
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Senator Henry Stern

Chair

2025 - 2026 Regular

Bill No:	AB 1832	Hearing Date:	6/23/2026
Author:	Ransom		
Version:	6/18/2026 Amended		
Urgency:	No	Fiscal:	Yes
Consultant:	Cassie Royce		

SUBJECT: 2-1-1 information and referral response system

SUMMARY: Creates the 211 Fund (Fund) in the State Treasury for the 211 system and related purposes, subject to appropriation by the Legislature, and directs the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) to allocate the funds as specified.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Designates Cal OES as the lead state agency responsible for addressing natural, technological, or man-made disaster and emergencies, including activities necessary to prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of emergencies and disasters to people and property.
- 2) Authorizes the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to supervise and regulate every public utility, including telephone companies, in the state and do all things necessary and convenient in the exercise of such power.

This bill:

- 1) Establishes the 211 Fund in the State Treasury, subject to legislative appropriation, and provides the moneys in the fund shall be used for the 211 system and related purposes.
- 2) Requires Cal OES to allocate the funds to the California 211 Providers Network, known as 211 California, to implement the activities specified in this bill.

- 3) Provides that the 211 Fund shall be used for the following purposes, as specified:
 - a) Enhancing critical 211 system capacity and service quality;
 - b) Providing equitable access to 211 dialing and services;
 - c) Publishing a statewide 211 community needs data dashboard;
 - d) Strengthening 211 community resource databases and enabling data sharing;
 - e) Developing aligned systems and protocols with 911 and 988 systems;
 - f) Promoting public awareness about 211; and,
 - g) Improving 211 system readiness, infrastructure, and capacity to respond to disasters and all hazard events.
- 4) Directs 211 California to provide an annual report to Cal OES on the status of the 211 system, use of any funds, and future 211 system funding needs.

Background

Author's statement. According to the author, “211 is a reliable alternative to 911 for Californians facing a crisis, a disaster, or needing access to basic needs. For families across California, 211 is a lifeline, and with the increase in large-scale natural disasters and emergency events, the need for a reliable 211 continues to grow. AB 1832 would ensure 211 has the support and visibility it needs to strengthen this statewide network and enable more people to get help quickly, especially after emergencies. In doing so, 211 service providers can relieve pressure on 911 and emergency response teams, creating a more coordinated and efficient disaster response system.”

What is 211? In 2000, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) designated 211 as the free telephone number to obtain information and referral (I&R) services to various health and human services programs, such as physical and mental health resources, housing, utility, food and employment assistance. 211 also provides related preparedness, response, and recovery services during and after disasters and emergencies.

211 California. As described in its 2026-2028 Strategic Plan, 211 California is a statewide 501(c)3 nonprofit organization consisting of more than 20 local and regional 211 providers that deliver coverage to over 98% of California's population. According to 211 California, most 211 providers facilitate additional service navigation and care coordination that go beyond a referral. These services include accessing care services for the homeless, conducting benefits screening and enrollment for health and human services programs, recommending caregiver support programs, providing Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) safety planning for vulnerable households, arranging transportation and trip planning assistance,

and collaborating with county and community partners to determine additional program eligibility. In 2025, 211 California providers responded to 1.8 million calls and texts. The most common requests involved housing assistance and food programs.

Statewide 211 coverage. As part of its action to reserve the 211 dialing code, the FCC encouraged states to implement 211 for access to I&R services. In response, the CPUC, under its authority to regulate telephone companies, issued an order in 2002 deploying the 211 system to counties and establishing administrative procedures for implementing 211 dialing in California. The CPUC further designated 211 California to serve as a single point of coordination and implementation in achieving statewide 211 coverage. An entity seeking to provide 211 services must apply to the CPUC for authority to use the 211 dialing code.

According to the CPUC, as of 2024, 45 of the state's 58 counties, covering approximately 99.3% of California's population, have 211 service. Of the 13 rural counties that do not have access to full 211, nine only offer disaster 211 service, meaning it is only activated and operational specifically in response to emergencies and disasters. The CPUC indicates it is working with various agencies and nonprofit organizations to extend 211 service to these remaining unserved areas.

