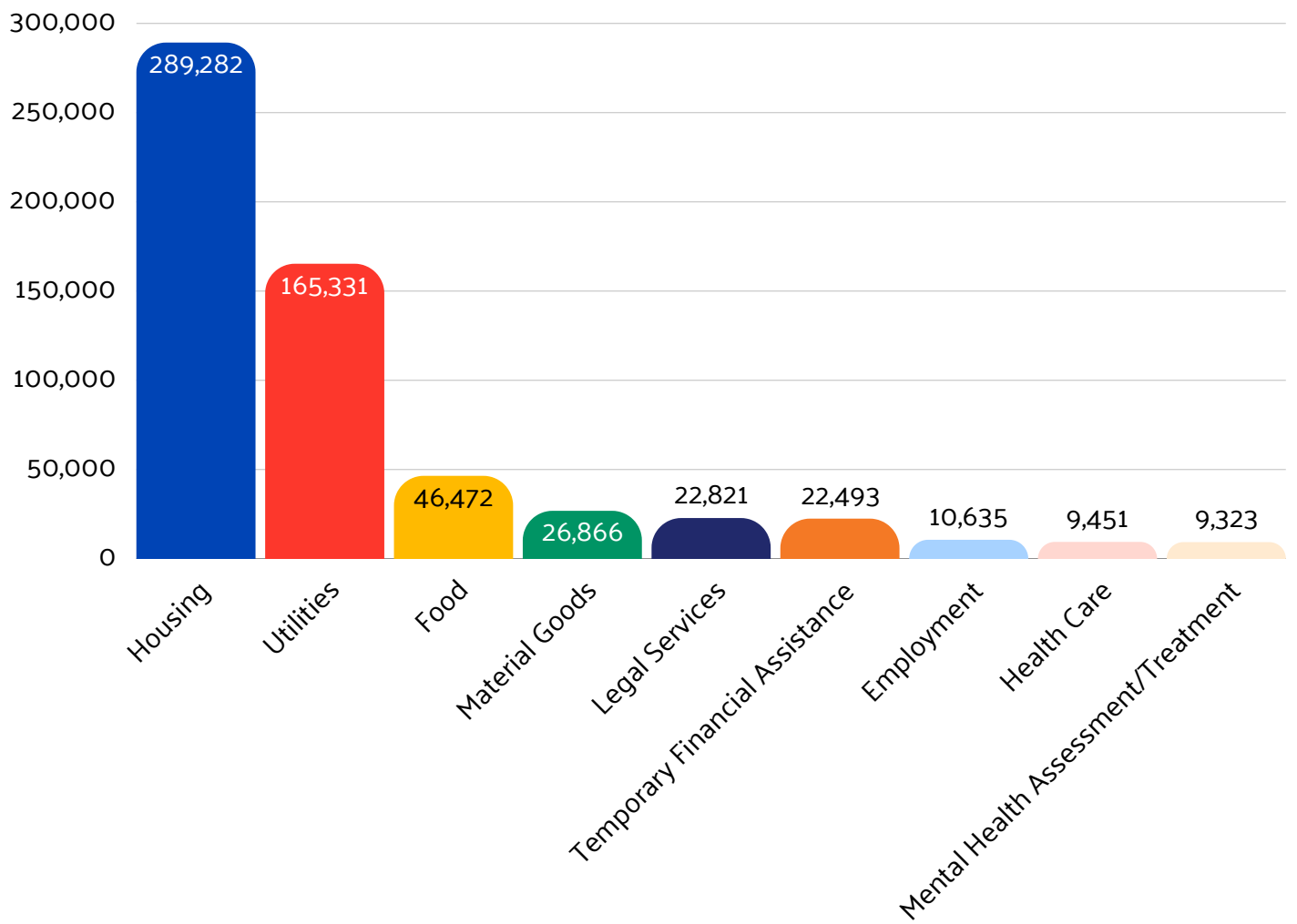


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REFERRALS IN 2024

Referrals from interactions - calls, texts, and chats - were 679,440, and from VITA scheduling were 24,970, for a total of 704,410 referrals in 2024. As is typically the case, housing and shelter saw the highest level of referrals, 289,282, and utility assistance was the second highest at 165,331. The chart below identifies the number of referrals for the top identified needs in 2024.

