

IMPACT REPORT

FY 2026

July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026



UNITED WAY
Champaign County



United Way of Champaign County Staff

Left to right: Katie Braemer, Anne Skuse, Alyssa Whitacre, Emily Neal, Olivia Tobin, Beverley Baker, Javaite Burton, Penny Hood, Ayla Dew, Sarah Buckman, and Carolyn Butterfield

A LETTER FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

As Champaign County's primary convener and community leader, we take pride in bringing people together around the critical challenges impacting our region and investing in solutions that create meaningful change.

With 44% of Champaign County residents struggling to meet their basic needs, our mission is more important than ever. Through strategic partnerships and targeted investments, we are improving lives for more than 48,000 individuals by strengthening community health, advancing financial security, expanding youth opportunities, and building a stronger, more resilient community.

We are encouraged by the progress made across Champaign County in 2026. From improvements in early grade-level success to ongoing efforts supporting housing stability and homelessness prevention, these achievements demonstrate what is possible when nonprofit organizations, community leaders, donors, volunteers, and residents unite around a shared vision for lasting impact.

As we reflect on our accomplishments in fiscal year 2026, we celebrate the dedication and contributions of the many partners who make this work possible. Their commitment and collaboration continue to drive meaningful outcomes throughout our community. Looking ahead, we remain focused on addressing both current and emerging challenges with innovation, partnership, and purpose.

Together, we will continue building a stronger, healthier, and more resilient Champaign County for today's residents and for generations to come.

Thank you,



Luke Sullivan
Board Chair



Dr. Jenn Smist
Chair Elect &
Community Impact Committee Chair

Executive Leadership Team

Beverley Baker, President and CEO

Luke Sullivan, Board Chair

Lisa Rector, Past Chair

Dr. Jenn Smist, Chair Elect and Community
Impact Committee Chair

Sarah Sandquist, Secretary

Geri Melchiorre, Treasurer

Demetria Candler, Diversity, Equity, and
Inclusion Chair

Dale Wright, Resource Development Chair

Board of Directors

Dr. Kayla Banks

Shawna Benton

Deanna Capel

Shmonica Cobb

Beth Dubson

Mia Hernandez

Dr. Jennifer Ivory-Tatum

Amy Lynn

Charlie Osborne

Andrew Quarnstrom

Lindsay Quick

Kevin Sage

Angie Salas

Alma Sealine

Stephanie Seay

Ryan Squire

Dr. Nancy Sutton

OUR MISSION

United Way of Champaign County brings people and resources together to create positive change and lasting impact in our community.

OUR IMPACT AREAS

1

Financial Security

2

Healthy Community

3

Youth Opportunity

4

Community Resiliency



FINANCIAL SECURITY

Building financial stability and strength through homelessness prevention, financial education, and affordable housing.

Total invested in Financial
Security Grants in 2026:

\$485,390.00

Housing and financial insecurity look different for everyone in Champaign County. Some are searching for a safe place at a local homeless shelter. Others are renters struggling to catch up on utility payments or facing eviction. And many homeowners are at risk of foreclosure due to circumstances they never anticipated or wish on someone else.

Whatever challenges individuals and families face, United Way of Champaign County is investing across the spectrum of financial security to help remove barriers, increase financial education, and ensure more people have a safe and stable place to call home.



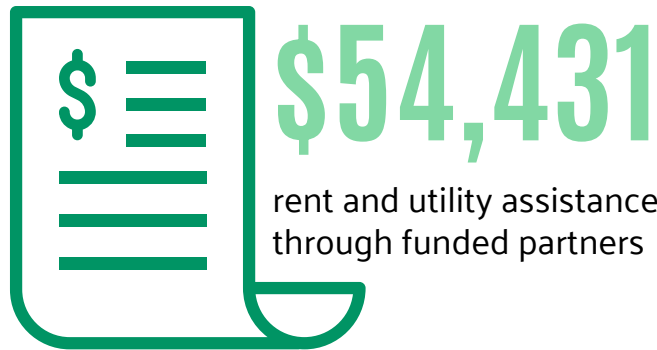
ALEX

After struggling with years of addiction and homelessness, Alex received help from the United Way-funded program at C-U at Home. Working closely with staff, he began turning the idea of a different life into a practical plan. Staff helped him identify goals, navigate setbacks, strengthen daily living skills, and prepare for employment and permanent housing. As he progressed through the program, he gradually took responsibility for his schedule, finances, relationships, and future housing.

