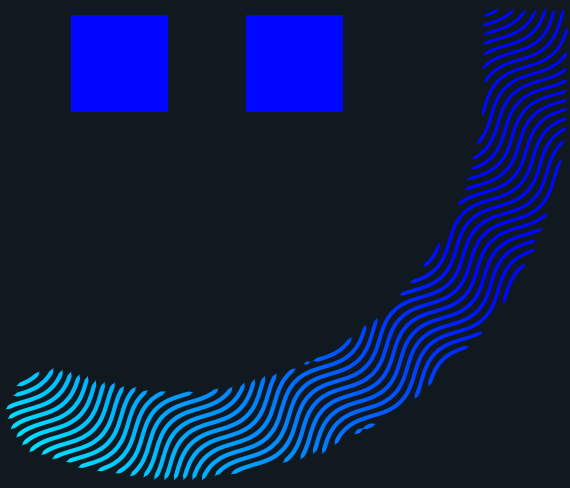


Case Study



United Way of Connecticut Builds Award-Winning 211 Contact Center with NICE CXone

United Way of Connecticut is responsible for operating the state's 211 contact center, 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline Center, and the contact center for the Care4Kids program, which connects callers to affordable childcare options. The 126 agents across both departments spend each day talking with people in need, some in various states of crisis. In 2020, United Way had to quickly pivot and increase capacity, growing the 211 contact center from 25 on-site agents to 300 remote workers in just two weeks to serve as the state's COVID hotline. Since then, the organization has also onboarded the 988 program to their contact center, reduced call answer time on that line to just eight seconds, and become an award-winning operation.



8 SECOND

988 answer time



430k CALLS

answered a year



SCALED

from 25 agents
to 300 in two weeks



10 YEARS

of partnership with NICE



CUSTOMER PROFILE

ABOUT

United Way of Connecticut serves individuals, families, and 14 local United Ways across the state. The organization provides the 211 and 988 contact centers for Connecticut and administers the Care4Kids program. 211 functions as a one-stop shop to connect people to services and benefits that meet their urgent needs and improve their lives. 988 is the national Suicide and Crisis Lifeline. Care4Kids helps low- to moderate-income families in Connecticut pay for childcare costs.

INDUSTRY

Nonprofit

WEBSITE

www.ctunitedway.org

LOCATION

Rocky Hill, CT

AGENTS

126

GOALS

- Meet federally mandated call answer times
- Support scaling and evolution of programs
- Showcase data and critical ROI to government stakeholders

PRODUCTS

- [NICE CXone](#)

FEATURES

- Queue callback
- Easy to use dashboards
- Schedule swap and flexibility



01 THE BEFORE

An award-winning contact center, supported by NICE

United Way of Connecticut is responsible for operating the state's 211 and 988 contact centers as well as the contact center for the Care4Kids program, which connects callers to affordable childcare options. The 126 agents across departments spend each day talking with people in need, some in various states of crisis. It's important, difficult work, and United Way prioritizes the well-being of their team by offering initiatives like decompression rooms, hybrid work schedules, and person-centric coaching.

The organization has been partnering with NICE for a decade, with CXone integrated into their contact centers. Having NICE solutions in place has helped United Way in its efforts to care for both the community and employees, supporting detailed reporting needs and creating an award-winning 211 and 988 programs. When the COVID-19 pandemic arrived, United Way was unexpectedly pushed to adapt its programs in multiple ways over the next few years. NICE CXone played a critical role in ensuring every pivot was successful.

02 DESIRE TO CHANGE

Adapting on the fly, supported by "burstability"

In March 2020 – like most organizations, non-profit and corporate – United Way of Connecticut moved a formerly in-person team to fully remote. Leo Pellerin, Chief Information Officer at United Way of Connecticut, said that the key feature of CXone for them has always been its "burstability" – the ability to scale their services at a moment's notice, which took on a new meaning when COVID-19 arrived. As agents moved all their work home, United Way realized their staff of 25 wouldn't be enough. 211's call volume was up dramatically as citizens adjusted to pandemic life, and 211 was asked to take on a new role as the state's official COVID hotline.

Leveraging the NICE tools they already had in place, United Way moved to work remotely and expanded their 211 call centers to 300 agents within two weeks. New team members were quickly onboarded and jumped right in to using NICE's "elegant, user-friendly dashboards," Pellerin said. "We were able to provide robust training very quickly and get the team comfortable with the tools fast."

03 THE SOLUTION

Scaling up – and then scaling up again

United Way's 211 center supported the community in new ways in the coming months, from providing information on COVID safety to scheduling vaccine appointments during the 2021 rollout. Pellerin said that the vaccination calls required some quick thinking. "The appointments became available by age group, and each time a new one opened we were inundated with calls," he said. "Using NICE, we implemented a system to figure out how many calls our 300 agents could handle in a day and then implemented queue callback." Once the daily limit of calls had been reached, the queue callback automatically notified those still waiting that they would need to call back tomorrow.

In 2022, a new challenge arose: the launch of the federally-mandated crisis phone number 988. United Way Connecticut was told this service would be part of the established 211 contact center. 211 previously offered a

suicide hotline and would need to again scale up to meet the needs of 988. United Way CEO Lisa Tepper Bates said the team increased by two-thirds in a matter of weeks to meet the increase in call demand.

"With 988, the federal expectation is that 95 percent of calls are answered in 15 seconds or less," she said. "Knowing that and understanding that most crisis calls last at least 15 minutes, we needed to again scale up." Scale up they did; so successfully that United Way of Connecticut won a crisis hotline award in 2022.

