

United Way of the Midlands

211 Military and Family Helpline

Area of Innovation: Cooperative Relationships

Summary of the Innovation:

The 211 Military and Family Helpline provides confidential, 24/7 support to service members, veterans, and their families, connecting them to essential resources like mental health care, financial assistance, and crisis intervention. Its impact lies in bridging the gap between military communities and vital support services, reducing stress and improving overall well-being for those who serve.

This is the first-ever program with an MOU with the Department of Defense which embeds a navigator on the base.

The Challenge that the Innovation Addressed:

The 211 Military and Family Helpline addresses the critical challenge of navigating the complex and often overwhelming support systems available to service members, veterans, and their families.

We know that 70% of active duty military personnel live off base. Many military families face difficulties such as financial hardship, mental health struggles, PTSD, reintegration issues, and access to essential services, but they often don't know where to turn for help. The helpline provides best-fit resources by offering a trusted, confidential, and easily accessible connection to tailored support, reducing barriers to assistance and improving their overall well-being.

The Decision-Making and Implementation Process:

United Way of the Midlands partnered with Offutt Air Force Base to create this program. We determined there was a need for military-connected individuals to have access to both government and community programs.

We secured a Memorandum of Understanding between Offutt Air Force Base and United Way of the Midlands to create a partnership and share a community navigator. This is a joint partnership and we worked together to create processes and procedures.

The Outcome/Impact of the Innovation:

The 211 Military and Family Helpline has had a significant impact, providing crucial support to thousands of service members, veterans, and their families.

Key measurable improvements include:

- Resources: UWM has added over 200 military-connected resources to our database, including local, state, and federal agencies.
- Success Stories: Veterans struggling with PTSD have found therapy resources, military spouses experiencing domestic violence have received immediate assistance, and families facing eviction have been connected to emergency housing solutions.

The tangible results demonstrate that the helpline is more than just a resource—it's a lifeline, making a real difference in the lives of those who serve and their families.

Potential Applicability to Other Members:

We have created a model that any 211/I&R Service could partner with their local military base to share a Navigator. This is now a best-practice model developed by the Association of Defence Communities, Blue Star Families, Five and Thrive.

The United Way of the Plains in Wichita has also opened up discussions with McConnell Air Force Base.