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## New 211 line well received in its first month of operation

### More calls made in Lake than Porter County

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As far as Mary Rogan is concerned, the launch last month of the 211 human services telephone line could not have been more timely.

"My brother had taken in a friend and his family and we needed some help," said Rogan, 43, of Hammond. "I spoke to a service representative and she was amazingly helpful."

Rogan said she was reluctant to call for help because of past experiences when she lived in Illinois.

"She asked me what my needs were, and she gave me every help possible, for soup kitchens, emergency care, everything," Rogan said. "Whoever is running it, it is extremely helpful to the neighborhood and eased my mind because things were very stressful enough."

Northwest Indiana Community Action launched the new 211 system in Lake and Porter counties Dec. 19 to generate relief from the 911 emergency-call system. Callers can get information on human-care needs, such as health, food, counseling, shelter, education and employment.

"We are very happy that we are not seeing any major glitches, but the call volume has increased," said Jennifer Malone, director of elderly services at Northwest Indiana Community Action.

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Malone said from Dec. 15 to Dec 29, 2005, Lake and Porter counties received 342 regular information-referral calls, but the counties have noticed an increase in their call volumes.

During the same time frame in 2006, 638 calls came through the 211 service number.

"We are seeing an increase in questions on legal assistance, but our primary information-referral services are financial and shelter needs," Malone said. "The 211 is giving better access and statistics are showing more people are using the service."

But Malone said they are finding a problem with cell phone users.

"Callers calling the 219 area code are not always getting into the 211 service, but no problems with landline," Malone said. "That's more of a telecommunications system problem."

Sylvia Cardosi, information and referral and 211 manager. said the service calls have been higher in Lake County than in Porter.

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