After nearly a year, his life looks remarkably different. He secured a union job in the skilled trades, and with continued sobriety and support from C-U at Home staff, he was able to move into housing of his own—something that had once felt far beyond his reach. Now a new father in a supportive relationship, Alex's story is living proof that change is possible when a community invests in building strong safety nets.



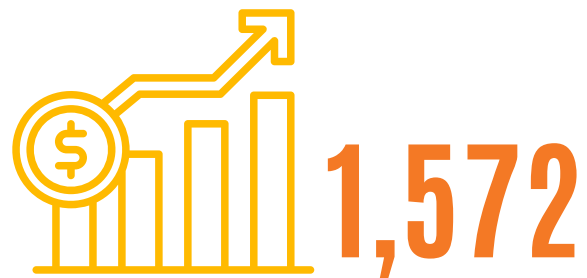
nights of shelter provided



rent and utility assistance dispersed through funded partners



individuals participated in programs designed to reduce homelessness, obtain affordable housing, or support home ownership



individuals accessed financial services and education



10 YEARS OF EMERGENCY SHELTER FOR FAMILIES

This year marks a decade of partnership among United Way of Champaign County, the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission, and the Housing Authority of Champaign County, working together to support families experiencing housing instability through the Emergency Shelter for Families (ESF)

Since 2016, ESF has provided 73,693 nights of shelter to 1,039 people, with children representing 63% of those served; more than 95% of households who planfully exited ESF transitioned to safe, stable housing.

HEALTHY COMMUNITY

Improving health and well-being for all with nutrition security, health care, and benefits access.

Total invested in Healthy
Community Grants in 2026:

\$839,321.00

\$549,321.00 + \$290,000.00

Child Well-Being

Healthy Living

There are a lot of barriers when it comes to accessing food, quality health care, and education.

Our Healthy Community strategies center on collaboration and removing barriers to care. We fund programs that offer free support services for families facing trauma, community-based mental health access and counseling, food access initiatives, free dental and medical care, and investing in social services that build strong safety nets for children and their families.





DIANA

Diana has some medical conditions that can make finding the food she needs challenging. “I like the fact that I can get specialized food, like low-salt and low-sugar food,” she told us during a recent visit to Wesley Food Pantry on the UIUC campus. With current grocery prices, she says it’s difficult to get all the nutritious groceries she needs, especially protein.

Thanks to funding from United Way of Champaign County, partner agencies like Eastern Illinois Foodbank and Wesley Food Pantry can supply supplemental groceries that meet the dietary needs of their diverse clientele.



1,951

individuals received mental health services and supports



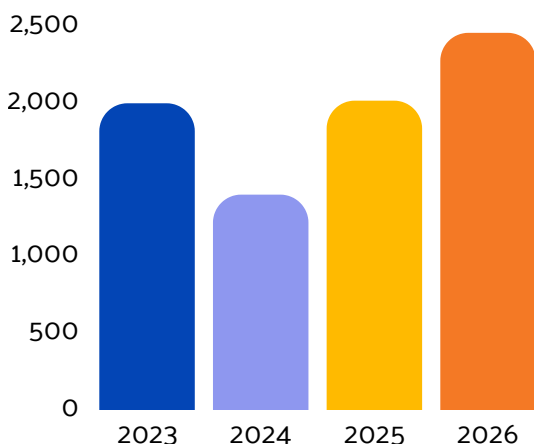
I finally have a place of my own to call home! After being homeless and sick for years, you helped get me into healthcare, and you helped me qualify for disability benefits, which also helped me qualify for housing. I don’t know what I would have done without you or how I would have survived much longer.



