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**United Way
of Pennsylvania**

PA 211 COVID-19 Response March, 2020 – December, 2021

Since March of 2020, the COVID-19 Pandemic has presented a variety of challenges for Pennsylvanians. Regardless of income, number of residents, collective age, race, or location, households across the Commonwealth, some of whom have never had to ask for help, have needed access to resources including rent/mortgage assistance, utility payment assistance, physical and mental health supports, child care, and other basic essentials. According to United Way of Pennsylvania's ALICE Report, almost 40% of Pennsylvania households were struggling to make ends meet **before** the pandemic. COVID-19 exacerbated short-term and long-term financial burdens for many Pennsylvanians. Even though many Pennsylvanians have returned to work, there has been a consistent and major strain on PA 211 due to a significantly higher-than-normal volume of requests for assistance. Accordingly, PA 211 is requesting a one-time investment of \$4.2 million of American Rescue Plan funds from the Pennsylvania General Assembly to help modernize our infrastructure.

Since 2017, PA 211 has been available statewide, 24/7/365, providing access to state and local services, including publicly and privately funded services, for any need. This service is currently primarily funded by local communities contributing more than \$4.2 million from a variety of sources including local United Ways. In addition, 211 has received an annual appropriation of \$750,000 in the Commonwealth budget since FY 2018-2019. On October 7, 2020, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee released a study entitled, "A Report on the Pennsylvania Health and Human Services Hotlines," which identified the services provided, staffing, cost and appropriations, contract options, and hours of operation for each hotline. Of the 66 hotlines reviewed, PA 211 provided the most information due to our tracking and annual auditing.

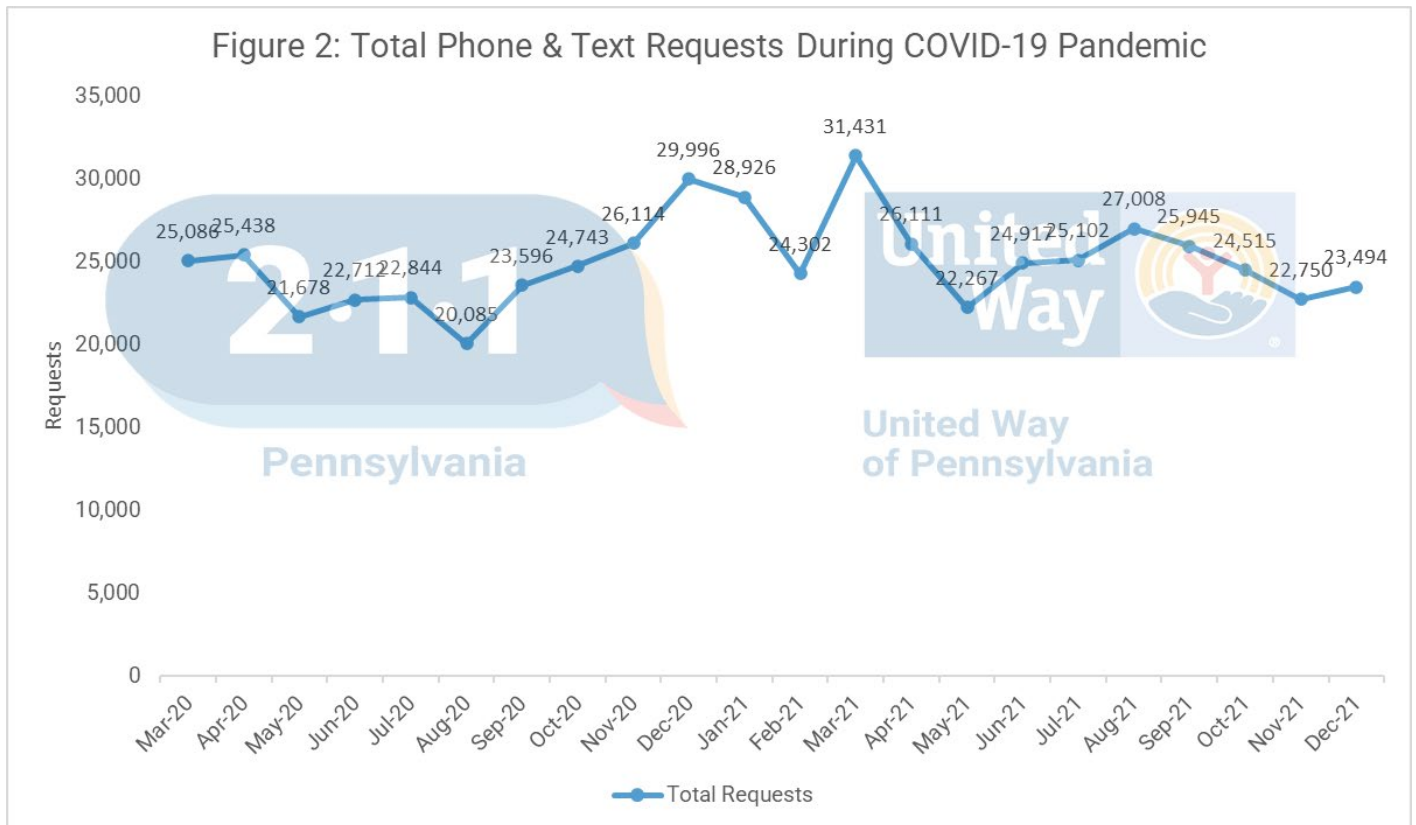
According to the most recently available data on PA 211 Counts, <https://pa.211counts.org/>, from the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to present, March 1, 2020, through December 31, 2021, PA 211 has received over half a million call and text requests for a variety of supports and services. Top requested services are outlined in the chart below.

