



COMMUNITY CONNECTION

MARCH 2007

211 HELPED MORE THAN 47,600 CALLERS IN 2006

This service is clearly meeting an important need in our growing city. In fact, more than 47,600 callers found the help they needed by calling 211 last year. Read on for a complete update on 211 - along with tips for how you can help promote this important service for Calgarians.

211 for Cochrane & Area Expansion

On January 24, 2007, Cochrane and area welcomed 211 into their community.

211 for Cochrane and area will support the existing information and referral work being done by the Cochrane Family & Community Support Services (Cochrane FCSS) and other local service providers. 211 will fill in the gaps by offering 24-hour service and an alternate choice to residents who may not feel comfortable calling locally for help. "Cochrane FCSS staff are excited that residents will have access to the 211 service. This will enhance the work that is already being done in the community to share information", says Susan Flowers, Manager of Cochrane FCSS & Social Planning.

211 for Cochrane and area is a partnership of United Way of Calgary and Area, The Town of Cochrane, Distress Centre Calgary, The City of Calgary, The

Municipal District of Rocky View and Calgary Bow Region Community Partnership Enhancement Fund. Members of this 211 Expansion Committee have been working hard for months to bring 211 to Cochrane and area. Katie Ayres, Call Centre Supervisor for Distress Centre Calgary says "Distress Centre Calgary is so excited to have been a part of the 211 Cochrane launch. We have been involved in the steering committee these past months and were thrilled when the Cochrane community saw the benefit of the 211 service."

211 for Cochrane and area has become the sixth Canadian community to introduce the service. Toronto was the first, in 2002, followed soon after by Calgary, Edmonton, Niagara Region and Simcoe County.

Speakers at the launch included Mayor Ken Bech (Town of Cochrane), Randy Eil (MD of Rocky View Family & Community Support Services), Céline Bélanger (United Way of Calgary & Area), and Suzanne Rosebrugh (Distress Centre Calgary). Representatives from more than 30 local agencies were on hand to learn more about the value the initiative would bring to the community and how they could use 211 to assist their clients.

Based on our evaluation of the 211 pilot project in Cochrane and area, we will explore the potential of expanding 211 to other surrounding communities, such as Okotoks and Airdrie.

211 is:

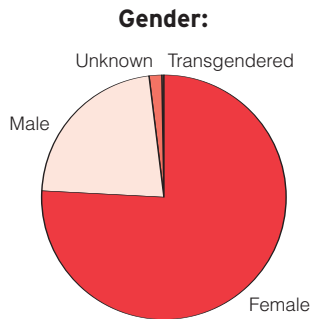
- **Free**
- **Confidential**
- **Multilingual (150 languages)**
- **Available 24 hours a day**



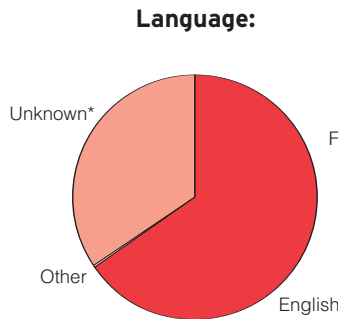
WHO IS CALLING 211?

Each month, 211 information and referral specialists respond to an average of 3,900 calls from Calgarians of all ages and backgrounds. Almost three quarters of the people are calling for their own needs; others are calling on behalf of a client, friend or family member. More than 75% of the callers are adult females.

A snapshot of callers:

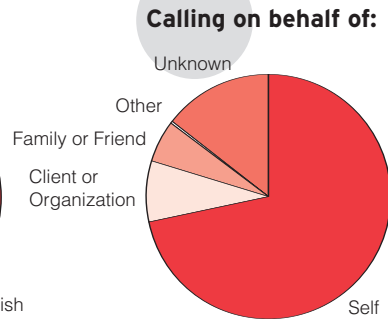


Female: 75.97%
 Male: 22.23%
 Unknown: 1.79%
 Transgendered: 0.01%



Notes: 1) In 2006 the top two languages were Cantonese and Mandarin, 1) *unknown is high because data collection in this field was not mandatory between the months of January and April 2006.

English: 65.51%
 Other: 0.31%
 Unknown*: 34.18%



Self: 71.70%
 Client or organization: 8.07%
 Family or friend: 5.54%
 Other: 0.44%
 Unknown: 14.25%

WHAT ARE PEOPLE CALLING ABOUT?