Number of Referrals for Top Identified Needs Categories 2024

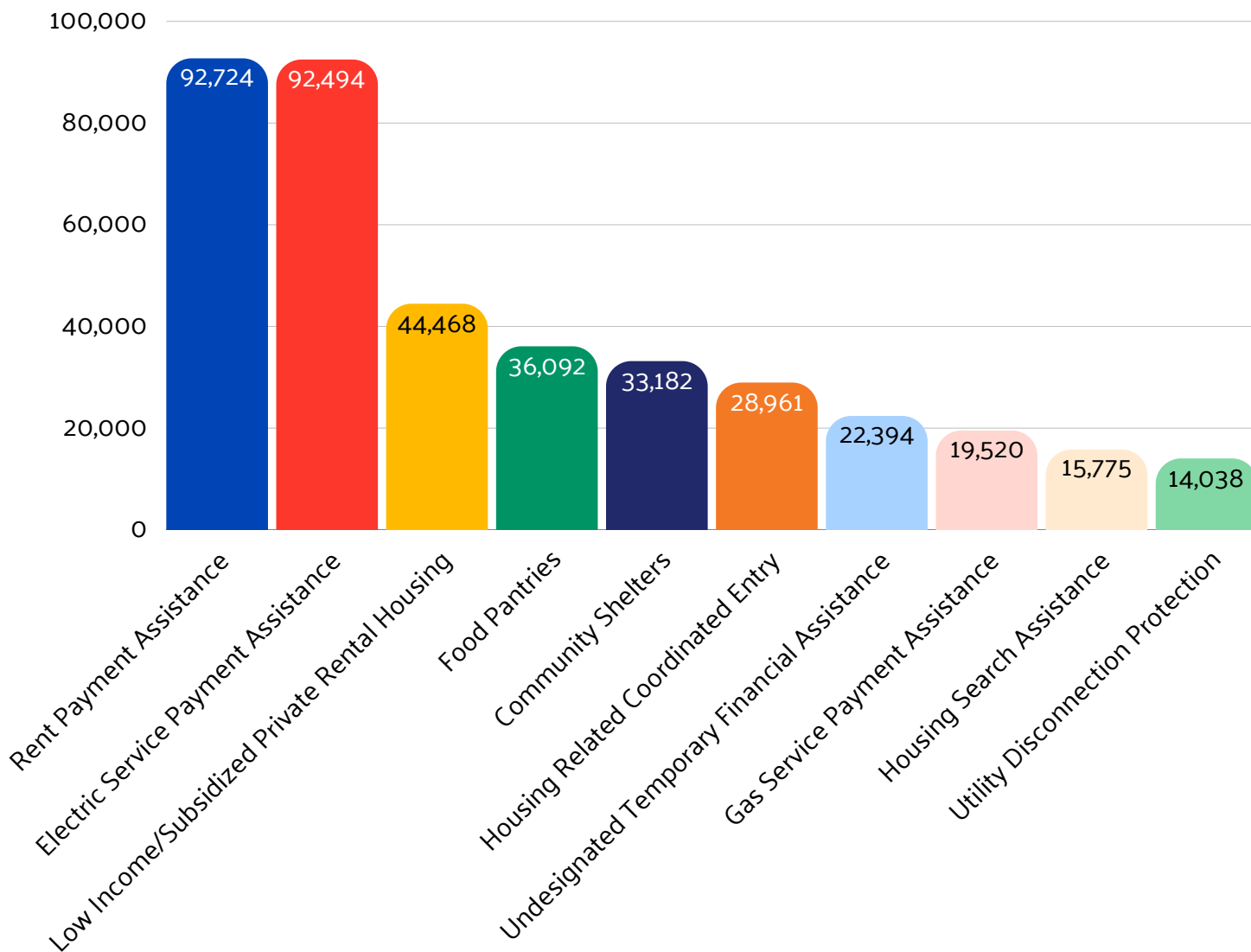


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REFERRALS IN 2024 (continued)

Within each referral category are subcategories for specific services. For example, within the housing category, there are eight subcategories with a variety of specific supports and services listed within each. While housing supports and services led referrals overall, clients interacted with PA 211 for a variety of needs.

