BUILDING AN INTEGRATED SERVICE… FROM THE COMMUNITY UP

ANNUAL REPORT
2013-2014
ONTARIO 211 SERVICES
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## What is 211?

211 is an award winning helpline providing information and referral to Ontario’s community and social services. 211 provides the most complete directory of 60,000 community and social services to help residents find the support they need.

Call 2-1-1 to reach our helpline

www.211ontario.ca

TTY: 1-888-340-1001

Highly trained specialists answer the 211 helpline and update the database.

Free | Confidential | Live Answer 24/7 | 150+ Languages

To view the report online, visit www.211ontario.ca.
Executive Summary

Last year, through the efforts of countless stakeholders in communities across Ontario, 211 made hundreds of thousands of connections – linking people to the services and supports available to improve or enhance their quality of life.

We are leaders in the Information and Referral business. This means that we collect and maintain comprehensive data about health, social and government services available in the community, and we provide access points to that information for those looking for help. Last year, more than half a million callers reached a professional Information & Referral Specialist who listened to them, assessed their needs and referred them to the most appropriate programs or services close to home. More than 1.1 million times, people visited 211ontario.ca to search for services using enhanced topic searches. 211 partnered with hundreds of organizations at a local and provincial level to share our data, provide an access point for specialty services or provide caller needs data to networks and planners to enhance their decision-making.

So what does all of this mean for people in Ontario? How do we know that we are having an impact? 86% of our callers followed up with the referrals provided, and 89% of those callers got the help they needed from the agency we referred them to. This means that less people are falling through the cracks because they don’t know where to begin to access services. Through our data sharing partnerships, we have saved organizations and tax-payers dollars by collecting information once and sharing it many times. And our 3-digit number has been leveraged to create a clear and easy path for people to connect to services 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, in over 150 languages – both in times of crisis or disaster, and every day.

We are proud of our accomplishments, but there is more work to be done to ensure that 211 can be of greatest value in the coming years. This past year, we set the stage for that work by initiating an integrated phone discussion, which would link our 7 call centres together to increase our capacity to answer large volumes of calls efficiently, and according to the skills of our Information & Referral Specialists across the province.

We implemented new data standards and processes with local data partners to allow for the consolidation of data at a provincial level, and will launch a shared platform for caller data collection and reporting in the coming fiscal year.

211 in Ontario is built from the Community Up, and the Annual Report reflects the accomplishments of each and every stakeholder in the 211 system. Their work in communities to collect data about services, answer calls, promote the 211 service, or work with planners and decision-makers on pressing social issues, has been nothing short of incredible. We are encouraged to consider how many more people we can help when we get to our goal of creating an integrated and sustainable 211 system that leverages local information and expertise for the benefit of all Ontarians.
In 2013, we worked closely with our key stakeholders, including service delivery partners, community data providers, United Ways and municipalities, to develop a shared vision and strategic direction for 211 in Ontario. We reached a significant milestone in 2011 – 100% phone and online coverage for 211 – by expanding local and regional coverage to meet the needs of all Ontarians. Our attention is now focused on modernizing infrastructure and transforming service delivery to fully leverage community resources and expertise within a sustainable and integrated provincial system.

In 2013, 211 responded to 527,000 callers, referring them to community, government, social and health services. 211 was once again recognized for its dedication to service excellence, receiving SQM’s customer satisfaction award.

In addition to managing the most comprehensive database of agencies and programs in the province, 211 Ontario expanded access to services through local and provincial partnerships. In 2013, O211S collaborated with Kids Help Phone, ConnexOntario and the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health to deliver the Good2Talk mental health helpline for post-secondary students. 211 Ontario also helped to connect more seniors to counselling and personal supports through its work with Senior Safety Line and Alzheimer’s Society of Ontario.

Our Data Providers worked hard over the last year to implement enhanced data standards, aligning data in a consistent manner and reducing duplication. In the coming weeks and months, we will continue to work with our partners to identify opportunities for leveraging 211 data and sharing it broadly across the health and social services sectors, enhancing the information that is available to communities and planners.

Despite limited resources, 211 messages reached new audiences last year including physicians, single-parent families and persons with disabilities. We also supported local ads and promotions in some communities with matching dollars from United Ways. As we look forward, we will work towards increasing awareness of 211 through local champions and ambassadors, and identify new ways to reach out to all groups and areas of Ontario.

