



WA211 is Helping To Ensure Equitable Access to COVID Vaccine

Barely two months into 2021 and it's looking like another record breaking year for Washington 211 as our focus shifts from helping people understand how to be safe in the time of COVID to helping them find, schedule and receive the vaccine. In 2020, call volume leaped by 70 percent over 2019 with 477,000 callers entering the system's queue. It's only early March of 2021 and the Washington 211 network has already received nearly half the number of calls received for all of the 12 months in 2020. This includes a significant increase in non-COVID calls assisting state residents.

Helping To Ensure Equitable Access to COVID Vaccine

The Washington 211 network is assisting the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) in helping people overcome obstacles to scheduling and receiving the COVID-19 vaccination. This means helping those with limited access to the internet navigate the system; complete the PhaseFinder, search for appointments, schedule appointments when available, and add them to existing waitlists. Many callers are over 75, only have a landline, lack internet, have no email address, and do not have someone else to assist them. This makes the calls longer and more complex. But the reward is helping vulnerable populations access the vaccine while providing a comforting human exchange that enlivens their sense of community.

Washington 211 Rapidly Mobilizes New Staff to Meet Demand

After receiving confirmation that Department of Health mass vaccination sites would be opening at four locations in Washington, the agency provided training to Washington 211 in late January for its scheduling tool, PrepMod. Washington 211's statewide network of call centers immediately recruited, hired, and trained more than 239 specialists to assist members of the community. Within 48 hours, the DOH COVID-19 Assistance Hotline calls increased from an average of 500 per day to over 10,000 calls. For more information about 211's response to this increased demand, [see the recent report to DOH here](#).

Observations from the Field

Deb Miller, Executive Director, Health Action Partners – serving north central Washington notes, “I hear heartbreaking stories nearly every day of the challenges of getting our

elderly clients and other vulnerable community members into the system to ensure they receive their vaccines. I see the inequities of the current system to be too often occurring for our fragile elders. For those able to skillfully access technology, 211 is a lifesaver – providing a caring, human hand to help.”

Will There Be a Dedicated Funding Source for 988?

WA211 has provided information and offered assistance for HB 1477 which would create dedicated funding for state implementation of the national 988 crisis and behavioral services helpline. As of this writing, the House Floor had not considered [HB 1477](#). Meanwhile, Washington 211, which has experienced record growth in call volumes since the start of the pandemic, is seeking an appropriation from the state's general fund budget .

The community can help Washington 211 with resource information updates. If you are a service provider or community member and are aware of changes in services due to COVID-19, you can go to wa211.org and search for the services in the 211 database to determine if they exist and have updated information. You can also provide information on new or unlisted services. To report changes dial the number 2-1-1 to inform a 211 Specialist or you can [complete an online form](#). 2-1-1 is a great resource to help connect people to community resources but it is only helpful if it has accurate and updated information and you can help ensure that it does.

Washington 211