

# United Way 211 helpline recipient of \$117,000 in grants as demand grows

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July 7, 2010

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The Review

United Way's 211 call volume is up 35 percent from last year due to the fact that more county residents are calling for food, rent and mortgage assistance -- for the first time ever.

United Way of Greater Stark County asserts: "Knowing you need help is one thing. Finding someone who can help you is another." That's why United Way's 211 referral helpline was created. By dialing three easy to remember numbers, the caller can be linked to resources that include family counseling, senior services, rent and utility assistance, health-related services, support groups and parenting resource information. The referral line also advertises it is meant to be "your first call for free foreclosure help."

As more people find they are in need of assistance during this harsh economic climate and high unemployment period, the 211 call volume continues to grow.

"In 2009, 211 directly assisted 77 individuals with their medical needs and received over 500 calls for medical services and 902 calls for prescription assistance," said Sarah Hayden, vice president of marketing and communications for United Way of Greater Stark County. "In 2009, 211 received 427 calls for homeless services. In only a five-month period in 2010, from January to May, 211 has received 441 calls for these same services. In April, 211 received 1,875 calls and made 2,169 referrals to community partners, and in May 2,019 calls were taken."

To help keep up with an increased demand, 211 will receive \$117,941 in grants from American Electric Power (AEP) and the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. The grants will be used to support United Way initiatives and human need services through United Way's 211 referral help line.

The \$26,216 awarded from AEP Ohio will be used to assist their customers with rent and mortgage payments, and United Way will partner with Catholic Charities to administer these services.

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services provided a \$25,000 grant for vehicle repairs for non-TANF eligible residents in the United Way service area. The state DJFS agency granted an additional \$41,725, which will be used to fund a collaborative effort with ICAN Housing Solutions. Information listed about ICAN, obtained at [ican-inc.org](http://ican-inc.org), states the organization's mission is to "promote self reliance by providing housing opportunities for homeless clients with mental illnesses."

Another \$25,000 grant from AEP Ohio's Partnership with Ohio program is earmarked for United Way's iCARE Team initiative. The Stark County iCARE Team -- comprised of teachers, administrators and staff from multiple community agencies including law enforcement, mental health, alcohol and drugs, and other social service agencies located throughout the county -- works together in a school-based environment to address challenges facing the at-risk student population and their families, according to information listed at [starkcountyesc.org](http://starkcountyesc.org).

Hayden reports iCARE assists students and their families to eliminate the underlying obstacles that cause students to struggle in school. Across the county, iCARE Teams currently serve 4,273 students in nine school districts, including Alliance City Schools.

"We also have a program for prescription assistance and medical needs that is operated through Western Stark Free Clinic and other agencies, as well as from a medical van that makes stops all around Stark County and also in Alliance," Hayden also informed during an interview on Thursday.

By dialing 211, residents of Stark County can reach the Information and Referral Office and be directed to programs, health and human service agencies and volunteer opportunities. The service is free, confidential and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Visit [www.uwstark.org](http://www.uwstark.org) for more information.