Our progress is the result of the hard work of dedicated staff and service providers, and financial investments made by our funders and supporters. Thank you to the Board of Directors for its leadership and guidance, and the many volunteers that have donated their time and experience to strengthening our system. We are very grateful to Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Ministry of Community and Social Services for their investment and ongoing support for the development of 211, and to United Way for their support and promotion of 211 in communities throughout the province. As we look forward, we are excited by opportunities that lie ahead - working with all stakeholders to realize our vision of the future.

Jocelyne St Jean, President
Andrew Benson, Executive Director
Building awareness of a relatively new service like 211 in a world of competing messages can be a daunting task. We are so grateful to our small army of Ambassadors – Regional Service Partners, local United Ways, Data Providers, municipalities and community agencies – who help us amplify our messages.

We know from our calls last year that 47% heard about 211 from a friend, a family member or a community agency. And we know that many people will typically not think of calling 211 until they need help. Our Ambassadors strive to make sure that when people don’t know where to turn, they will think of 211.

In 2013/14, our Ambassadors collectively made presentations in the community to hundreds of Ontarians, attended information fairs and community events, engaged agencies to keep their information current, and built 211 awareness among key community networks and decision-makers.

THANK YOU to all of our Ambassadors for continuing to be the voice of 211 in your communities.

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211 Videos:
Don’t just take our word for it!

We were thrilled to have the support of some very high-profile well-respected Ambassadors in the production of new videos for 211 in Ontario. The videos describe the value of 211 from the perspective of 211 staff, United Ways, responders, health professionals, and decision-makers.

A BIG thank you to:
Michael Nolan, *Chief of Paramedic Services, County of Renfrew*
Charles Bordeleau, *Chief, Ottawa Police Service*
Dr. Samir Sinha, *Director of Geriatrics, Mount Sinai Hospital & Ontario Seniors Care Strategy*
Mathieu Fleury, *City Councillor, Rideau-Vanier Ward*
Jacline Nyman, *President & CEO, United Way Canada*
Madeleine Meilleur, *Attorney General for Ontario, Minister of Francophone Affairs*
Jacinthe Desaulniers, *Executive Director, French Language Health Services Network of Eastern Ontario*
Jocelyne St Jean, *Board Chair, Ontario 211 Services*
Kent Gillespie, *Past-Chair Ontario 211 Services, Ret. Commissioner of Social Services, Region of Peel*

And thank you to the staff at Findhelp Information Services and Community Information Centre of Ottawa for sharing their 211 stories.
United Way and Municipal Ambassadors: Leading the Way for 211 in Communities

United Way of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington

As Co-Chair of the Poverty Reduction Initiative in Kingston, Bhavana Varma, President & CEO for United Way serving KFL&A, has advocated for the use of 211 as a tool for connecting vulnerable people with basic services. Bhavana coordinated the production of a local “Where to Turn for Basic Needs” brochure that uses 211 data to promote local resources available, and continues to encourage the use of 211 at every community meeting.

City of Toronto

One of the many ways that 211 supports communities is through the resource data and caller data collected. Harvey Low with the City of Toronto’s Planning Department has used 211 data in mapping the supply and demand for services in the city, and has presented his work to many other groups in Ontario to demonstrate how 211 data can be a resource for planners.

United Way of Bruce Grey

Executive Director Francesca Dobbin is a strong Ambassador for 211 in her community. Last year, Francesca engaged a donor to support the cost of producing 211 materials such as coffee sleeves and pop-up displays, and placing 211 ads on local radio. In addition, Francesca promoted 211 with local media during a long and difficult winter that saw increased demand for programs such as utility assistance.

Simcoe County

On almost every Simcoe County web portal or promotional brochure for social services, 211 is positioned as the first point of contact for those looking for help - initiatives such as their local immigration portal, custom search portals for Ontario Works staff and Homelessness Services for residents, to name a few. Simcoe County’s calls as a percentage of the population are higher than most other communities in Ontario as a result.
Powered by Partnerships: Working with others to improve outcomes

Ontario 211 Services is proud to work with other provincial organizations to improve access to services through our award-winning phone service, consolidate the collection and maintenance of human services data, and to inform decision-making around key community issues through caller needs data.

Our formal partners include the Ontario Network for the Prevention of Elder Abuse (Senior Safety Line), Alzheimer Society Ontario (Finding Your Way program), Kids Help Phone, ConnexOntario and the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health (Good2Talk Service).