211 specialists help people find programs and services related to many non-emergency issues, including:

- emotional and mental health
- employment and job skills
- parenting and childcare
- support for seniors
- family recreation and social programs
- family violence
- citizenship and immigration
- coping with physical disabilities
- death and bereavement
- sexuality

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 211 AND OTHER 3-DIGIT TELEPHONE NUMBERS?

- 211** – An easy-to-remember telephone number that connects people to the full range of non-emergency community, social, government and health services information available in Calgary, Cochrane and surrounding areas.
- 311** – Customer service line for City of Calgary municipal services such as road repairs, bylaw infractions, water and wastewater issues, waste and recycling, street lights and building permits.
- 411** – Telephone directory listings
- 911** – Emergency number for medical, fire and police assistance

CALLS ANSWERED. LIVES CHANGED.

211 is improving the quality of life for people living in vulnerable situations. It helps callers in times of crisis or prevents crisis in the first place. Here are just a couple of stories of callers whose lives were changed by dialing 2-1-1.

Caller in need

In a recent call to 211, a woman confided that she had just left an abusive relationship and had two children that she was really struggling to financially provide for. She called 211 because she wanted help getting back on her feet. At the time, her most pressing need was immediate assistance with her utilities and rent, to ensure that she could keep her family housed.

The 211 specialist provided the caller with contact information for organizations that might be able to support her in accessing financial assistance. Then the specialist asked if she could call the woman back that same afternoon, as she wanted to confirm that the caller had received the resources she required.

The follow-up call revealed that the woman did indeed secure financial aid. She said the agency to which she had been referred was very helpful. In fact, they even provided her with half-price bus passes, to ensure that she could get to job skills training workshops and take her children to school.

The caller felt that 211 was very helpful. She told the specialist that she would most certainly use the service again, when the need arose. The fact that 211 was accessible to her 24 hours a day, 7 days a week allowed her to feel some level of comfort, knowing that someone would always be available to help her.

A call in translation

A caller who did not speak English recently dialed 211; he asked to speak with someone who was able to communicate with him in Punjabi. This was arranged and as a result the caller was able to tell his story. He was in desperate need of food for his family of eight. They were housed but he had run out of money for rent and was worried that when he was unable to pay rent the following month, he would be evicted. As it was, they were living without furniture – it was an expense he felt he could not justify when so many other necessities were demanding attention and finances.

He had been referred to 211 by Alberta Human Resources. Once the caller was connected with a Punjabi-speaking specialist, he was directed to the Calgary Inter-Faith Food Bank, an organization that would provide him with food. He was also provided with the referral he would need in order to access free housewares from the Interfaith Thrift Store.

When asked by the 211 specialist if he had been in contact with Alberta Works, the caller indicated he had been. He also acknowledged that he had spoken with the Immigrant Aid Society for rent support and translation services. The 211 specialist referred the caller to a few additional organizations that may be able to help him, including the Salvation Army, Rent Bank and the Red Cross. She felt that it was important to give the caller options, in case one of the agencies was unable to meet his needs.

In order to ensure that the caller accessed the services he required, the 211 specialist offered to call him back at a later time. Unfortunately, the caller's schedule did not permit such a follow-up call, so the specialist gave him the option of calling her back if he ran into any difficulties with the referrals she had provided.



2-1-1 DOES HELP!

Moving away from your homeland can be extremely daunting. Along with starting a whole new life in a brand new country, new immigrants to Canada often face a seemingly impenetrable language barrier. There are no language barriers when you dial 2-1-1.

“When people aren’t sure where to turn or who to ask for help, 211 is the number to call.”

Katie Ayres, 211 Call Centre Supervisor

211 offers information in over 150 languages, so no matter what language you speak, you can get the help you need. Dial 2-1-1 from any phone in Calgary or Cochrane and the surrounding area and you will be instantly connected to an Information and Referral Specialist who has access to a wide array of information on the many programs and services available in the city. 211 offers free, confidential service and connects callers with a full range of community, social, government and health services in Calgary, Cochrane and the surrounding area. “We’ve got a ton of great services in and around Calgary, but people sometimes have trouble finding the help they need,” says 211 Call Centre Supervisor, Katie Ayres.