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Figure 1: Most Requested Services Via Call and Text – PA 211

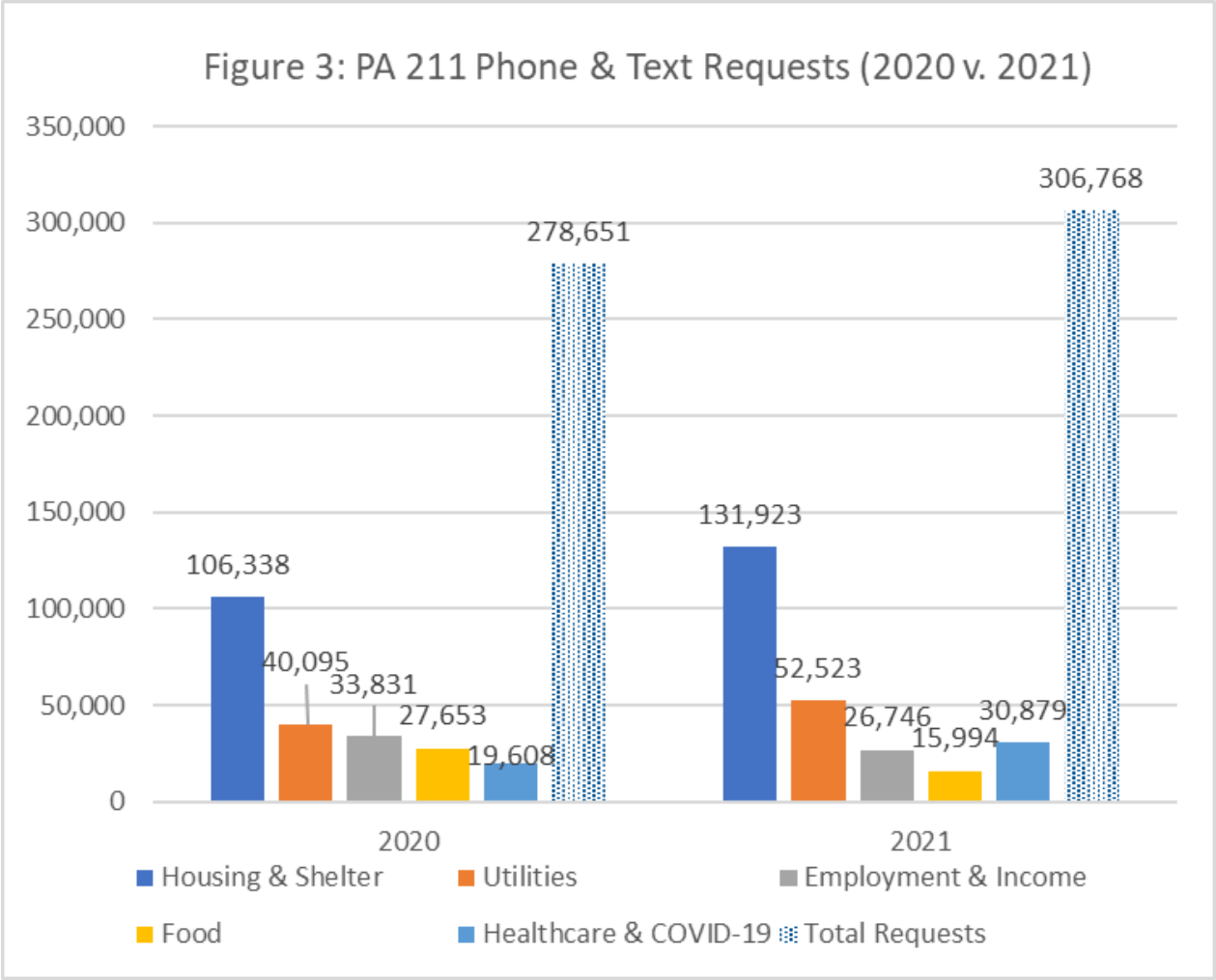
Service Type	Total Requested 3/2020 – 12/2021
Housing & Shelter	223,056
Utility Assistance	87,256
Healthcare & COVID-19	49,139
Employment & Income	48,044
Food	41,347
Total (all requested services)	549,060

While the demand for all supports and services has been consistently trending upward, (see Figure 2), housing has been the most requested service with over 227,000 requests since March 1, 2020. To date, the counties with the five highest number of total requests have been Allegheny (110,063), Lancaster (44,311), Philadelphia (38,843), Montgomery (29,619) and Westmoreland (26,389) Counties.