Top Identified Needs and Referrals 2024

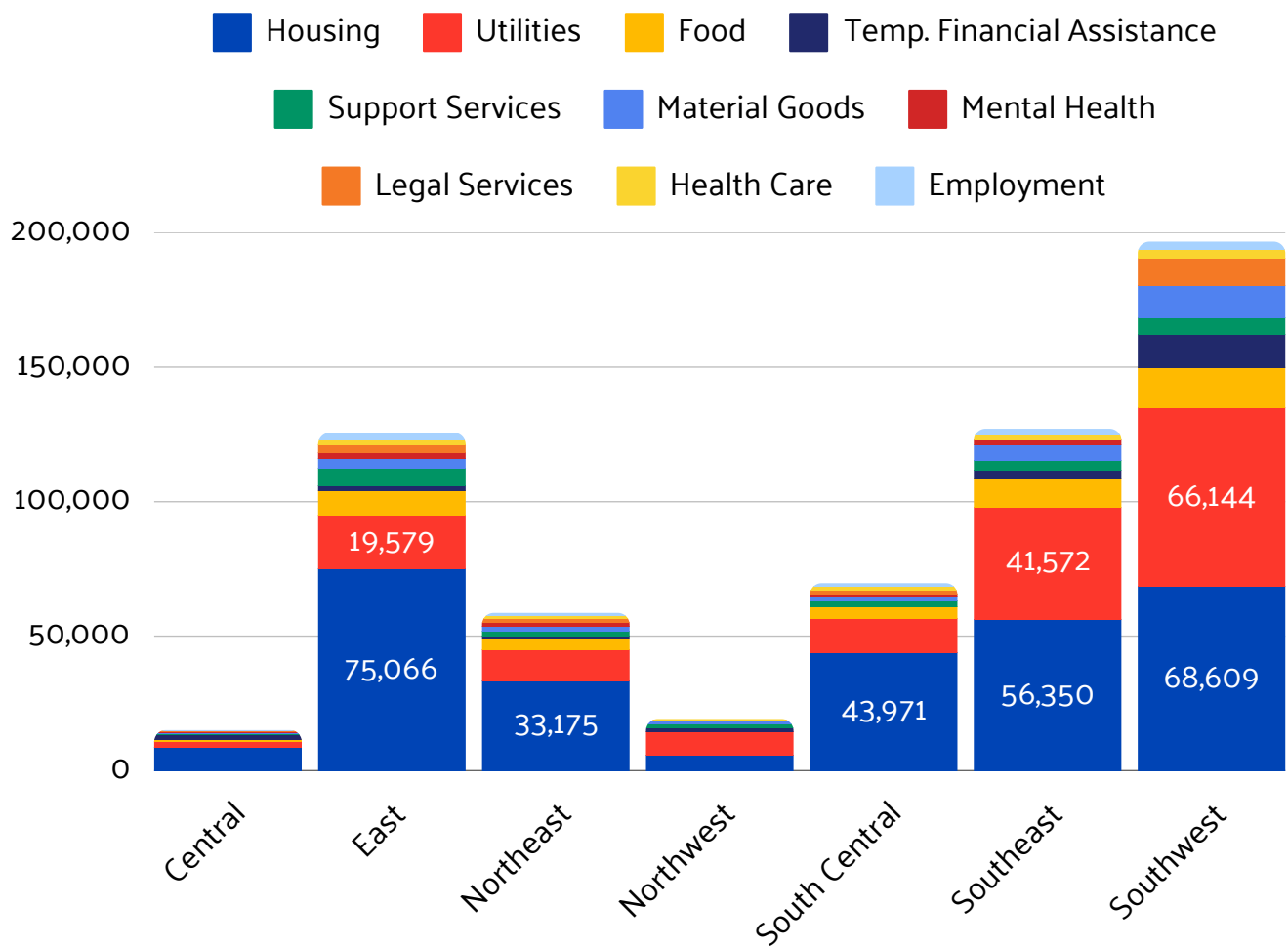


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REFERRALS IN 2024 (continued)

