

FAQS

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 population in communities with 211 services. In British Columbia, 211 (phone/text and website) is currently available in the Metro Vancouver, Fraser Valley, Sunshine Coast and Squamish Lillooet Regional Districts, which represents 60% of the province by population. Plans are underway to expand the bc211 website to the remaining 40% of the province by the first quarter of 2017. Phone and text options will be part of Phase Two and individual United Ways will determine future participation based on their financial abilities.

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.

What are the benefits of bc211.ca?

- Single point of access for community, 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 Way and various partners.

Why would you use bc211.ca?

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 care for her newborn child.
- A laid-off worker wanting to find out about employment insurance.
- A family searching for child care services 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 mental 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.

How is 211 across Canada supporting Syrian refugees and their sponsors?

211's award-winning telephone help line (2-1-1) and website (www.211.ca) is providing Syrian refugees and their sponsors with an easy way to access vital community services – including housing, literacy training, employment opportunities and child care among other resources – that will allow refugees to more easily and quickly adapt to life in their new communities.

The service is also acting as a key resource for Canadians wanting to contribute to the national Syrian refugee efforts. Finally, 211 is collecting and sharing vital data about the needs of refugees and their sponsors in communities across the country. This information is being used to inform community and government responses to this ongoing work.