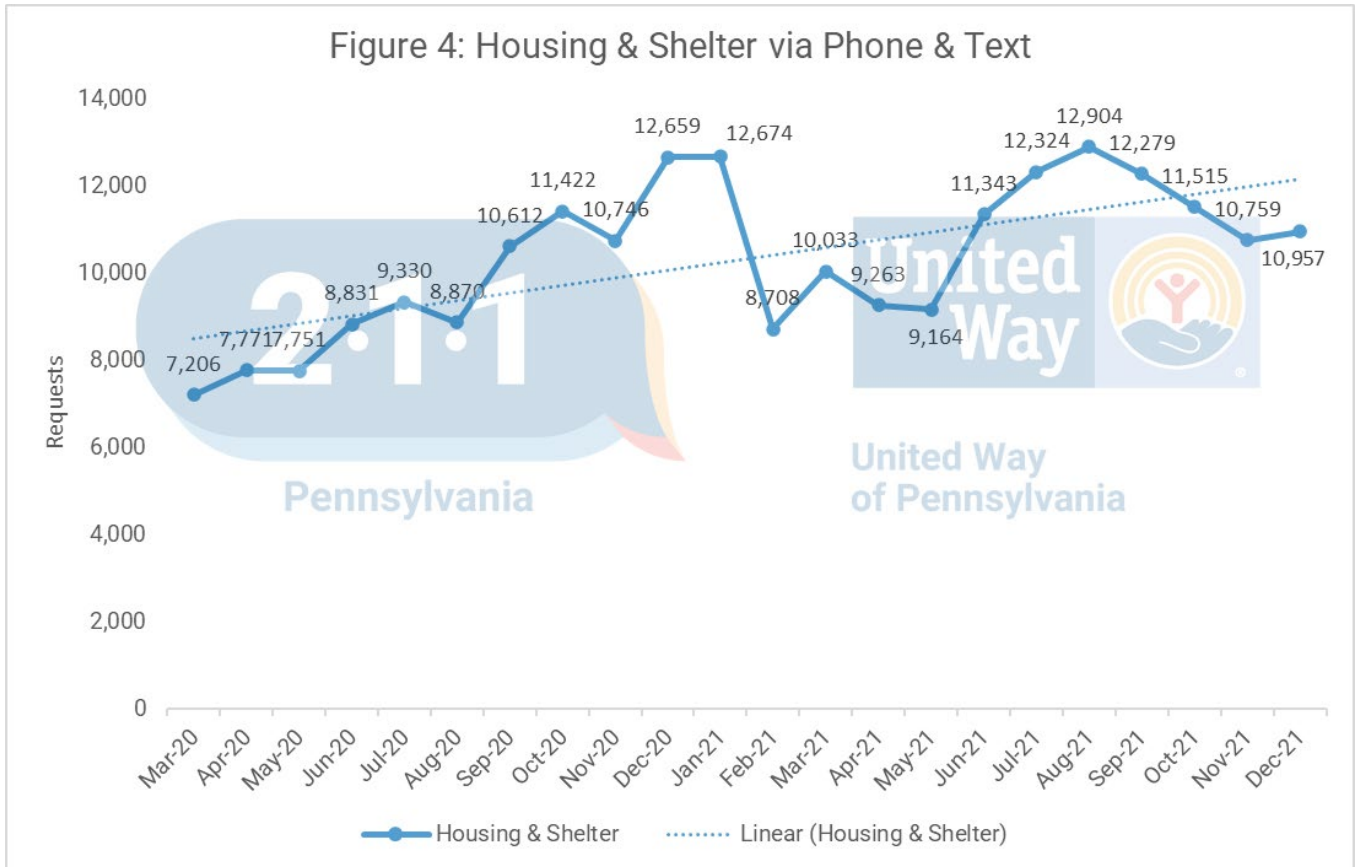
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Despite many Pennsylvanians returning to work and school and COVID-19 safeguards lifting in 2021, PA 211 saw requests for supports and services increase. While total calls and texts were up 10% in 2021, PA 211 saw increases of 57%, 31% and 24%, for information about health care and COVID-19, utilities and housing and shelter, respectively. Figure 3 demonstrates the increases in total requests and categories previously noted.



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Through various points of 2020 and 2021, there have been sharp increases in the demand for shelter, rental assistance, and other forms of housing aid because of inclement weather, high COVID-19 transmission rates, availability of federal assistance, the extension and termination of federal eviction moratoria and other influencing factors. See Figure 4.