Most regions follow the statewide trend of housing, utilities, and food being the top needs requests. However, the Central and Northwest regions have other needs that fall into the top three needs. Likewise, some regions have top categorical needs that are different from the rest of the regions. For all regions, housing receives the most referrals, except for in the Northwest where utilities are the most referred services.

Number of Referrals for Top Identified Needs Categories by Region



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UNMET NEEDS IN 2024

In 2024, PA 211 recorded a total of 16,294 unmet needs. Unmet needs arise when the resources required to meet a client's needs are unavailable or the client is ineligible for assistance. Reasons for unmet needs include:

- Service not Available/Does not Exist
- Service Hours not Available
- Coordinated Entry Closed
- Ineligible - Gender/Age
- Ineligible - Housing Status
- Ineligible - Income
- Ineligible - Household Composition
- Ineligible - Residency
- Ineligible - Lacking Necessary Documentation
- Ineligible - Already Exhausted Resource
- Ineligible - Disability or Veteran Status



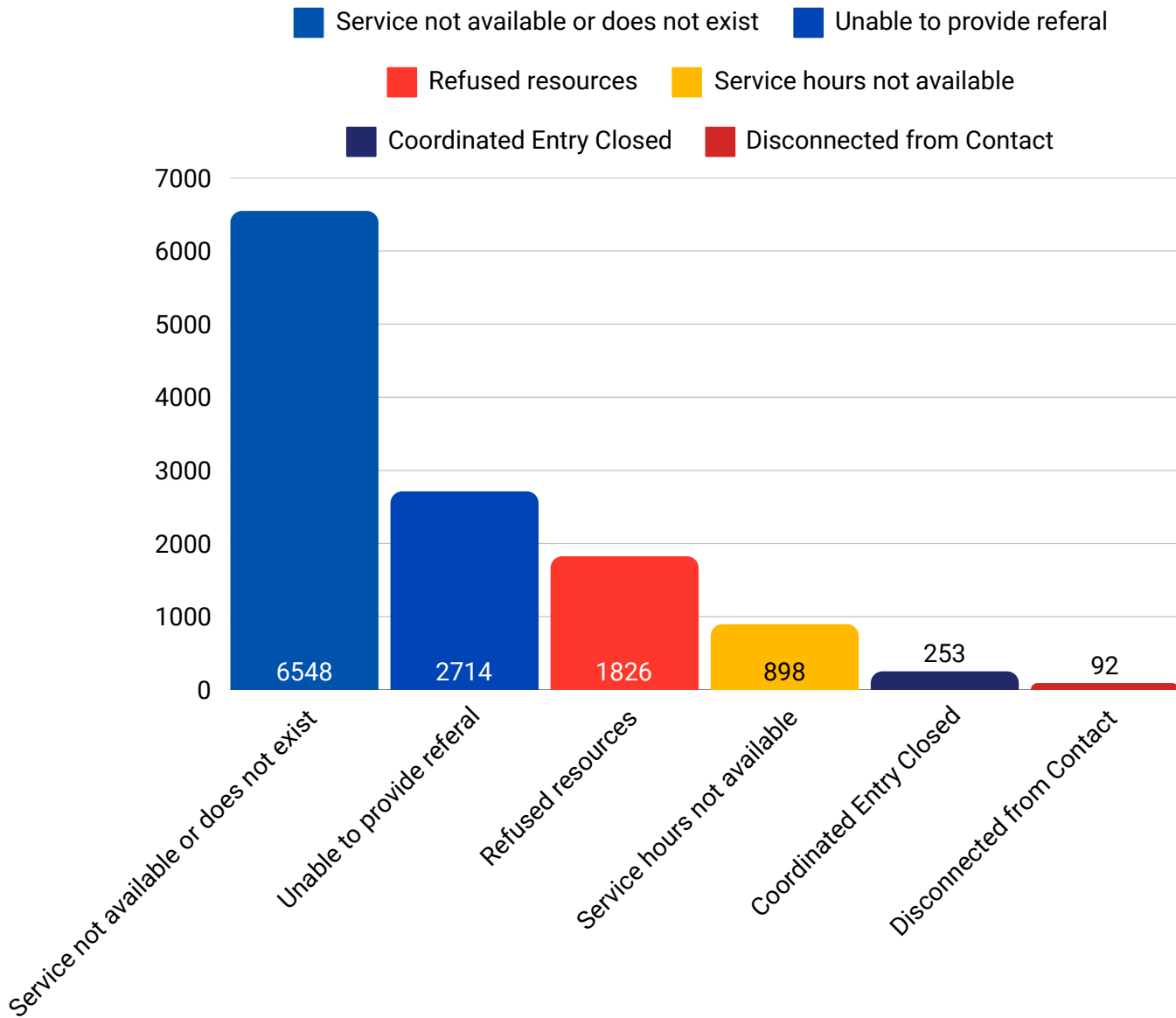
While some of the reasons for unmet needs in 2024 are due to program eligibility requirements, **40%** were due to the lack of service availability or the existence of a program/support. Both local governments and community partners invest resources in PA 211 with the expectation of referrals to programs and supports. With limited resources, programming availability is a challenge for many communities across the Commonwealth. This is evidenced by some of the unmet needs presented on the next page.