We partnered with paramedics across Ontario, and with Ontario Provincial Police to develop training and materials for their front-line staff. 211 is a resource that first responders can rely on to connect seniors living in the community to health and social supports available to help them remain independent and maintain a good quality of life.

We participated in a provincial Caregiver Consultation hosted by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, advising government on what is needed to support paid and unpaid caregivers in Ontario, and we are exploring opportunities to partner with Community Care Access Centres and Local Health Integration Networks in an effort to share resource data across the health and social service sectors.

Our Regional Service Partners are also involved in dozens of other partnerships with agencies, governments and United Ways to improve outcomes for residents of those communities.

To learn more about partnering with 211, visit our website 211ontario.ca/basic-page/partners.
Securing Financial Support

A Slovak speaking woman applied for the Ontario Disability Support Program on behalf of her daughter. Her application was approved but two months later they hadn’t heard any more. Worried the application was lost and that her English wasn’t good enough to follow up with the ODSP office, she called 211.

A 211 Specialist called the ODSP office several times that day only to get a pre-recorded message that asked for Case Worker’s ID number. This number had not been provided yet to the client. 211 followed up the next day until they reached a live person. The Case Worker confirmed that the application was almost finished and the client would be contacted once the paperwork was done.

Why people called 211 in 2013

- **Health** 73,435 calls
- **Income & Financial Assistance** 59,709 calls
- **Community Services** 45,214 calls
- **Housing Help** 44,145 calls
- **Legal & Public Safety** 38,558 calls
- **Provincial Government** 37,380 calls
- **Federal Government** 34,488 calls
- **Food & Meals** 32,777 calls
- **Mental Health & Addictions** 27,073 calls
- **Individual & Family Services** 26,732 calls

“Over the 17-year period, GDP has grown almost four times more than our overall wellbeing. The trends clearly show that even when times are good, overall wellbeing does not keep up with economic growth.”

Caller Satisfaction
- Results from SQM caller satisfaction survey

- 99% were satisfied with 211
- 86% of callers followed up with the referral 211 provided
- 89% of these callers got the help they needed
- 31% of calls were complicated referrals

211 online

1,149,722 web visits to 211 related websites
12,042,513 pageviews

Social Media

Twitter
3,733 Followers
Facebook
2,426 Likes
YouTube
13,560 Views

Who calls 211?

Age of person needing assistance

- 6 years or under: 36%
- 7 to 12 years: 37%
- 13 to 21 years: 4%
- 22 to 35 years: 1%
- 36 to 54 years: 1%
- 55 years or older: 4%

Income of person needing assistance

- Full Time: 13%
- Part Time: 7%
- Employment Insurance: 3%
- Ontario Disability Support: 22%
- Ontario Works: 10%
- Old Age Security: 6%
- Self-employed: 3%
- Other: 16%
- Don’t know: 13%
- Refused: 4%
- Res: 10%
The work we do every day – providing professional information and referral, maintaining quality data about human services, and collecting and reporting on caller needs and trends in real time – is the same work we do during emergencies. For emergency responders and managers, 211 provides a channel for authoritative information to the public about anything relevant to the emergency that does not require police, fire or ambulance, such as the location of emergency shelters, where to get basic supplies and how to donate goods. This helps to alleviate the non-emergency calls that go to 911 and other municipal phone lines, and provides a channel for responders to receive information back from the public – both during the event and through what can be a long recovery period for affected residents.

With the support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, a 211 Emergency Management project team has more clearly defined the services and supports available through 211. Under the leadership of the team members; Rosanna Thoms, Pam Hillier, Marie-Andree Carriere, Sue Wilkinson, Karen Milligan and Project Manager Jonquil Eyre, the two-year project has achieved a great deal:

- Made presentations to hundreds Emergency Management representatives
- Developed Mutual Assistance Agreements between our Regional call centres to increase our capacity to respond
- Conducted internal exercises, and participated in large multi-county exercises and local table-top exercises to test the flow of information
- Developed and delivered training materials, templates and workshops so that our partners across the province understand their roles
- Signed agreements with several municipalities – or in some cases, a Communication Protocol between the 211 service provider and the municipality that allows for the flow of information back and forth

Our thanks to Ontario Trillium Foundation for supporting this work, and allowing us to make significant progress.