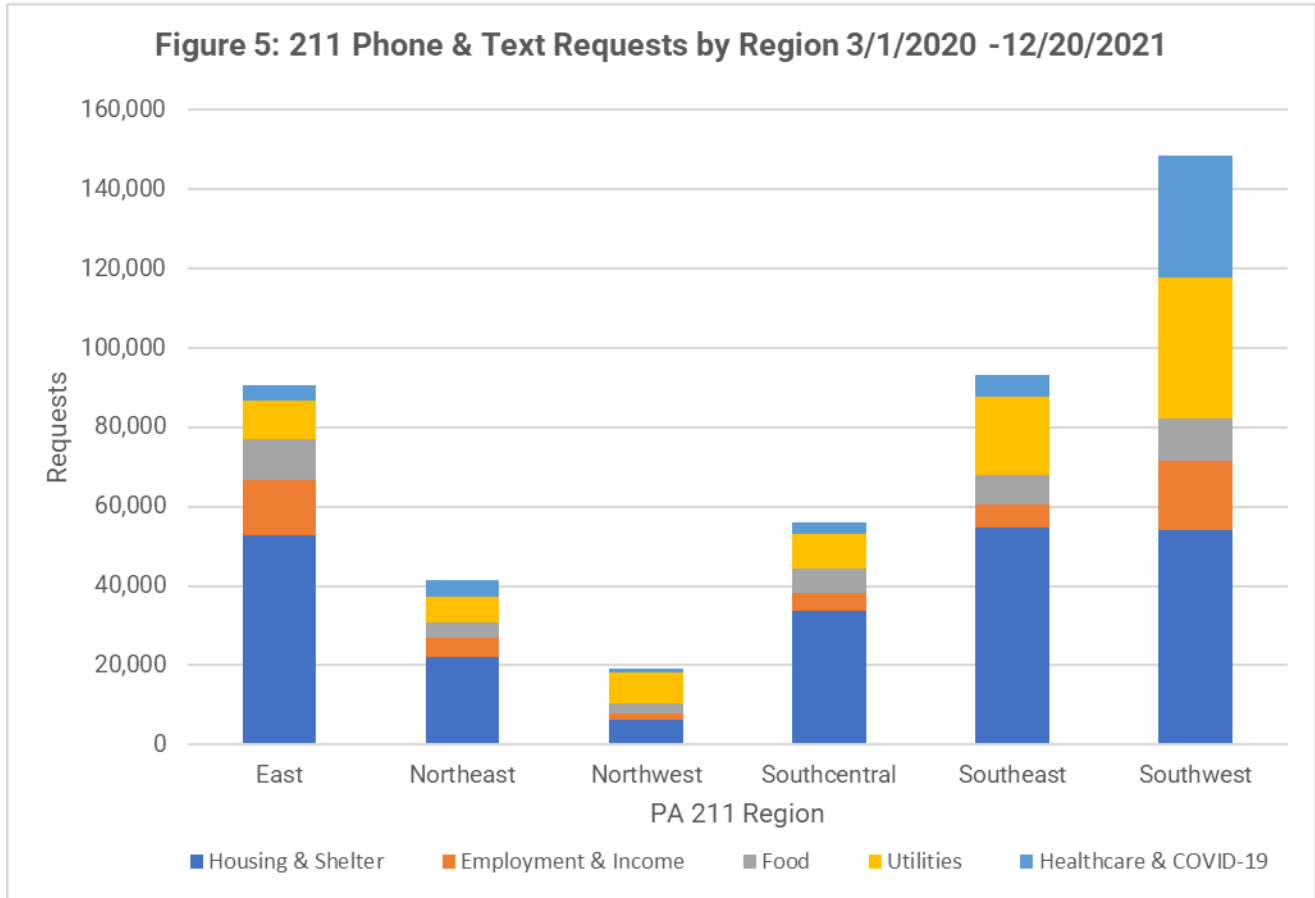


Consequently, housing requests have the most involved intake process of all supports and services provided by 211, which has contributed to longer wait times for callers trying to access help via 211. In fact, the current average wait time to connect with a specialist via phone is approximately 40 minutes. To reduce calls answered to within four minutes, the goal of PA 211, an investment in infrastructure and regional staff are necessary.

PA 211 consists of six regions – East, Northeast, Northwest, Southcentral, Southeast, and Southwest – that service a diverse, and sometimes similar, set of needs. As previously indicated, the most requested service throughout the pandemic has been housing, which is reflected in Figure 5. Appendix A provides a list of the counties in each of the regions. As you will note, the East, Southeast, and Southwest regions had the highest

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number of housing requests by phone and text at 52,884, 54,796, and 54,076, respectively. However, the total number of requests by phone and text in the East (108,077) and Southeast (109,193) were more comparable than those in the Southwest (175,972).