– Mr. B, a client of Champaign County Health Care Consumers

PROJECT DASH DELIVERIES

22% increase over last year



4,751



individuals who received healthcare services and supports



529,663

pounds of food distributed

PROJECT DASH DELIVERY PROCESS



Homebound client requests food assistance



Partner completes client intake and schedules delivery



Food pantry packs client’s food order



UWCC manages DoorDash delivery and covers fees



BOTTOM LINE DIAPER BANK

Keep babies healthy,
dry, and happy while
easing the financial
burdens on families
in Champaign County.

Diapers are essential, but expensive. Families in Champaign County spend over \$80 each month on diapers. When money is tight, parents sometimes cut back on diapers so that they can afford other basic needs. Some parents regularly miss school or work because they don't have enough diapers to take to daycare while they are waiting for their next paycheck.

United Way's Bottom Line Diaper Bank (BLDB) provides free diapers to local families through trusted community partners. Thanks to volunteers, donors, and sponsors like you, we distribute over 13,000 diapers each month to meet urgent needs.

1 IN 2 

U.S. families struggles with diaper need
according to the National Diaper Bank
Network



153,710

diapers distributed through
twelve Diaper Distribution
Partners



406

average number of children
served each month

“

Some weeks, it felt like every spare dollar went towards diapers so my baby could be clean and comfortable.

Learning that my family could receive support with diapers and wipes lifted such a heavy weight off my shoulders, gave me a moment to breathe, and reminded me that I'm not alone.

- Parent supported through the Bottom Line Diaper Bank

”



44%

of Champaign County families
struggle to afford basic needs,
including diapers



270

volunteer hours to repack and
distribute the diapers

FARMERS FEEDING FAMILIES

80 acres of land from Champaign Unit 4 schools are farmed by Parkland College Agriculture to fund our food security initiatives.

Total invested in Farmers Feeding Families in 2026:

\$63,650.00

\$46,650.00 + \$17,000.00

\$20k to Feed 20k

Additional funding

By investing in local hunger relief partners through Farmers Feeding Families, we're helping reduce food costs for families so that they can direct more of their income toward other critical needs.

Each year, Parkland College agriculture students plant and manage two fields of corn and soybeans: approximately 80 acres rented from Champaign Unit 4 Schools. The crops are sold, and the proceeds are used to increase our grants to local food and nutrition programs.





WE
GREW 

YOU
RAISED 

UNITED,
WE FUNDED 

\$20,000 + \$26,650 = \$46,650

During last November's SNAP crisis, United Way of Champaign County stepped up with an immediate response to strengthen the safety nets for many local families. Challenging the community to match the \$20,000 raised through the season's Farmers Feeding Families harvest, we were able to exceed our goal, raising \$46,650 to distribute to six local organizations. These organizations work every day to ensure children and families across our community have access to healthy, reliable food.



Local programs supported through Farmers Feeding Families:

- Community Services Center of Northern Champaign County
- Centennial High School Food Pantry
- Daily Bread Soup Kitchen
- Eastern Illinois Foodbank
- Feeding Our Kids
- Project DASH
- Sola Gratia Farm
- Tiger Market at Urbana High School



YOUTH OPPORTUNITY

Equipping young people with tools to succeed through literacy development and early grade level success.

Total invested in Youth
Opportunity Grants in 2026:

\$519,515.00

From cradle to career, United Way is committed to helping young people thrive. Through strategic investments and powerful partnerships, we're focused on removing barriers and creating opportunities so every child in Champaign County can succeed.

Our Youth Opportunity work is focused on two key areas:

- Early Grade Level Success
- High School and Beyond



MAYA

When Maya started at Don Moyer Boys & Girls Club last fall, she tested below grade level on her initial literacy screener. Reading wasn't something she looked forward to, but that began to shift once Maya started visiting the Literacy Lab, a program funded by United Way of Champaign County. The freedom to pick what worked for her, week after week, kept her coming back. Soon, Maya was one of the kids looking forward to the lesson, bringing books to life through activities, snacks, and crafts tied to that week's story.