Phase II – Moving Towards a Provincial 211 Response

As we launch into Phase II of our Emergency work, our priorities shift to creating the infrastructure, and enhancing policies and procedures that will maximize our capacity to respond as a system to wide-reaching or prolonged emergencies. Work is underway on an integrated phone system that will allow load balancing and intelligent routing of calls, and on a shared call tracking database that will allow for the consistent collection and reporting of caller needs information across the province.
What 211 Callers are Saying about Their Experience

“She went above and beyond. Lots of times when you call any kind of agency they just do the bare minimum. She was proactive.”

“They speak in a respectful manner. They are non-judgmental. They really know the community resources that are available. I feel they really care. It’s not just a job to them. They sound like they want to help and that’s what I like about them.”

“He was helpful and patient with what I was trying to say. He really gave me time. He said, ‘no, just take the time, you don’t have to worry’. That was perfect, I needed the time.”

“The first agency wouldn’t work which I explained. She then found two other agencies on her own research and contacted them for me to make sure my circumstances were applicable and called me back to tell me about these. She was awesome.”

“I’m disabled. But she still follows up with me to help make sure that things are still good. She’s helped me get a lot further with my disability in getting help and stuff. She’s very helpful and works at my pace.”

“She transferred the call for me so that I didn’t have to do it myself as I am vision impaired. A very nice girl.”

“She was clear and concise. She took time to explain to me because I don’t have a computer.”
Snapshot: 211 Central

211 Central Region Making the Connection to Services for Newcomers

In partnership with the Ontario Coalition of Agencies Serving Immigrants (OCASI), Findhelp (211 Central) provides access to bilingual provincial service data for newcomers. This ongoing initiative involves providing access to data through an API and assisting in the development of specialized searches as defined by OCASI. The site delivers nearly 36,000 page views and responds to 17,000 searches for newcomer services per year. (http://www.settlement.org/findhelp/, http://www.establishment.org/findhelp/)

With 17% of all 211 Central calls being newcomer related, and with more than 20 languages spoken by Findhelp staff, we have a strong commitment to newcomer service access, settlement and adaptation.

Calls to 211 229,080

Top Reasons for Calling 211

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Calls</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>32,827</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income &amp; Financial Assistance</td>
<td>26,477</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>23,650</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Meals</td>
<td>21,863</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Services</td>
<td>19,760</td>
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</tbody>
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Snapshot: 211 Central East

211 Central East Region Connects Callers with Emergency Utility Assistance

211 Central East supported utility assistance programs delivered by two United Ways – (Bruce/Grey and Simcoe County). One partnership provided the access point for intake registration, and the other partnership supported after-hour and weekend calls. 211’s Information Specialists were able to de-escalate calls from confused/upset residents, stabilize callers who might be at-risk without utilities (e.g. medical equipment, food contamination without refrigeration), and ensured callers were connected to additional resources such as food and legal assistance. Partnering with 211 to provide enhanced access to assistance for residents and saved time by reducing the need for voice messages and follow up calls by assistance providers.

Calls to 211 59,648

Top Reasons for Calling 211

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Calls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>9,131</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income &amp; Financial Assistance</td>
<td>8,769</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>7,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual &amp; Family Services</td>
<td>5,747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal &amp; Public Safety</td>
<td>4,035</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
211 Dufferin-Peel Received AIRS Accreditation

The Region of Peel delivers services that contribute to the quality of life, health and well-being of residents. 211 is recognized as a program that supports the needs of the community by providing residents with easy access and navigation to information and services. In 2013, the Region of Peel joined the other 211 service providers across Ontario in receiving AIRS Accreditation (Alliance of Information and Referral Systems). Accreditation is a multi-phase process that includes a comprehensive review of the 211 service and provides a benchmark of service excellence for information and referral providers across North America. Congratulations to our partners at 211 Dufferin-Peel for this significant achievement!

Calls to 211

| 211 Dufferin-Peel | 17,650 |

Top Reasons for Calling 211

1. Community Services | 1,083 |
2. Health | 907 |
3. Income & Financial Assistance | 691 |
4. Municipal Government | 655 |
5. Legal & Public Safety | 485 |

211 Central South and United Way in Niagara Region Partner to Meet Demands of Tax Season

After identifying an unmet need in the Niagara region for community volunteer income tax preparation clinics, 211 Central South worked with United Way to engage agencies to expand the number of programs available. With funding from United Way of Niagara Falls and Greater Fort Erie, 211 Central South led community meetings, delivered a Volunteer Screening Workshop, scheduled appointments for clinics in other agencies through their 211 lines, while continuing to offer clinics at their own offices in St. Catharines. As a result of this work, many agencies offered clinics beyond the usual busy tax season to ensure more residents could be served.