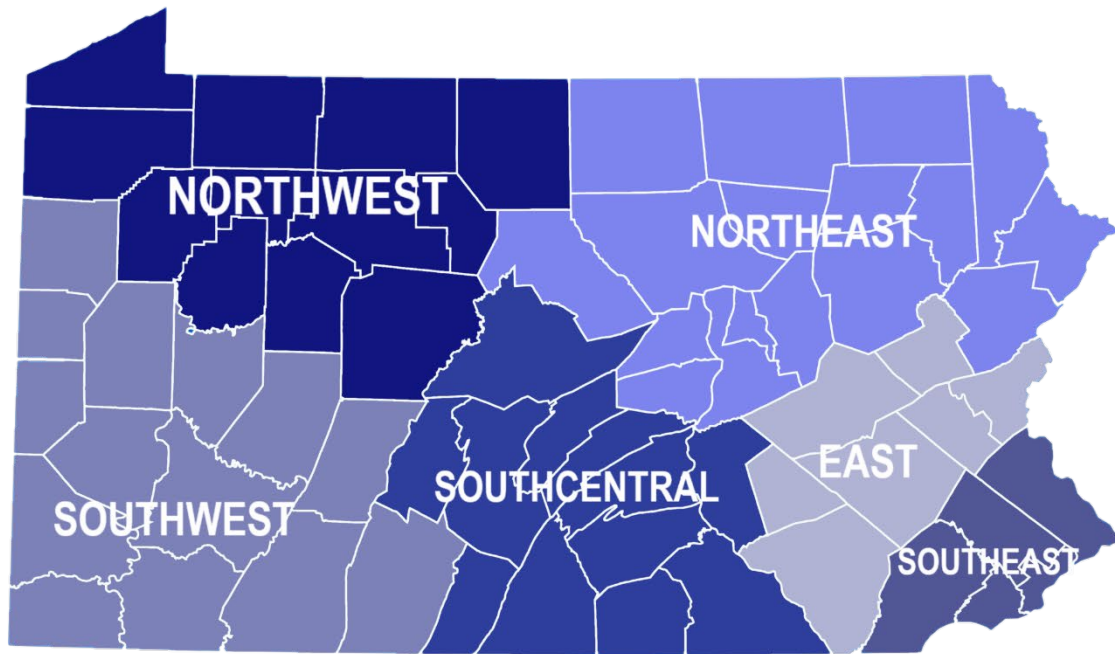
In addition to phone and text contact, Pennsylvanians have access to PA 211's resource database via pa211.org. From March 1, 2020, through December 31, 2021, there were 489,153 web sessions with access to the database of community resources. This medium provides individuals in need of help another point of entry that is even more confidential than calls and texts, plus the option to explore the variety of supports and services available in their community. It is important to note that the data provided on 211 Counts does not include web traffic for pa211.org because user activities on the website are not the same as interaction with a resource navigator or housing specialist when calling or texting PA 211.

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PA 211 is dedicated to ensuring that Pennsylvania households have suitable resources to survive current and future manmade and natural disasters. As indicated in the data provided, over half a million households have experienced an economic deluge, which for some has no end in sight. Through the efforts of our local United Ways, some support from local governments, and contracting opportunities, PA 211 has found ways to weather the storm, and is exploring new ways to expand and improve upon our service through technology, infrastructure, and staffing capacity.

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APPENDIX A: PA 211 REGIONS



PA 211 Regions

- East Region –** Berks, Carbon, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Northampton, and Schuylkill
- Northeast Region –** Bradford, Clinton, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Lycoming, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Pike, Snyder, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Tioga, Union, Wayne, and Wyoming
- Northwest Region –** Cameron, Clarion, Clearfield, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, McKean, Potter, Venango, and Warren
- Southcentral Region –** Adams, Blair*, Centre*, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry, York
- Southeast Region –** Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia
- Southwest Region –** Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford*, Butler Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer, Somerset, Washington, and Westmoreland

* Calls currently answered by several 211 regional call centers.

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