In its second year of operation (2006), the 211 Initiative for Calgary and Area assisted more than 47,600 callers in finding the help they needed by connecting them with programs and organizations they may not have ever been aware of otherwise. “When people aren’t sure where to turn or who to ask for help, 211 is the number to call,” says Ayres. Approximately 900 callers dial 2-1-1 each week and get help with issues such as immigration and citizenship, parenting and childcare, employment, support for seniors, and recreation.

211 specialists spend much of their time connecting callers with resources to help them meet their most basic needs. “The most common calls are for financial

assistance, food, clothing and shelter,” says Ayres. 211 is a partnership between United Way of Calgary and Area, Distress Centre Calgary, and The City of Calgary, who combine their efforts to make 211 available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. “Despite Calgary’s thriving economy, there are many people in our community who are in need,” says Ruth Ramsden-Wood, president of United Way of Calgary and Area. “There are also many people moving to Calgary who simply don’t know where to turn for help. By dialing 211, Calgarians are finding the support they need to deal with day-to-day challenges and cope with stressful situations before they escalate into crisis.”

Darren Nightingale

“By dialing 211, Calgarians are finding the support they need to deal with day-to-day challenges.”

**Ruth Ramsden-Wood,
President, United Way of Calgary and Area**



Margarida, a 211 Information and Referral Specialist, assists one of the many callers who are dialing 2-1-1 for help finding the best local programs and services to meet their needs.

UNMET NEEDS

In 2006, 42 per cent of callers were looking for help in meeting their most basic needs: food, clothing, shelter, financial security and personal safety. Most of those callers were successfully referred to local service providers who would be able to offer support in one or more of the areas the caller was struggling with, such as food programs, shelters, housing support and even thrift stores.

But not everyone who called was successfully referred. In 2006, 211 specialists were unable to fulfill the needs of 192 callers due to the lack of available resources. Fortunately, 211 specialists track every call – providing centralized information about unmet needs in the community. In 2006, the three most common unmet needs were:

1. Moving assistance for low-income families. Callers were asking for help moving between residences or reclaiming belongings out of storage. With a lack of affordable service in this area, families who already have

very little may be forced to leave many of their few belongings behind. When families move from place to place, their belongings are what make each new location 'home'. Having to leave those items behind makes the transition that much more difficult; especially for children.

2. Housing. In the midst of the current housing shortage in Calgary, 211 specialists have seen an increase in calls from individuals who are unable to access affordable housing. As the year progressed, a new unmet need came to light: callers who were not able to access shelters because the shelters were already operating at capacity at the time of their call.

3. Financial resources tapped out. These callers were looking for financial resources, after having used or been declined by all available resources in the city. Where do people turn when all legal avenues of financial assistance have been exhausted?

New 211 language

Items from the 211 Calgary and 211 for Cochrane and Area promotional toolkits will soon be available in multiple languages!

According to the 2001 Census of Canada, Calgary's immigrant population comprises 21 per cent of the total population. Overall, China, the Philippines, India and Pakistan remain the leading countries of birth for immigrants to Calgary. Slightly more than half of all immigrants landing in Calgary speak neither English nor French, and there are long and growing wait lists for ESL services. Moving to a new country is an overwhelming experience in and of itself. The language barrier would make it that much more difficult for a newcomer to our community to find the services they want and need.



PARA ENCONTRAR
INFORMACIÓN SOBRE SERVICIOS
COMUNITARIOS Y SOCIALES
EN CALGARY LLAME AL

211

• GRATUITO • CONFIDENCIAL •
MULTILINGÜE • 24 HORAS


www.211calgary.ca

While 211 is for everyone, particular emphasis must be put on reaching the people who would most likely benefit from assistance finding the services they need. To that end, with help from Calgary Immigrant Aid Society's Language Bank, the 211 brochures are being translated into several additional languages. Keep your eyes on 211calgary.ca for further information regarding the availability of this new and exciting resource.



TO THE AGENCIES: SPREAD THE WORD!