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UNMET NEEDS IN 2024 (continued)

Top Reasons for Unmet Needs



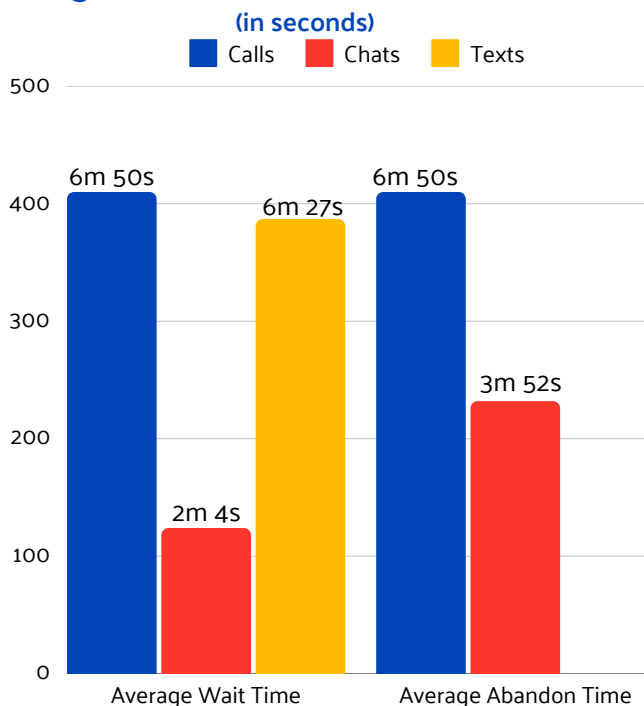
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CALL WAIT TIMES & ABANDON RATES