By the end of the year, Maya moved from below grade level to on grade level, and her percentile ranking had climbed by more than 10 points. More than the numbers, though, staff noticed the shift in how she approached reading, with confidence instead of reluctance.

LITERACY DATA

 **1,505**

children participating
in early childhood
development programs

246 

children K-3 received
literacy supports

\$56,850 

awarded to 11 programs
through Women United
Literacy Grants

 **100%**

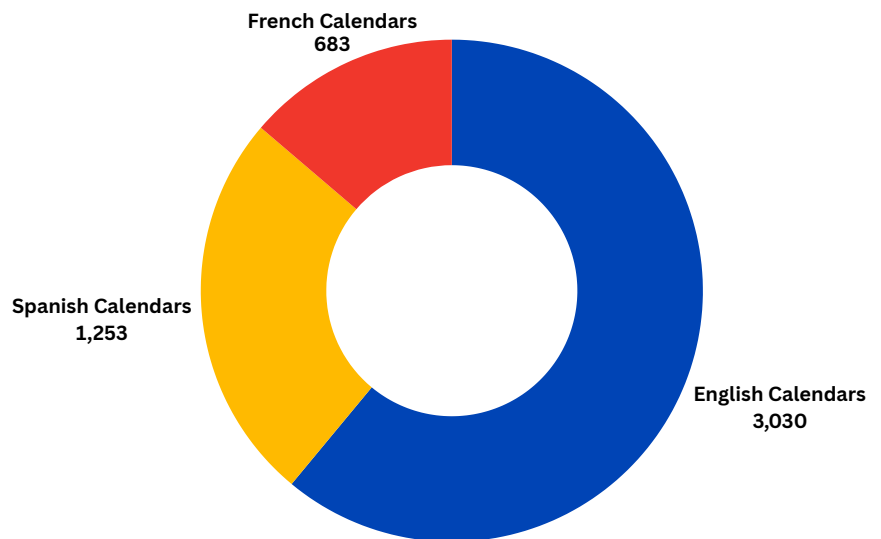
graduating high school seniors
with post-secondary plans

5,193

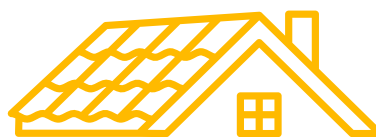
Read.Talk.Play.
Every Day!



website visits on readtalkplay.org



**4,966 KINDERGARTEN READINESS
CALENDARS DISTRIBUTED IN 3
LANGUAGES TO 64 LOCATIONS**



\$7,200

in stipends granted to
18 high schoolers for
completing Summer
Construction Program

DOLLY PARTON'S IMAGINATION LIBRARY

Free books delivered monthly to children under 5 in Champaign and Douglas Counties.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library was inspired by her father's inability to read and write. "He was one of the wisest men I've ever known, but I knew in my heart this inability to read probably kept him from seeing all his dreams come true", said Dolly in an interview with the Imagination Library in 2023.

Today, the program provides free, high-quality, age-appropriate books to children from birth to age five in participating areas across the world, regardless of their family's income.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is possible thanks to community support. While the Dollywood Foundation covers administrative costs, United Way of Champaign County funds the books and postage for the program in Champaign and Douglas Counties.

“Inspiring kids to love to read became my passion and my mission because if you can read, you can teach yourself anything. In the beginning, my hope was simply to inspire the children in my home county but here we are today, an international program that gives a book each month to millions of children.” - **Dolly Parton**”





4,307

children served this year in Champaign
and Douglas Counties



40,372

books mailed to children this year



Our family loved receiving books through Imagination Library. We especially loved the varied and diverse nature of the books, and the sweet video email from Dolly for our son's 5th birthday.

- Nicole, parent of child receiving books through Dolly Parton's Imagination Library





COMMUNITY RESILIENCY

Addressing urgent needs for a better tomorrow through disaster relief and emergency preparedness.

