

FAQs

BC211.ca ANNOUNCEMENT

April 26, 2017

What is 211?

The 211 number is the national abbreviated dialing code for access to community, social and government services information and referral. 211 is a free, multilingual, confidential service, accessible 24/7 to the entire population in communities with 211 services. In British Columbia, 211 (the full suite of phone/text and website) is currently available in the Metro Vancouver, Fraser Valley, Sunshine Coast and Squamish Lillooet Regional Districts.

On April 26, 2017, nine other United Ways joined the bc211 movement & United Way Lower Mainland and expanded the online service bc211.ca to all British Columbians. The service directory database now includes over 10,000 current entries that document and describe services and organizations available to help people. The website is also optimized for mobile devices and online chat is available seven days a week from 8 am to 11 pm.

Who can use bc211.ca?

211 is for everyone...from individuals, families and professionals to community agencies, government and people facing barriers due to poverty or personal difficulty. bc211.ca will help anyone get information and access to vital community services within their local neighbourhood.

What are the benefits of bc211.ca?

- Single point of access for community, non-clinical health, government, and social services.
- Simple for everyone, especially useful for vulnerable populations.
- Reduces confusion, frustration, and unnecessary delay in reaching services.

Who operates bc211.ca?

In British Columbia, the 211 Information & Referral service is operated by the 211 British Columbia Services Society, a charitable non-profit organization funded by United Ways and through contracts with various partners.

Why would you use bc211.ca?

bc211.ca benefits British Columbians of all ages. Examples of inquiries received by information and referral services include:

- A senior citizen wanting home care support in order to live independently.
- A homeless person seeking a shelter bed, or a place to get out of the cold and to have a hot meal.
- A family facing eviction that doesn't know where to turn for help.
- A recent immigrant needing language and employment training.
- A young mother worried about how to properly care for her newborn child.
- A laid-off worker wanting to find out about employment insurance.
- A family searching for child care services in their community or close to work.
- A parent asking where to get food for her family.
- A concerned neighbour trying to help a friend in an abusive relationship.
- A family trying to find services for their son with a newly diagnosed illness.

Why do United Ways throughout BC support bc211.ca?

United Way helps find solutions to community problems and funds a network of social service agencies throughout the province. 211 complements United Way's role as a funder of community services by helping people connect to the services they need.

How did 211 come about?

In August 2001, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) assigned the 211 telephone number for community information services across Canada. This application was a partnership by United Way of Greater Toronto and Community Information Toronto, United Way of Canada/Centraide Canada, and InformCanada. The CRTC's decision followed a public consultation process in which the 211 proposals received support from community organizations, government and the telecommunications industry.

"211 is a very important Canada-wide project for the United Way Centraide movement because it helps people at vulnerable points in their lives and provides access to the supports required to cope with life's challenges. We are thrilled to see British Columbia come on board to help us reach our goal to bring 211 to all Canadians. Over 70% of Canadians now have access to the service, either online or by phone and text," says Bill Morris, National Director, 211 at United Way Centraide Canada.