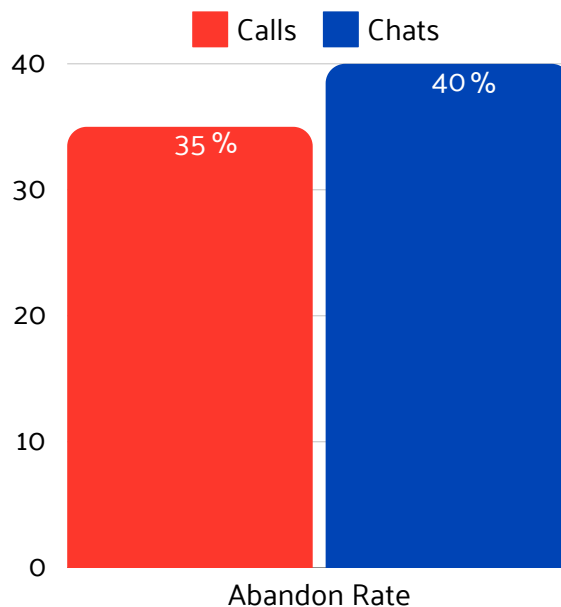
In 2024, PA 211 clients experienced average wait times of nearly seven minutes for calls, a little over two minutes for chats, and seven-and-a-half minutes for texts. Abandon rates for calls and chats were 35% and 40%, respectively. In 2022, United Way of Pennsylvania advocated for additional support for PA 211 due to the impact COVID-19 had on call wait times and abandon rates. At one point, PA 211's call wait times exceeded 40 minutes. Fortunately, that has not happened the state of 2025. However, PA 211 is seeing increased call wait times and abandon rates for two main reasons - increased interactions and the expiration of the one-time \$4 million grant allocated to PA 211 in the 2022-23 Commonwealth budget.

The \$4 million grant was used to make a variety of infrastructural enhancements and expand use of technology for efficient deployment of human resources. The investment also allowed PA 211 to hire additional intake specialists to address the highest and most involved needs request, housing. As previously noted, housing accounts for over one-third of the total referrals made by PA 211 in 2024. With the expiration of those funds, PA 211 was forced to reduce staff in the four contact centers, and housing intake specialists in the Eastern Continuum of Care, which is leading to higher call wait times and abandon rates.

Average Wait and Abandon Times, 2024



Abandon Rate, 2024



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Call Wait Times and Abandon Rates (continued)

Eastern COC-211 Contact Metrics 2023 v. 2024

	July-23	July-24	Difference (%)	Aug.-23	Aug.-24	Difference (%)
Calls	2,171	2,529	+17%	2,220	2,097	-6%
Avg. Wait (minutes)	28	37	+32%	29	39	+35%
Abandons	635	873	+38%	717	751	+5%
Abandon %	29	35	+21%	32	36	+13%

The chart above demonstrates the increase in wait times, abandonments, and abandonment rates in two of the higher volume months for the Eastern Continuum of Care. In July and August of 2023, United Way of PA was using part of the \$4 million grant to PA 211 to supplement housing coordinated entry intake capacity under a HUD-funded contract. In July and August of 2024, those funds were no longer available, positions were eliminated, and wait times, abandons, and abandon rates went up.