Total invested in Community Resiliency in 2026:

\$30,650.00

Preparedness is key to resilience. United Way coordinates resources at the national, state, and local levels to ensure communities are equipped before disaster strikes. We bring together trusted partners, local leaders, and volunteers to share knowledge and tools that strengthen communities long before an emergency.

When a crisis does occur, the response begins immediately. With United Way present in tens of thousands of communities worldwide, we can act quickly. We mobilize partners, activate volunteers, and use trusted systems to get resources where they are needed most.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

The Emergency Response Plan was created in partnership with Community Foundation of East Central Illinois allowing our community to respond quickly when disasters strike.



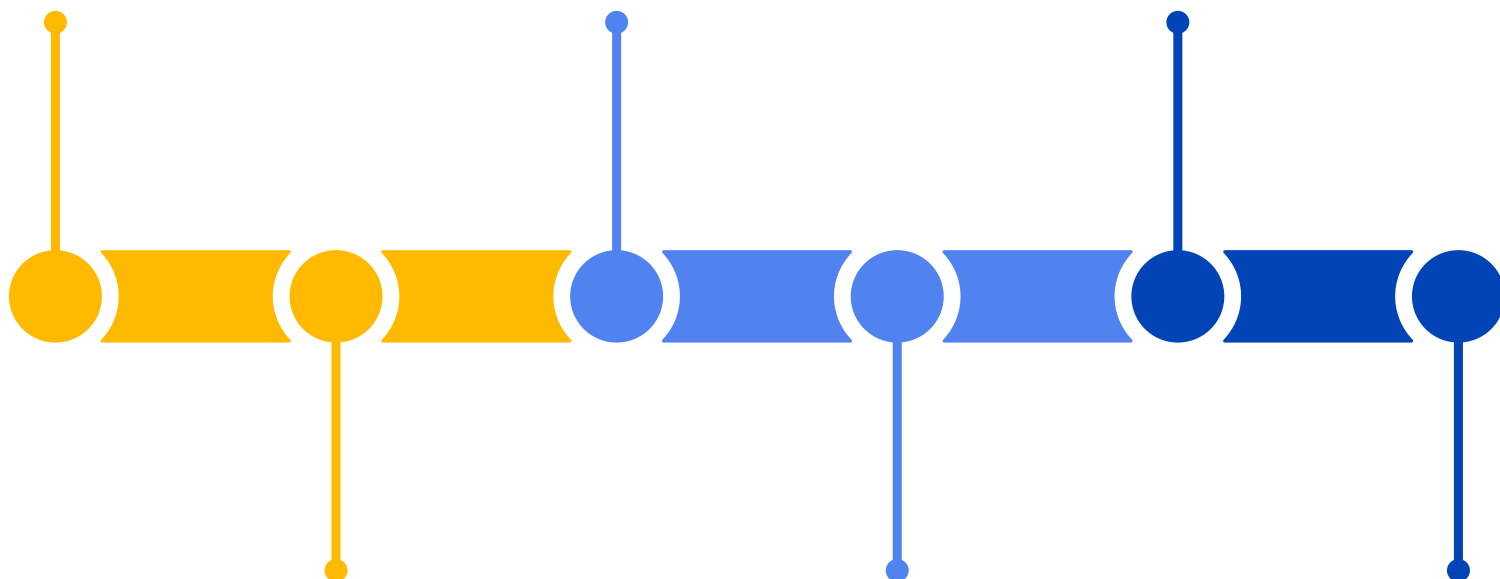
STRIDES SHELTER IMPROVEMENT TIMELINE

Summer 2025 to Fall 2026

UWCC initiated and led a steering team with the goal of turning around Strides Shelter to improve safety for staff, guests, and the surrounding neighborhood.

Supported a leadership transition at the Township Supervisor level and guided a new staffing and operations plan to stretch money and improve relationships and communication with the City of Champaign Township Board.

