

United Way of Erie County's Bi-Annual 211 Helpline Trend Report

Issued: February 2022

Background

United Way of Erie County has evolved from its roots as a fundraising organization to a critical community impact organization mobilizing local partners - including businesses, community leaders and residents - to break the cycle of poverty and expand opportunities for people to become self-sufficient. One of the ways we approach impact work is through United Way's 211 Helpline. Individuals in need can contact a trained resource navigator and receive referrals to agencies near them by simply dialing 211 – 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. This May, we are proud to be celebrating 5 years of United Way's 211 Helpline in Erie County!

As agencies, organizations, employers, and government officials continue to share the value of 211 in our community, we know that sharing data can better equip the county to meet the needs of its citizens. United Way will be producing trend reports like this on a bi-annual basis. We hope that by shedding light on the needs individuals in Erie County are facing, our community can work together to better meet those needs and address gaps. Data included in this trend report includes statistics sent by 211 coordinators to United Way, and direct data pulls from PA 211 Counts.

PA 211 COUNTS

PA 211 Counts is a *publicly available data dashboard* that provides customizable, real-time, visual presentations of requests from Pennsylvania's 211 call centers and can be accessed at pa.211counts.org. 211 Counts offers data on the types of referrals that callers are requesting based on their location and timeframe for contact.

DATA & TRENDS

This section provides an overview of 211 data and trends for the period of July 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021, as well as comparative statewide data for reference.

CONTACTS & REQUESTS

From July to December of 2021, **2,206 individuals** contacted the 211 Helpline¹, which resulted in **4,178 requests for referrals** to services, programs, or organizations in Erie County. A request is noted when an individual indicates that they are in need of something, whether by their own account or after some probing questions from trained resource navigators. The goal is to provide the caller with a referral for each request.

The number of contacts to the helpline had a slight *decrease* of 7.5% compared to the previous 6-month period; however, there was a 23% *increase* in number of referrals. This illustrates the robust database of available services and programs for 211 navigators to use when assessing *all* of a caller's needs. This data also suggests that each caller – on average – received *at least*

¹ PA 211 Call Center Monthly Reports to United Way

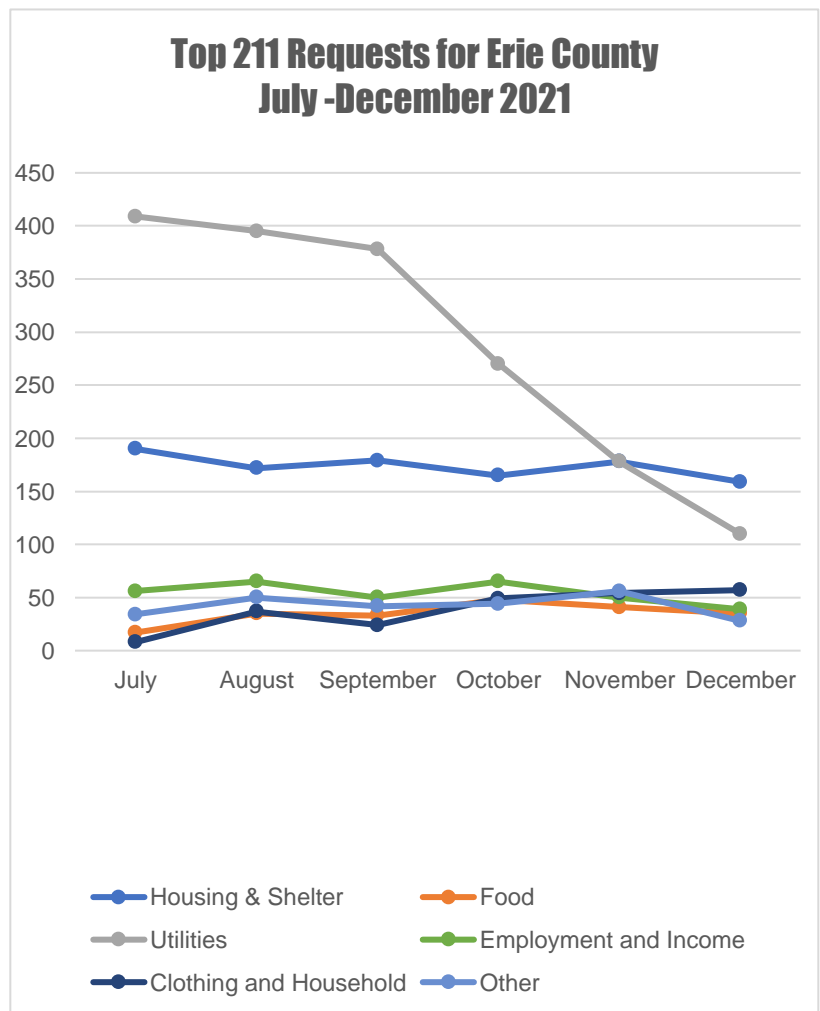
one referral. Both contacts and referrals during this time period significantly increased in comparison to the last six months of 2020.

PA 211 reports to United Way the demographics of individuals in Erie County who contacted 211 in the last six months based on their gender and age. Please note that not all 211 callers may choose to disclose this information. From July to December, on average 68% of callers identified themselves as female, 31% identified themselves as male and 1% identified as gender non-conforming. Additionally, in those six months, 211 saw the most contacts from individuals ages 30-39, followed by contacts from individuals ages 50-59, and then individuals ages 40-49. These data points did not see significant changes in comparison to the previous six months.