04 THE RESULTS

Millions of calls, millions of lives impacted

Since making these pivots, the contact center teams for both 211 and Care4Kids continue to work remotely several days a week, enjoying increased schedule flexibility. Agents report overall satisfaction with NICE as well. "We haven't experienced any outages that made a difference during all these changes," Pellerin said. The new 988 program has been able to exceed expectations, with most calls answered in under 10 seconds. Tepper Bates noted that though the 211 contact center focuses more on "efficacy instead of efficiency" in terms of KPIs, this achievement means they can serve more clients in meaningful ways. Across both contact centers, United Way of Connecticut answers more than 430 thousand calls a year.



The improvements United Way has seen extend to the monthly reporting the organization is required to do. Utilizing CXone, United Way is able to pull in-depth reports and show the impact of the funding they receive to government stakeholders. “We do have different KPIs for 211 and Care4Kids, given the different needs of each center,” Tepper Bates said. “Sometimes a program is underfunded, and we use reporting to argue for more support.”

05 THE FUTURE

Supportive AI and stronger healthcare partnerships

United Way of Connecticut is now looking at how to be more tightly aligned with healthcare entities in the state. There’s a growing awareness that healthcare costs are driven in part by lack of access to basic support needs. 211 can help by providing connections to government, non-profit, utility and other assistance that can help people be healthy. Building relationships with hospitals in the state and working together to solve those access barriers is a priority.

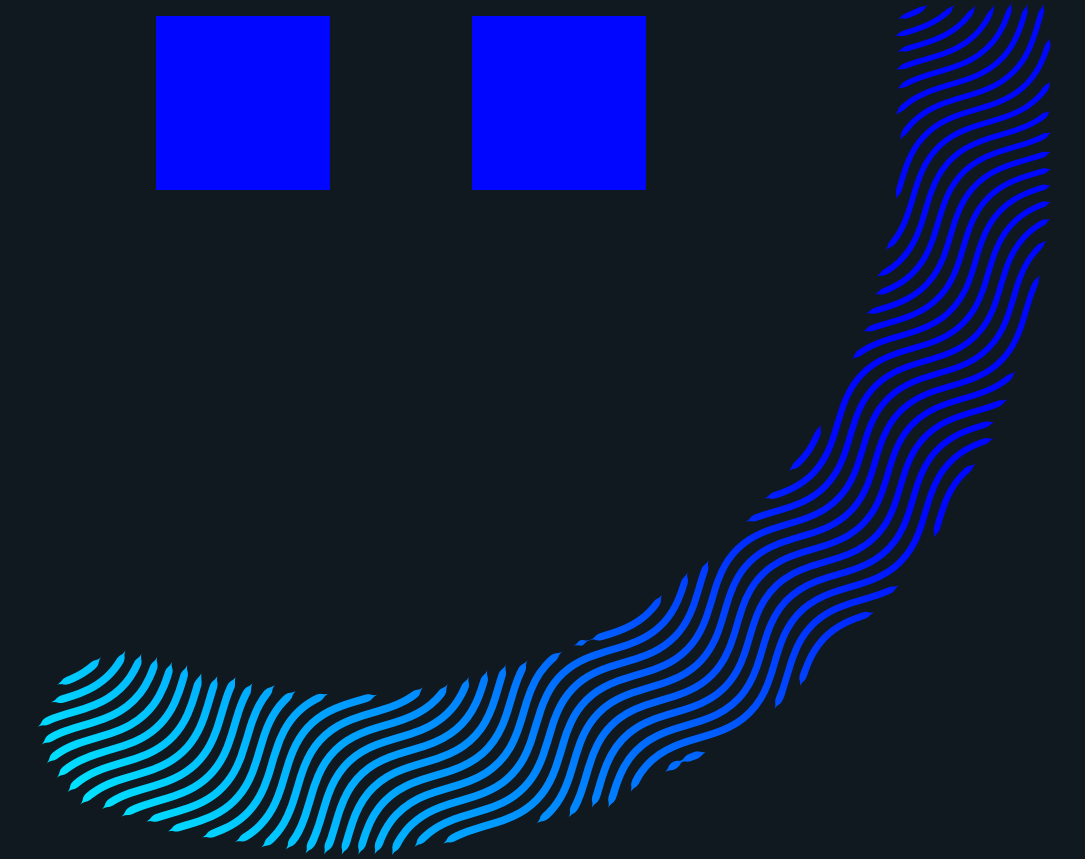
Tepper Bates said AI is also top of mind for the organization. “Our agents provide huge value by asking questions beyond what the caller initially asked about, connecting people to helpful resources they might not have known to ask for” she said. “This how they uncover the true needs of the caller, and we see the potential for AI to support them in asking the right questions at the right time.” Tepper Bates and Pellerin both see AI as a supportive tool for their team, one that can add a level of critical thinking in the moment that might not be available otherwise. Pellerin also noted that there is important research emerging around AI supporting mental health and crisis calls, helping 211 agents quickly understand danger levels and real-time needs.

Pellerin also hopes to tap into NICE’s capabilities to solve a longstanding challenge: how to fine-tune scheduling needs and forecasting to the point that 988 staff can be pulled to 211 and vice versa during slow times without creating a gap. He and Tepper Bates are excited to see how they can solve this question in the near future.



“We have evolved as a contact center, and **it wouldn’t have been possible without NICE.**”

LISA TEPPER BATES
CEO
UNITED WAY OF CONNECTICUT



About NICE

With NICE (Nasdaq: NICE), it’s never been easier for organizations of all sizes around the globe to create extraordinary customer experiences while meeting key business metrics. Featuring the world’s #1 cloud native customer experience platform, CXone, NICE is a worldwide leader in AI-powered self-service and agent-assisted CX software for the contact center—and beyond. Over 25,000 organizations in more than 150 countries, including over 85 of the Fortune 100 companies, partner with NICE to transform—and elevate—every customer interaction.

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