Continued working on funding plan, location and space needs, and on-going sustainability of Strides Shelter.



The team helped develop new policies and procedures to improve safety to be implemented by the City of Champaign Township Supervisors' Office and Strides Shelter leadership.

Developed action plan for Strides Shelter to improve neighborhood relationships.

Active participant in the CSPH Strategic Planning Advisory from January 2026 - Fall 2026.

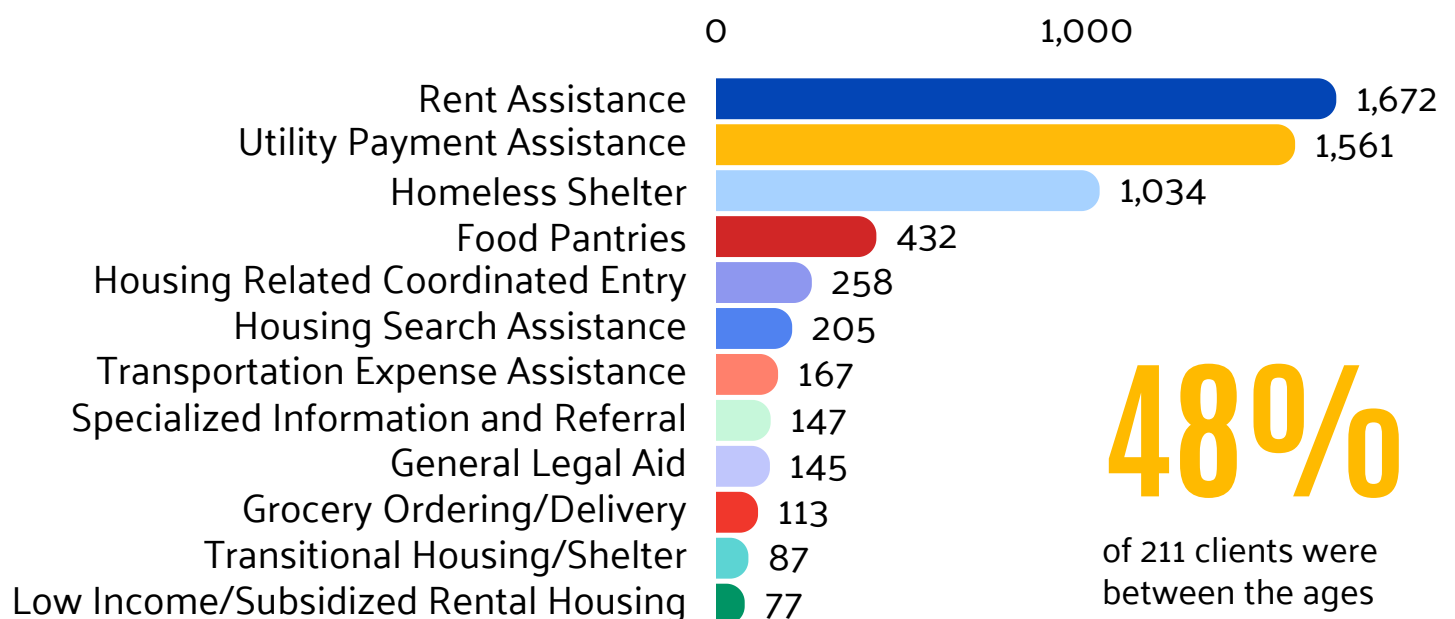


211 ILLINOIS

211 is a free, statewide 24/7 helpline that connects residents to essential health and human services. Trained community navigators assess needs and provided tailored referrals.

