

23-00071



## East Tennessee 211

Wednesday, September 20, 2023

Tennessee Public Utility Commission

Attn: Chairman Herb Hilliard, c/o Ectory Lawless, Docket Manager  
502 Deaderick Street 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Nashville, TN 37243

RE: Petition to augment 2-1-1 Designation in Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Cocke, Carter, Claiborne, Greene, Grainger, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Jefferson, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sevier, Sullivan, Unicoi, Union, and Washington Counties.

Dear Chairman Hilliard,

East Tennessee 2-1-1 respectfully submits this petition to transition 2-1-1 designation in East & Upper East Tennessee to the United Way of Greater Knoxville's oversight. We will continue to provide the same excellent service that these entities have provided for over 20 years. Since consolidating with Upper East Tennessee 2-1-1 (Formerly Contact 2-1-1) in 2022, we have changed the overall management and budgetary processes and structure to more efficiently serve our communities. United Way of Greater Knoxville, along with United Way World-Wide, has a long history of service in our communities and support of 2-1-1. East Tennessee 2-1-1 will continue to operate from its current call center and the entire 23 county area will be referred to as EAST TENNESSEE 2-1-1. This petition fits in with the Inform Tennessee (formerly TN AIRS) plan for statewide 2-1-1 coverage. Operationally, nothing will change, we simply, respectfully request the designation to reflect the n-1-1 (2-1-1) number designation be assigned to United Way of Greater Knoxville / 2-1-1 East Tennessee.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*Russ Jensen*

Russ Jensen  
East TN 211 Director

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

**IN RE:**

**PETITION OF EAST TENNESSEE 211 FOR 211 TRANSFER OF EAST AND UPPER EAST TENNESSEE DESIGNATION FOR ANDERSON, BLOUNT, CAMPBELL, CLAIBORNE, COCKE, GRAINGER, JEFFERSON, KNOX, LOUDON, MONROE, MORGAN, ROANE, SCOTT, SEVIER, UNION, CARTER, GREENE, HANCOCK, HAWKINS, JOHNSON, SULLIVAN, UNICOI, AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES.**

<b>PETITION FOR transfer of 2-1-1 designation for East and Upper East Tennessee</b>
---

United Way of Greater Knoxville - 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 Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Carter, Claiborne, Cocke, Greene, Grainger, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sullivan, Sevier, Unicoi, Union, and Washington counties.

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Petitioner is the current 2-1-1 provider for the 16-county East Tennessee Region and the 8 County Northeast Tennessee Region with its place of business is in Knoxville, TN.
2. East Tennessee 211 is a member of Inform TN (FORMERLY TN AIRS) and receives funding from area United Ways, COORDINATED BY United Way of Greater Knoxville. East Tennessee 211 and 211 Northeast have been in operation for 20 years and our program was the third in the US to go live. (98+% of the US has coverage today). Calls for the counties listed will continue to receive the same high-quality service, from the same call center, that they do today.

**DESIGNATION SOUGHT**

3. Petitioner seeks designation for 2-1-1 in the counties listed above under United Way of Greater Knoxville (UWGK) and removal of the Knoxville/Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC). This area is referred to collectively as East Tennessee 211.

**STANDARD FOR GRANT OF PETITION**

The petition for 2-1-1 designation in Anderson, Blount, Campbell, Carter, Claiborne, Cocke, Greene, Grainger, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson, Knox, Loudon, Monroe, Morgan, Roane, Scott, Sullivan, Sevier, Unicoi, Union, and Washington counties is part of the Inform TN (Formerly TN AIRS) plan for statewide coverage. CAC has agreed to transition 2-1-1 designation in East Tennessee to United Way of Greater Knoxville.

#### **REASONS SUPPORTING DESIGNATION AS 2-1-1 COLLABORATIVE**

4. 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 2001. Funding is received from area United Ways, government grants, and other community partners and is coordinated by United Way of Greater Knoxville. UWGK continues its commitment to funding 2-1-1 and maintaining sustainability. This change only serves to streamline budget and operating processes.
  - b. Technical ability: East Tennessee 211 already provides 2-1-1 service to all 23 counties listed, is a member of Inform TN, the Director is a member of the National 2-1-1 Steering Committee, and the organization remains committed to highest levels of service. Our call center has been recognized several times on a national level for our service to the community, having recently received an AIRS award for collaboration for work with partner agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular for our work connecting callers with access to rent, mortgage, and utility assistance through Knox County's Federal Treasury Grant. Area government, area United Ways, and the Community Action Committee of Knox County support this petition. Our office has made 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 regularly employs 1-2 interns throughout the year, some undergrad, and some master's candidates. East Tennessee has Inform TN certified operators answering all 2-1-1 calls for Information & Referral. East Tennessee 2-1-1 also has a modern ACD phone system as well as call recording and live monitoring for quality assurance. Russ Jensen, Inform TN President and East Tennessee 211 Director, will be responsible for ongoing 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 is currently in use. East Tennessee 211 participates 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 Inform Tennessee. He was on the board for the original 211 for East Tennessee when it went live in 2000-2001.

### **CONCLUSION**

- 5. Petitioner respectfully requests that the Tennessee Public Utility Commission approves this request to assign n-1-1 (2-1-1) designation for the above listed counties. Calls to the 2-1-1 will continue to be answered in the same call center they are today.

Respectfully submitted,

*Russ Jensen*

Russ Jensen  
East Tennessee 211 Director  
Inform TN President



Matt Ryerson  
President, CEO  
United Way of Greater Knoxville



September 1, 2023

22-00047

To Whom It May Concern,

As President and CEO of United Way of Greater Knoxville, we fully support the transition of 211 services of Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee to the 211/311 Call Center located in Knoxville, Tennessee.

The United Way of Greater Knoxville will go beyond the endorsement of this transition and commits to funding support of this work, as well as, convening the nonprofit community to give the necessary information to make that work successful. Additionally, UWGK commits to sharing data to further the work of 211 for Greater Knoxville and Upper East Tennessee, as well as communicating the value and importance of such information and referral services for the region and the State of Tennessee.

I am happy to answer any questions regarding our role and support of this transition and work or the support United Way has traditionally offered and intends to continue to offer these important services for our communities and the citizens of Tennessee.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Ryerson".

Matt Ryerson, President & CEO

**UNITE FOR CHANGE**

September 12, 2023

Herb Hilliard, Chairman  
Tennessee Public Utility Commission  
502 Deaderick Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Mr. Hilliard,

The Knoxville-Knox County Community Action Committee (CAC) is in full support of the transition of the East Tennessee 2-1-1 services from our agency's operations to the United Way of Greater Knoxville. CAC has been operating East Tennessee 2-1-1 services since 2008. Since 2015, the United Way of Greater Knoxville has been the sole financial supporter to ensure that the services continue in the East Tennessee region. Their ongoing interest and support of 2-1-1 services will lend itself well to a smooth transition.

CAC commits to supporting the transition and continuing to promote and share the value of 2-1-1 services throughout our service area.

Please contact me if you have any questions about our role and support of this transition.

Sincerely,



Barbara Kelly  
Executive Director