



THE CONCEPT: A 211 PHONE SYSTEM FOR NOVA SCOTIA

United Way Halifax Region has led the creation of a multi –stakeholder Steering Committee to develop the business case to examine the feasibility of 211, and ultimately implement a 211 system across Nova Scotia. United Ways in Nova Scotia supported by several key institutions, libraries, the Canadian Federation of municipalities and multiple provincial agencies have submitted a request for funding to the Province of Nova Scotia seeking 95% of ongoing operational funding (approximately \$950,000 per annum) for the creation and operation of a 211 system for the province. The 211 service would be a separate non – profit operation managed by an independent board of directors who would provide oversight and governance.

THE BACKGROUND ON 211

The purpose of 211 is to make finding a community support services simple and accessible for everyone.

Every hour of every day, someone in Nova Scotia needs help finding services – from substance abuse assistance, to securing adequate care for a child, to local home care support for an aging parent. Faced with a complex maze of phone books, help lines, directories, and voice mail systems, people often don't know where to turn. In many cases people end up going without necessary available services because they don't know where to begin looking. 211 provides callers with information about, and referrals to services that support everyday needs and to those needed in times of crisis. For example, 211 can offer access to the following types of services:

- **Basic Needs Resources:** food banks, shelters and clothing closets.
- **Physical and Mental Health Resources:** medical information lines; crisis intervention services, support groups, counseling, drug and alcohol intervention and rehabilitation.
- **Employment Supports:** job training, transportation assistance, education programs
- **Seniors Support and Persons with Disabilities:** adult daycare, Meals on Wheels, respite care, home health care, transportation and homemaker services.
- **Support for Children, Youth, and Families:** childcare, after school programs, family resource centers, summer camps and recreational programs, mentoring, tutoring, protective services.
- **Volunteer Opportunities and Donations**

KEY POINTS

211 is an easy to remember telephone number that connects citizens to a full range of non-emergency social, health and government services in their community.

Accredited information and referral (I&R) specialists answer 211 calls, assess the needs of each caller and link them to the best available information and services by consulting a comprehensive, searchable database.

211 is widely used in communities in the United States. As of September 2006, approximately 165 million Americans, over 55% of the population, had access to 211.

211 has been successfully implemented in several Canadian cities including: Toronto, the Niagara region, Calgary, and Edmonton serving 15% of the Canadian population. The Premier of British Columbia recently announced his commitment to a province wide 211 service.

211 does not duplicate, replace or eliminate the specialized human, community and health services offered by agencies. 211 will provide information to callers on the appropriate and available counseling services for their concerns, but will not counsel them.

WHY 211 WORKS

Single Point of Access

211 provides a single point to a community's full range of social, health and government services, reducing confusion and frustration for the caller.

Targeted Help

211 information and referral specialists are trained to seek out necessary information, assess the situation and find the organization and service that is best suited for the caller.

A Personal Touch

211 lets people talk to people. Callers can explain their situation in their own words and get the help they need on their own terms.

Around the Clock Access

211 is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Free Access

211 is accessible at no cost to callers.