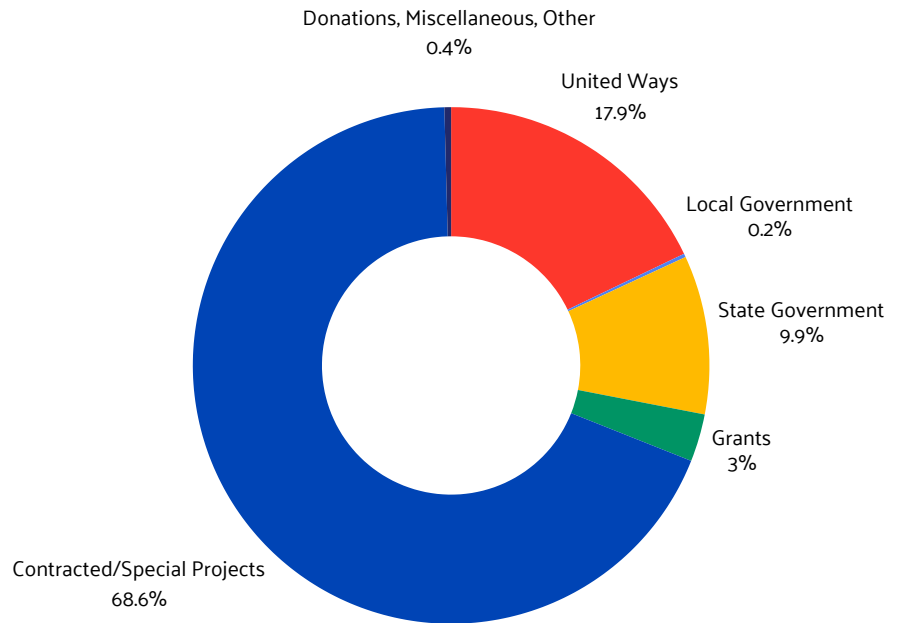


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PA 211 FUNDING IN 2024

PA 211 operates its four contact centers at an annual cost of over \$7.7 million. While the largest portion of revenue comes from contracted/special projects, some of those projects do not pay for themselves. Most notably, HUD-funded coordinated entry intake budgets are insufficient to address needs. As a result, PA 211 relies on other sources of revenue to support those special projects.

PA 211 Revenue (2024)



To operate the service, PA 211 relies on revenue from a variety of sources. Funding from the Commonwealth makes up less than 10% of the total sources of revenue funding PA 211.



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PA 211 2025-26 APPROPRIATIONS REQUEST

Governor Shapiro proposed flat funding PA 211 at \$750,000 as part of his 2025-26 budget proposal. United Way of PA and our network thank the Governor for ensuring continued Commonwealth support of PA 211. However, **we urge the General Assembly to increase the PA 211 line item to \$2.5 million.**

PA 211 is universally necessary to rural, urban, and suburban communities across Pennsylvania - both to help our neighbors and to track and publicly report needs data, demographic data, and unmet needs. The stories of people who utilize PA 211 include struggling working families who have never had to ask for help before, individuals on the verge of homelessness, community members looking for support groups for the loss of a loved one, and services for an aging family member.

PA 211 is growing in its public recognition and understanding across the Commonwealth. This is vital to help people secure the right support at the right time, save taxpayer resources, and avoid both trauma and financial disaster for individual households. Basic needs shortages are often a contributing factor in mental health crises and substance use disorders. It's better for a person to reach out to the accessible and effective help-space of PA 211 when they get behind on their utility bills for advice about payment plans, customer assistance programs and/or LIHEAP, in advance of utilities being shut-off. It's better for communities and individuals to call PA 211 and seek housing or eviction prevention resources, rather than enter the more expensive category of homeless services.

PA 211 faces three major challenges - growing call wait times, increasing abandon rates, and unmet needs. Flexible, charitable dollars are also being invested in funding this service while the Commonwealth investment fails to secure the baseline service required in all of our communities.

The expiration of the \$4 million state grant led to elimination of some housing intake specialist positions. PA 211 can attribute the increase in wait times and abandon rates to this decision, compounded by the continually increasing need for housing-related solutions. PA 211 anticipates wait times and abandon rates to steadily increase as these are the most involved requests that PA 211 receives. The only solution which allows PA to meet its federal funding requirements, is to hire additional housing intake specialists. To do this, PA 211 needs additional capital.



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PA 211 Appropriations Request (continued)

PA 211 hopes to address some unmet needs by freeing up a portion of the funds it receives from our local United Ways and nonprofit partners, to allow more of their flexible, charitable dollars to flow into communities. With those dollars dedicated to programming, and services, we expect unmet needs to decrease. However, to free up those funds and secure and improve one place any Pennsylvanian can turn to for help, PA 211 needs additional Commonwealth support.

In the current budget year, local United Ways are contributing 80% more than the Commonwealth for PA 211 operations. Unfortunately, those contributions are not equal or equitable, and some PA 211 providers are better-funded than others, making the ability to provide the service, promote the service and engage local partners for its effectiveness a very precarious situation in rural parts of our state. The original intent of the PA 211 line item in the Commonwealth budget was to bring the service to all 67 counties. As the data proves, the service is used in all 67 counties and the state funding increase is needed to secure this for your constituents into the future.