Calls to 211

| 211 Central South | 80,178 |

Top Reasons for Calling 211

1. Income & Financial Assistance | 12,509 |
2. Health | 11,565 |
3. Legal & Public Safety | 6,063 |
4. Consumer & Commercial | 5,798 |
5. Mental Health & Addictions | 5,041 |
 Snapshot: 211 Eastern Region

211 Eastern Region Helps Victims Connect with the Right Support

Thanks to a grant from the Department of Justice Canada, a strong collaboration has emerged between 211 and Ottawa Police Service (OPS) to connect victims to services and supports in the community. During National Victims Awareness Week, the campaign kicked off with an email from Chief Charles Bordeleau, a 211 desktop screen saver was on every computer, and 211 info stations were set up at every parade room. Since that time we continue to build engagement by ensuring that first responders are aware of the value of 211 as a resource for victims and their families, and are equipped with 211 materials to offer to people that they meet.

Calls to 211 54,684

Top Reasons for Calling 211

1. Health 5,672
2. Community Services 4,015
3. Income & Financial Assistance 3,957
4. Legal & Public Safety 2,765
5. Municipal Government 2,689

Snapshot: 211 North

211 North Partners with RFDA to Make the Season Brighter for Seniors and Singles

In November of 2013, Christmas Cheer Thunder Bay announced that they would only be able to support children and families with Christmas hampers due to limited financial capacity. Immediately, the Regional Food Distribution Association (RFDA) of Northwestern Ontario and 211 North partnered to fill the void for seniors and singles living in the Thunder Bay area. From December 4 to December 10, 211 North accepted 930 registrations, provided information to individuals regarding pick up dates and times, and compiled registrations into lists for each pick-up location (food bank) in their area, making the season a little bit brighter for some of the community’s most vulnerable residents.

Calls to 211 36,587

Top Reasons for Calling 211

1. Health 6,582
2. Consumer & Commercial 3,262
3. Special calls - H1N1, fires, etc. 2,504
4. Mental Health & Addictions 2,096
5. Individual & Family Services 2,073
Providing a front door for homeless youth in Elgin County

The Community Action Network for Children & Youth Elgin is a group of service providers working on issues that affect children & youth in St. Thomas & Elgin County. In the Fall of 2012, a Youth Homelessness Protocol was developed and endorsed by all members that aims to reunite youth with their families or to find safe & affordable housing. 211 South West region provides an easy entry point for at-risk youth to access services, and works with other local agencies to ensure that youth do not get lost in the system. To learn more about the protocol or the network, visit www.canelgin.org

Calls to 211 49,385

Top Reasons for Calling 211

1. Provincial Government 16,772
2. Community Services 12,907
3. Federal Government 10,602
4. Health 8,278
5. Consumer & Commercial 6,210

211 Data Providers: Keeping Local Agency Information Up-To-Date

- Community Information Hamilton, Hamilton Public Library
- Community Reach
- Community Resource Centre Killaloe
- Contact Brant
- CONTACT South Simcoe Community Information Centre
- County of Lambton
- County of Oxford
- the Healthline
- Information Sarnia Lambton
- Information Barrie, Barrie Public Library
- Information Orillia
- Northwest Community Legal Clinic
- Northumberland United Way, Information Northumberland
- Newmarket Public Library
- Oakville Public Library, in trust for Halton Information Providers
- Sault Ste. Marie Innovation Centre
- Social Planning Council of Kitchener-Waterloo
- Social Planning Council of Cambridge & North Dumfries
- United Way of Chatham-Kent
- United Way Durham Region
- United Way Peterborough & District
- United Way Perth Huron
- Volunteer Centre of Guelph Wellington
- Volunteer & Information Quinte
- VCSS Employment Services
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**Central East Region**
Pam Hillier
*Community Connection*

**Central South Region**
Rosanna Thoms
*Information Niagara*

**Dufferin Peel Region**
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**Northern Region**
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**South West Region**
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