TOTAL 211 REFERRALS BY NEED

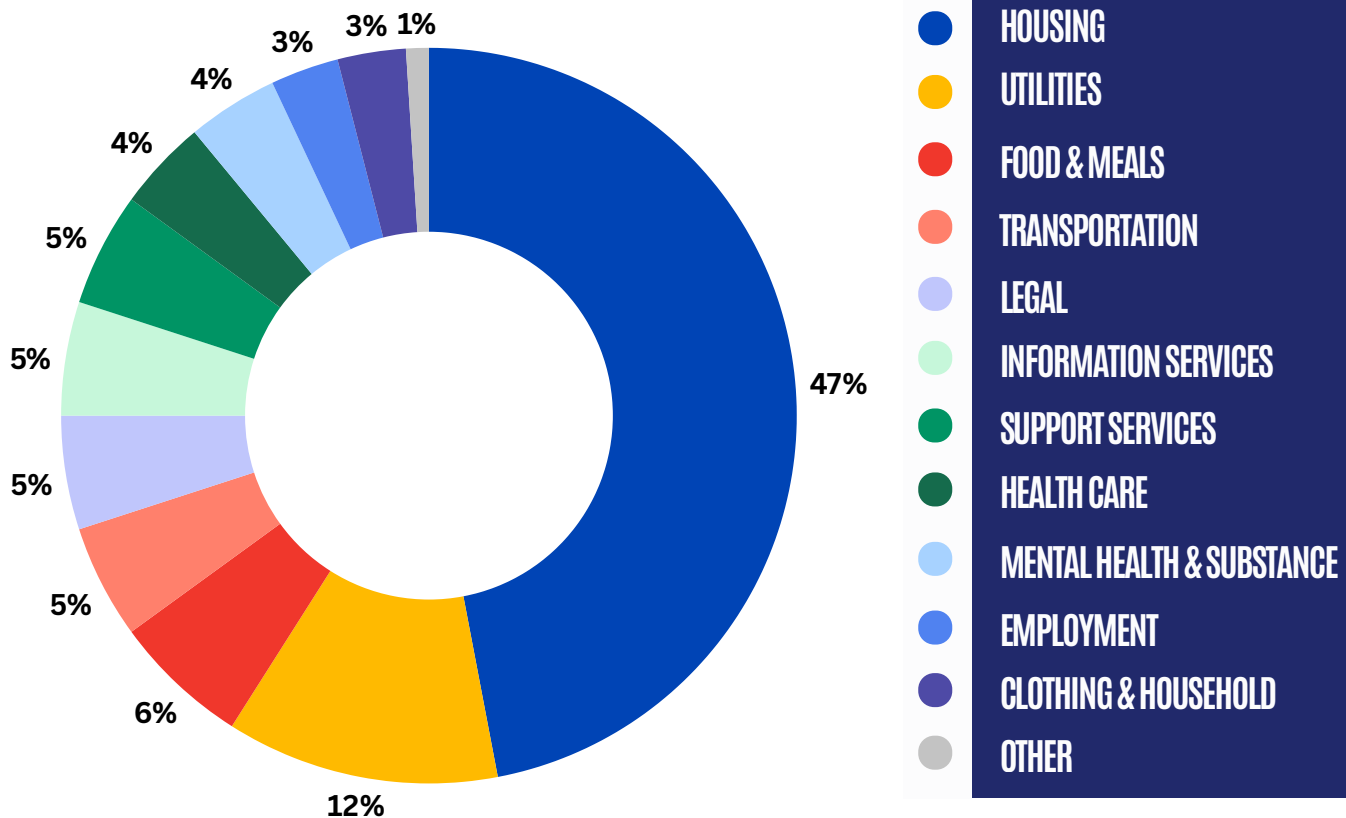
Data from 211 callers seeking referrals in Champaign County from July 1, 2025–June 30, 2026 identified the highest needs as rental assistance, utility payment assistance, and homeless shelter support.



48%

of 211 clients were between the ages of 25-44

211 NEEDS BY CATEGORY



Housing and Utility Assistance are by far the **most critical** needs identified from callers.



**100%
STATEWIDE
COVERAGE
IN ILLINOIS**

“211 is a vital service and a core part of Illinois’ health and human services safety net,” said Edward Perry, Executive Director of 211 Illinois. “With statewide coverage now in place, every Illinois resident has a simple, reliable way to find help, 24 hours a day, by calling, texting, or searching online.”

