

About bc211

bc211 is a **free, 24/7, confidential and multilingual service** that links people to community and government resources for help, where and when they need it. This not-for-profit organization operates through the generosity of the United Way and its donors.

bc211 **strengthens communities** by connecting people with the help they need:

- Highly trained professionals listen and respond to each and every call and text.
- There are more than **15,000** current resources on a broad range of topics including basic needs like **food and shelter, counselling, financial and legal assistance, child care, seniors' support.**
- The service is **free, confidential and available in over 160 languages, 24/7.**
- Access to the service is available by dialling or texting 211, or through live chat or email via bc211.ca
- All resource listings are available for anyone to access at any time via the website: bc211.ca

bc211 serves individuals and families who are seeking help, service providers in need of information for their clients, and affected third parties – people calling on behalf of others in need. **Highly trained call takers** assess needs by listening to the reason for the call, as well as asking questions to understand the context in order to address both the issue that prompted the call and the root causes of the caller's challenge.

There are several interconnected objectives for each call:

- To find the most appropriate resources to help the caller, and ensure the caller is eligible for that help
- To advocate for the caller, and where appropriate, to coach the caller on how to ask for the service in order to establish the most productive relationship with the resources recommended
- bc211's Resources Team ensures programs and services listed in the database are current and accurate, by adding, removing and updating resources as programs change (e.g. as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic).

Part of a network of 211 services across North America, bc211 is accredited by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS), for meeting international standards relating to call response, privacy and confidentiality, and the quality and accuracy of resources listed in the database.

bc211: A critical resource

Since COVID-19 hit Vancouver Island we have all been tested in ways we could have never imagined. But for our friends and neighbours who were already experiencing poverty and related issues—struggling to put food on the table or struggling with mental health concerns—it has been an exceptionally difficult and, sometimes, heartbreaking time.

bc211 has played a crucial role throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and has continued to be a critical resource for British Columbians seeking crisis support and system navigation during this unprecedented time.

Calls for help and assistance have seen a substantial surge in users, recording a **40% increase in calls from February to June 2020 across Vancouver Island**. Other statistics from this time include:

- **1,503 calls received (Feb – June 2020)**
- **65% of callers are female, 35% male**
- **The age groups most served are between 19 – 54 years (63%) and 65+ years (30%)**
- **Victoria represented 51% of all bc211 calls on Vancouver Island**

The main needs of callers have related to **health, income & financial assistance and basic needs**; all existing social issues that have been further exacerbated by the pandemic. Below are extracts and examples from some of the calls received by bc211:

- “My husband is coming home from abroad. I work in health care and every day I am asked if I have been exposed to someone who has been outside of the country. I cannot have him in our house. I was told he can stay at a hotel paid for by the province.”
- A senior citizen called experiencing mental health impacts from the COVID-19 crisis and was in need of counselling.
- A caller had lost his employment and was struggling financially.
- Caller needs to be home to take care of her twins during the COVID-19 crisis and just found out her husband has a brain tumour and needs care so she needs to leave her job to take care of her family.
- A caller stated her son had overdosed and she is urgently seeking support.

With these and other cases, highly trained professionals were able to listen and respond to each text and call.

Another benefit of bc211 is the ability to **reduce the pressure on 9-1-1 emergency services**. For every 100 legitimate emergency calls to 9-1-1 there are up to 200 non-emergency calls. bc211 can handle those non-emergency calls and direct callers to the resources they need.



Assisting vulnerable seniors

With the full services of bc211 now available across the province, bc211 has been able to play a vital role during the pandemic by connecting vulnerable seniors to volunteers through United Way's **Safe Seniors, Strong Communities Program**. This initiative matches seniors who need support with non-medical essentials (such as grocery shopping, phone and virtual visits, meal preparation etc.) to volunteers in their community who are willing to help. bc211 registered 4,504 seniors in need and 7,116 volunteers across British Columbia. Of those, 2,710 registrations were in the Greater Victoria area (1,070 seniors and 1,640 volunteers).

Mental health support

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health struggles were consistently the third most reported issue affecting callers using bc211. As of April 2020, mental health issues were overtaken by basic needs. We know that mental health issues haven't gone away; with more pressing concerns about health and finances, people's mental health concerns have been pushed to the side and buried under other stresses. A mental health crisis is coming, and bc211 will be crucial in connecting British Columbians with the support they need.

Help Vancouver Islanders make the right call and get the support they need where and when they need it with a gift to bc211 today.

Watch:

bc211 Sarah's Story - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8DG5VNJpTE>

bc211 Karen's Story - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gipEBm6W-dI>

bc211 Andy's Story - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqSecyHHL4s>



United Way
Greater Victoria

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