With an increase of the PA 211 line item from \$750,000 to \$2.5 million, PA 211 intends to:

- **Address the disproportionate local funding of PA 211 regions by supplementing expenses to ensure continued access, and high quality service, in rural areas of the Commonwealth**
- **Increase staffing to reduce call wait times and abandon rates**
- **Re-institute state dollars paying for statewide VITA scheduling online and by phone through PA 211, to give access to more eligible filers and enhance the financial impact of the program**
- **Promote and generate more public awareness of the service and increase use of the service for timely support that reduces the need for more intensive and costly supports and services**
- **Capitalize strategic technology investments that continuously improve the PA 211 service and enhance our team's ability to serve more Pennsylvanians.**

The logo graphic consists of four diagonal stripes of color: dark blue, light blue, yellow, and red, arranged from left to right.

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GLOSSARY

Agencies: Community-based organizations, government entities, or programs that coordinate the distribution of resources to Pennsylvania residents. These may include nonprofits, governmental agencies, or other groups that assist with various services.

Client/Contact: An individual who seeks assistance by contacting PA 211 through phone, text, chat, or email. This term refers to anyone utilizing the services offered by PA 211 to address their needs.

Resource Navigator: A trained professional committed to identifying clients' needs and directing them toward suitable resources. They play a crucial role in connecting individuals with the assistance they require.

Interaction: Any single exchange of communication between a client and a Resource Navigator via any mode of communication provided by PA 211, capturing the essence of each unique request for help.

Needs: These refer to the various types of support a client may require, including but not limited to housing assistance, food insecurity relief, and utility payment aid. Essentially, these are the social determinants of health needs identified by the client.

Referrals: Lists or suggestions of agencies, community-based organizations, or programs provided to clients, complete with the necessary contact information. These referrals are intended to help clients access the resources required to meet their specific needs.

Unmet Needs: Unmet needs arise when the resources required to meet a client's needs are unavailable, or the client is ineligible for assistance. Reasons for unmet needs can include:

- **Service not Available/Does not Exist:** A specific service or resource cannot be accessed or found in the database near the client's location. This also applies to seasonal resources that may only be available during certain times of the year.
- **Service Hours not Available:** Information about the hours of operation is not provided, or not accessible to the client.



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GLOSSARY (continued)

- **Coordinated Entry Closed:** A client has called for a housing/shelter need outside of Coordinated Entry Hours. Contact Instructions in the General I&R workflow will tell you CE hours specific to the county selected.
- **Ineligible – Gender/Age:** A client is ineligible for a service because of their gender and/or age.
- **Ineligible – Housing Status:** A client’s current housing situation does not meet the eligibility criteria for a specific service.
- **Ineligible – Income:** A client does not meet income requirements, or lacks a source of income, making them ineligible for a particular program or service.
- **Ineligible – Household Composition:** The makeup of an individual or family’s household does not meet the eligibility requirements for a specific program or service. Household composition includes factors such as the number of people in the household, their relationships to each other, and age.
- **Ineligible – Residency:** The client’s place of residence or length of time living at their current residence does not meet the eligibility criteria for a specific program or service.
- **Ineligible – Lacking Necessary Documentation:** The client cannot qualify for a program or service because they do not possess the required documentation to be eligible.
- **Ineligible - Already Exhausted Resource:** The client has previously used this resource and is not able to utilize it again for a specified amount of time (once per year is common for programs).
- **Ineligible – Disability or Veteran Status:** The client does not qualify for certain resources or services because of their disability status or veteran status does not meet the required eligibility criteria.



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GLOSSARY (continued)

- **Refused Resource:** The client has chosen not to accept a particular resource referral that was offered to them.
- **Disconnected from Contact:** The client disconnects from the call, text, or chat prior to resource referrals being provided.
- **Transportation Barrier:** A client cannot utilize a resource due to lack of transportation options or difficulties related to travel.



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The background features a solid blue field. In the upper right, there are overlapping semi-circular shapes in shades of red and orange. A large, light blue semi-circle is positioned in the lower half of the frame. Centered within this semi-circle is a dark blue speech bubble with a white outline and a yellow-to-red gradient tail pointing towards the bottom right.

211

Pennsylvania