EMERGING COMMUNITY LEADERS

Free leadership development program for young professionals who want to make a difference in nonprofits in Champaign County.

The Emerging Community Leaders (ECL) program equips young professionals with the tools and experiences they need to become engaged, effective community leaders.

Through seminars, volunteer projects, and collaborative learning, participants gain the skills to serve as strong nonprofit volunteers, committee members, and board leaders. The program connects participants with United Way's partner agencies, offering volunteer opportunities and other ways to get involved with organizations that align with their interests.

Graduates leave the program with a deeper understanding of community needs, a stronger professional network, and an increased commitment to giving back.

“ Being part of the ECL program has been such a rewarding experience, and I've already found ways to apply what I've learned in my career... I'm excited to stay active in the Champaign-Urbana community, and the foundation ECL gave me will be a big part of that journey.

- Russell Zillman 2025 Graduate

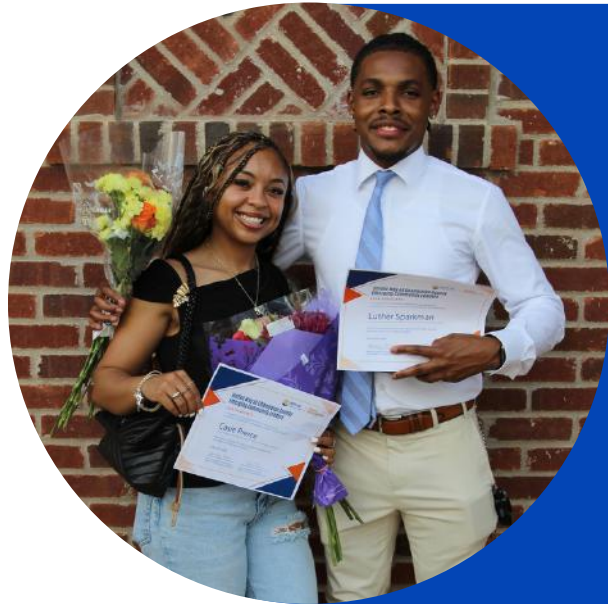
”





830

volunteer hours with
8 community partners



1,000+

graduates from Emerging
Community Leaders
Program since 2006



LEADER AND CONVENER

Acting as a bridge to unite the community to tackle pressing needs and create long-term solutions.

United Way of Champaign County serves as a key leader for numerous organizations, councils, and consortiums across Illinois. Some notable community partnerships include:

- 211 Illinois
- Birth to Five Illinois Region 9 Action Council (pictured)
- Champaign Community Coalition
- Champaign County Home Visiting Consortium
- Champaign County Continuum of Service Providers to the Homeless
- East Central Illinois AFL-CIO
- Emergency Food & Shelter Program (FEMA)
- Emergency Shelter for Families
- Family Resiliency Center Community Advisory Board
- Food Access Alliance Steering Committee
- Healing Illinois
- Feeding Champaign County Food Summit
- United Way of Illinois



MONTHLY

Executive Director meetings to connect numerous agency partners together

HEALING ILLINOIS GRANT



\$376,955

distributed across Region 3
with 22 counties in northern
and central Illinois



\$145,360

distributed to Champaign
County projects



500+

books and reading guides shared
with caregivers of children birth to
age 5 to support youth literacy

BIRTH TO FIVE ILLINOIS GRANT

Benefiting Champaign County Home Visiting Consortium



200

newborn welcome kits delivered to
families, stocked with diapers,
postpartum supplies, onesies, and more

YOU MAKE OUR IMPACT STRONGER.

Give Back

Become a one-time or reoccurring donor, join our Pillar leaders, make a planned legacy gift, or launch a workplace campaign.



Stay Connected

There are many ways to connect with us! Follow us on social media, read our latest news on our website, or become a volunteer!



UNITED WAY
Champaign County

5 Dunlap Court, Savoy, IL 61874
www.unitedwaychampaign.org
(217) 352-5151