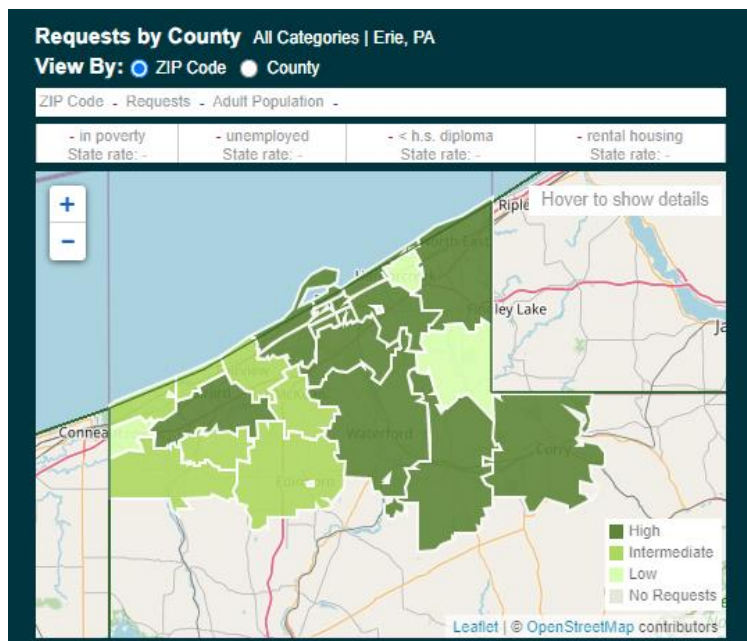
TOP REQUEST CATEGORIES

The PA 211 Helpline breaks down requests into thirteen categories. For the last six months of 2021, the top requests in Erie County were overwhelmingly for utilities resources (41.6%). This was followed by steady requests for help with housing & shelter (25%) employment & income (7.8%), clothing and household (5.5%), and food (5%). An important change when comparing the first six months of 2021 to these last six months: there was a significant increase (110%) in requests for special population services (which lives in the category of “other”) – referrals related to help for elderly, veterans, delinquents, ex-offenders, and animals.

PA 211 Counts provides data on the very specific requests within top categories. Of the **1,740** requests for utilities resources from Erie County residents, the majority (1,325) were for gas and electric assistance, followed by 41 requests for water assistance. Erie County was ranked 4th in the state during this 6-month period for utilities requests. Notably, we saw an increase in housing and shelter requests during these last six months, which could



be attributed to the Pennsylvania eviction moratorium ending in August.



It's important to note that the 211 resource navigators ask a range of questions when someone reaches out to 211 for assistance to best determine what may be either a caller's primary, secondary or tertiary needs. Utilizing the answers from these questions, navigators can then provide ancillary resource/program referrals to the individual in need, providing a comprehensive service outside of the individual's initial ask.

ZIP CODES WITH THE HIGHEST REQUESTS

Using PA 211 Counts, we are able to identify where the majority of Erie County 211 requests came from in the final six months of the year. While requests came in from all over the

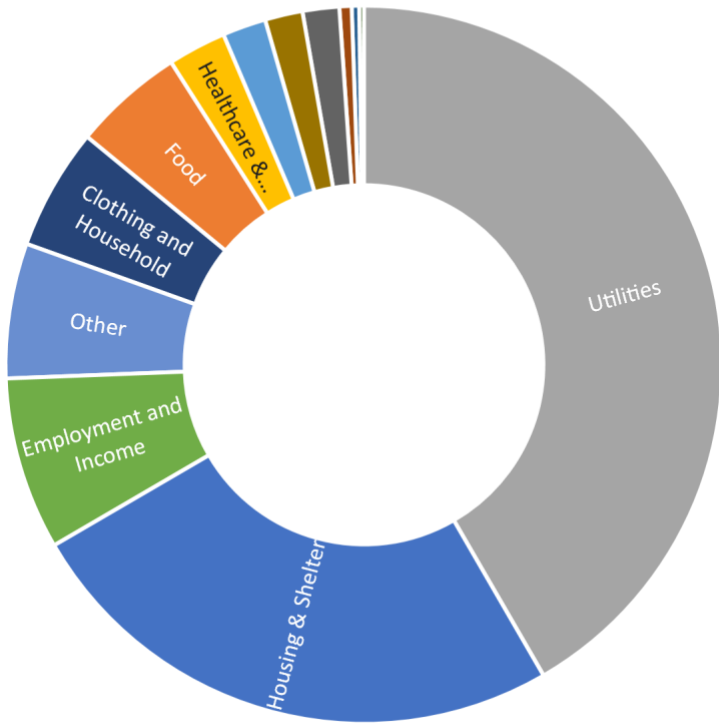
county, the zip codes with the top requests were 16503 with a significant 934 requests, and 16502 with 567 requests. The third highest zip code was 16507, where we saw 414 requests during this time.

STATE-LEVEL DATA

Because we have a state-wide network of 211 call centers, we are able to compare our local data to other communities, as well as to the entire state. The largest discrepancy between state requests and Erie County requests over the last six months is with utilities, as highlighted. Below are charts detailing requests to 211 in Erie vs. the entire state for the period of July to December 2021.

PERCENT OF REQUESTS BY CATEGORY		
Category	Erie	PA
Housing & Shelter	25%	47.5%
Food	5%	6.3%
Utilities	41.6%	18.2%
Healthcare	2.6%	4.2%
Mental health and Addictions	2.0%	2.4%
Employment and Income	7.8%	5.3%
Clothing and Household	5.5%	4.0%
Child Care and Parenting	<1%	<1%
Government and Legal	1.7%	2.2%
Transportation Assistance	1.7%	2.2%
Education	<1%	<1%
Disaster	<1%	<1%
Other	6.1%	5.8%

**Erie County Top Requests to 211
July-Dec 2021**



**PA Top Requests to 211
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