211 and disaster response. 211 California reports that during major emergencies 211 providers often handle five to ten times the normal call volume. Due to the increasing role of 211 in disaster response, 211 California created 211Now (www.211Now.com), a dedicated online resource hub and emergency portal to support Californians during disasters, community distress incidents, PSPS events and other emergencies. The online platform supplies live information regarding road closures, evacuation routes, shelters, food and medical assistance, and provides power outage support to electricity-dependent individuals with access and functional needs (AFN) in impacted communities. According to the Office of AFN within Cal OES, 211 is a trusted resource and essential community partner that provides important information and services to help individuals with AFN and their families stay informed, connected, safe and healthy.

Sustainability and funding challenges. Currently, the 211 system in California lacks a lead state agency to provide operational oversight and program sustainability. Prior legislative attempts to identify a state agency to administer 211 or establish a governance structure, via the California Health and Human Services Agency (CHHSA), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) and the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI), have not been successful.

The lack of a centralized state administrative entity for the 211 system also means 211 activities vary widely across the state. For example, according to 211 California's 2025 Annual Report, some counties partner with their respective 211 providers to deliver PSPS programming and support, while Los Angeles County partnered with its 211 affiliate, 211 LA, to report hate crimes under funding provided by the California Department of Civil Rights. 211 LA also served as a critical community resource for emergency response during the Los Angeles area wildfires in 2025.

Unlike the 911 emergency and 988 crisis response lines which have dedicated funding through telephone surcharges, 211 in California is funded through a fragmented mix of public and private sources, including charitable donations, grants, private foundations, local and state agencies for specific purposes, utility partnerships, and fee-for-service contracts. 211 California notes in its annual report that as more states contribute funding to support their 211 systems, California's lack of reliable public funding further exacerbates 211 service capacity and access inequities statewide.

This bill seeks to establish a structured arrangement between Cal OES and 211 California by directing Cal OES to administer moneys in a newly created Fund to 211 California for the purposes described in the bill. The operation of the Fund and its related purposes would be contingent on an appropriation by the Legislature.

Cost recovery consideration. As this bill moves through the legislative process, the author may wish to continue working with Cal OES to address reimbursement for the costs of administering the moneys from the 211 Fund to 211 California.

Prior/Related Legislation

AB 3020 (Reyes) of 2024 would have required the Office of Planning and Research (now known as LCI) to establish and convene the 211 Strategic Advisory Committee. (Held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee)

SB 318 (Ochoa Bogh) of 2023 would have required the CDSS to develop and administer the 211 Support Services Grant Program to stabilize, support, and expand 211 service to all areas of California. (Held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee)

SB 712 (Padilla) of 2009 would have designated the CHHSA as the lead entity responsible for implementing 211 throughout the state. (Held in the Assembly Appropriations Committee)

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

SUPPORT:

211 California (sponsor)
Family Resource Center San Joaquin (sponsor)
United Ways of California (sponsor)
211 LA
211 Sacramento
211 San Diego
American Association of Retired Persons
American Medical Response
California Association of Food Banks
California Foundation for Independent Living Centers
Champions for Vibrant Health Leadership Network
Community Action Partnership of Kern
Community Link Capital Region
Contra Costa Crisis Center
Edison International
Emergency Food Bank of Stockton/San Joaquin
Inland Empire Health Plan
Inland Southern California United Way
Lift to Rise
Operation Dignity
Orange County United Way
San Joaquin County Office of Education
Second Harvest Food Bank of Orange County
Self-help Enterprises
Southern California Edison
Supervisor Katrina Foley, Orange County Board of Supervisors
Tracy Community Connections Center
United Way Bay Area
United Way of Merced County
United Way of Northern California
United Way of San Joaquin County
United Way of Stanislaus County
United Way of the Wine Country
United Way of Tulare County
United Way Santa Cruz County

OPPOSITION:

None on file

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT: In support of the bill, the sponsors, 211 California, Family Resource Center San Joaquin, and United Ways of California write that, “211 is considered by the State to be an essential service alongside 911....and is an essential partner for California’s utilities in supporting vulnerable community members before, during, and after Public Safety Power Shutoff events. Despite this, 211 lacks State support and emergency response integration. AB 1832 will strengthen the 211 system in California, including by ensuring emergency response and mutual assistance infrastructure and protocols to respond to disasters and crises of all sizes and ensuring equitable access to 211 service statewide.”

DUAL REFERRAL: Senate Emergency Management Committee & Senate Energy, Utilities & Communications Committee