

2-1-1 Texas Information & Referral Network (TIRN), a program of Texas Health and Human Services (HHSC), is operated by Area Information Centers (AICs) throughout the state. These centers are managed by organizations like Councils of Governments, Area Agencies on Aging, and local United Ways. AICs are contracted by the state to handle calls to **Options 1, 4, 5, 6, & 8. These options connect callers to trained call specialists, available 24/7, 365 days a year.**

The 2-1-1 dialing code is also a vital connector to public benefits through 2-1-1 Option 2, but it's limited to business hours and managed by a separate vendor, creating gaps in accessibility and increasing burdens for AICs.

Key Challenges:

Underfunded Operations: 211 TIRN's funding still hasn't returned to pre-2011 levels and rising operational costs have made existing funding from HHSC insufficient.

Lack of Essential Technology: 211 lacks basic communication functions like texting, forcing callers to write down information manually and preventing follow-up by call specialists.

Limited System Integration: Despite being part of HHSC's "Integrated Eligibility & Enrollment," 211 TIRN, including its resource database, is not connected with other state systems, limiting efficiency and the ability to provide closed-loop referrals.

Neglect in Base Budgets: HB 1 and SB 1 do not allocate additional funding for 211 TIRN—only benefits & eligibility/Option 2— despite the critical need for modernization alongside other state programs.

Recommendations:

➤ **Increase Funding by \$12-15 Million for Call Center Operations**

This will support growing demand, ensure Area Information Centers (AICs) can meet contract requirements, and cover operational costs, including staff recruitment and retention.

➤ **Invest \$12 Million in 211 TIRN Network Modernization**

This funding will enable the implementation of two-way texting, closed-loop referrals, and integration with other state systems, improving service delivery and efficiency.

➤ **Support HB 555 by Rep. Bucy relating to the Texas Information and Referral Network**

This bill will modernize 211 Texas by enhancing its technological capabilities with two-way texting, improved screening, closed-loop referrals, and better data transparency. It will also ensure data privacy, establish accreditation standards for call centers, and strengthen 211 TIRN as a vital resource for connecting Texans to services.