



East Tennessee 211

Wednesday, June 8, 2022

Tennessee Public Utility Commission

Attn: Chairman Kenneth Hill, c/o Ectory Lawless, Docket Manager

22-00047

502 Deaderick Street 4th Floor

Nashville, TN 37243

RE: Petition for 2-1-1 Designation in Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington Counties

Dear Chairman Hill,

East Tennessee 211 is pleased to submit this petition for 2-1-1 designation in Upper East Tennessee at the request of Contact 211 of Northeast Tennessee. We are happy to provide this service and expand our current coverage which now includes the 16 county East Tennessee region. The expanded counties will include Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington. This petition is submitted as part of the TN AIRS plan for statewide coverage. Contact-Concern of Northeast Tennessee, Inc. is ceasing operations and has asked that we take over the 2-1-1 designation for Upper East Tennessee to ensure continued, seamless operations. East Tennessee can do this with minimal staff changes, no need for capital investment, using the software we already have access to.

As the Board of Directors for Contact 211 of Northeast Tennessee plans to close their offices on July 1, 2022, we would also ask to be allowed to answer these calls for Upper East Tennessee on an interim basis while we await approval. We understand our taking 211 calls on an interim basis does not constitute overall approval.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Russ Jensen

Russ Jensen

East TN 211 Director

TN AIRS President

**BEFORE THE TENNESSEE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE**

IN RE:

**PETITION OF EAST TENNESSEE 211 FOR 211 TRANSFER OF UPPER EAST TENNESSEE
DESIGNATION FOR CARTER, GREENE, HANCOCK, HAWKINS, JOHNSON, SULLIVAN, UNICOI,
AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES.**

PETITION FOR transfer of 2-1-1 designation for Upper East Tennessee
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East Tennessee 211 (“Petitioner”) respectfully submits this Petition for 2-1-1 designation for the purpose of providing health and human services information and referral to citizens in Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington counties.

INTRODUCTION

1. Petitioner is the current 2-1-1 provider for the 16 county, East Tennessee Region. East Tennessee 211’s place of business is in Knoxville, TN.
2. East Tennessee 211 is a member of TN AIRS and receives funding from area United Ways. East Tennessee 211 has been answering Information & Referral calls since July 2015. East Tennessee 211 is currently the designated call center for 2-1-1 in Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Hawkins, Jefferson, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, and Union counties.

DESIGNATION SOUGHT

3. Petitioner seeks designation for 2-1-1 in Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington counties. This area is referred to as Upper East Tennessee.

STANDARD FOR GRANT OF PETITION

4. The petition for 2-1-1 designation in Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington counties is part of the TN AIRS plan for statewide coverage. Contact-Concern of Northeast Tennessee has agreed to remove their request for 2-1-1 designation in Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington counties through an Amended Petition.

REASONS SUPPORTING DESIGNATION AS 2-1-1 COLLABORATIVE

5. In support of this Amended Petition, Petitioner would show as follows:
 - a. Financial status: East Tennessee 211 has been answering calls and inquiries since July 2015. Our funding is received from area United Ways, government grants, and the Community Action Committee (CAC) of Knox County. Area United Ways, as coordinated by United Way of Greater Knoxville, have committed to funding 2-1-1 and maintaining sustainability.
 - b. Technical ability: East Tennessee 211 provides 2-1-1 service in Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Hamblen, Hawkins, Jefferson, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, and Union counties. Area government, area United Ways, and the Community Action Committee of Knox County support East Tennessee 211 and are pleased with the service they have provided for years. Our office will also make enhanced services available including an already operational chatbot, live chat, web intake forms, and social media contact and support. East Tennessee 2-1-1 has a relationship with the University of Tennessee's School of Social Work and will have 2 interns working with us throughout the year, one undergrad, and one Masters Candidate. East Tennessee 2-1-1 will also retain the database administrator currently employed by Contact 211 of Northeast Tennessee, as well as volunteers currently working with Contact 211 of Northeast Tennessee in order to provide a seamless transition. East Tennessee 211, with assistance from United Ways and other partners, will market the 2-1-1 service in Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington counties through faith-based, agency, and government contacts. 2-1-1 service will be available in the petitioned counties in immediately upon approval by TPUC of our petition. East Tennessee has AIRS certified operators answering all 2-1-1 calls for I&R. East Tennessee 2-1-1 also has a modern ACD phone system as well as call recording and live monitoring for quality assurance. East Tennessee 2-1-1 recently received an AIRS award for collaboration for work with partner agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular for our work getting callers access to rent, mortgage, and utility assistance through Knox County's Federal Treasury Grant. Russ Jensen, TN AIRS President and East Tennessee 211 Director, will be responsible for activating central services in the petitioned counties. East Tennessee 211 will be

responsible for adding resources from the petitioned counties to their database of health and human services in the WellSky software program that we use for our current resources. East Tennessee 211 participate with local EMA offices as well as Region 2, Homeland Security on disaster preparedness and recovery.

- c. Managerial capability: Russ Jensen is the Director of East Tennessee 211 and the President of Tennessee AIRS. He was on the board for the original 211 for East Tennessee when it went live in 2000-2001.

CONCLUSION

- 6. Petitioner respectfully requests that the Tennessee Public Utility Commission approves this plan to assume operations of Carter, Greene, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington counties regarding 2-1-1 service.

Respectfully submitted,

Russ Jensen

Russ Jensen
East Tennessee 211 Director
TN AIRS President

Clarkston Parker

Clarkston Parker
Contact-Concern of Northeast Tennessee
Board of Directors