Thank you to the many agencies, businesses and other partners who promote 211! Your continued support is critical. There are many ways you can help increase awareness of 211:

- Remind your front-line staff to tell clients and customers about 211
- Display 211 posters and distribute brochures
- Invite 211 to speak or have a display at your events
- Include 211 information in your newsletter or directory of services
- Post 211 information on your website

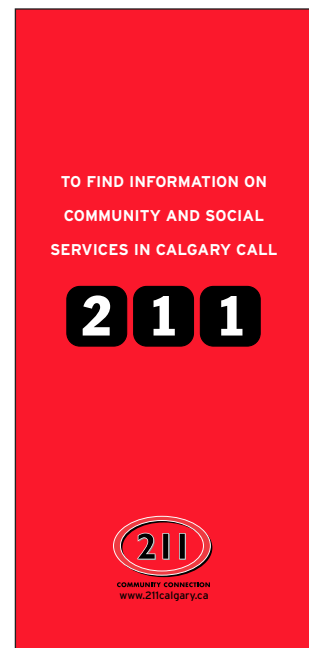
Do you need to re-stock your 211 posters and brochures?

- Dial 2-1-1 for copies of our promotional materials.
- Visit www.211calgary.ca to download a complete promotional toolkit (now available in two formats: Calgary and Area and Cochrane and Area) – including ready-to-print newsletter articles, public service announcements, brochures and more.

Planning a campaign? Include 211.

211 is an easy-to-remember number, making it a great ‘call to action’ for public awareness campaigns. Last summer, the Calgary Children’s Initiative launched a campaign about parenting resources and recreation programs for youth. The campaign directed people to dial 2-1-1 for information, generating a significant increase in calls to the 211 call centre about parenting, childcare and recreation programs.

If you would like to include 211 in your campaign, please call us first. We will work with you to ensure 211 staff know about your campaign and are prepared to refer callers accordingly.



HELP US MAKE ACCURATE REFERRALS

211 staff rely on the [informcalgary](http://informcalgary.ca)/InformAlberta database to find the best local services and programs to assist callers. You can help us make accurate referrals by updating your organization’s profile on [informcalgary](http://informcalgary.ca):

- Go to www.informcalgary.ca
- Go to your organization’s “Profile Page”
- Select “Update Profile”
- Edit and submit your changes on-line

If you are not listed on [informcalgary](http://informcalgary.ca) yet, click on “Getting Listed” and complete the on-line form. You can also dial 2-1-1 to arrange a training session or tour of your agency to help 211 staff learn more about your organization.



NEW Family Violence Info Line

On November 1, 2006 the provincial government established a new family violence information line to be answered by 211 staff called the Alberta Family Violence Information Line. Distress Centre Calgary will be handling the calls for this line for the portion of the province covered by the 403 area code, with The Support Network in Edmonton responsible for the 780 area code.

The objective of this line is to support and provide information and referral to witnesses of domestic violence

and to help them reach out to friends, family members or co-workers who may be experiencing family violence. It is also intended to help citizens take action about domestic violence. As with all Distress Centre volunteers and staff, the Information and Referral specialists will respond to a crisis call should it occur using the Distress Centre's established protocols.

To reach the family violence info line dial 310-1818.

"Sometimes people know they need help, but aren't sure exactly what they need or the kinds of supports that are available to them. 211 provides a point of contact where people can find out about a variety of programs and organizations that can help them tackle what they are going through from a number of different angles."

Katie Ayres, 211 Call Centre Supervisor

A COMMUNITY PLANNING TOOL

There is valuable information being collected by 211, 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. This data helps the community address potential gaps and overlaps in services, increase coordination among programs and ultimately ensure the most efficient use of community resources.

A brief glance at some of the 2006 data collected by the 211 Calgary team suggests, for example, that women are the information gatherers in the household (75% of callers were adult females). This also tells us that we need to increase our efforts in educating and encouraging men to use the 211 service. As referral and service providers, we need to learn more about how to reach out to that demographic.

A quick look at the 2006 "Heard About" numbers (which indicates how callers learned about the 211 service) tells us that word of mouth is by far the greatest public relations tool that 211 has at its disposal, with referrals from community agencies running a close second. The best thing we can do is tell our clients about 211, put 211 posters in our community rooms, 211 business cards on counselors' desks, 211 ads on public transit. Keep it in the forefront of people's minds, so that when they hear a friend say "I wonder who I could call about...?" they will know the answer is 2-1-1!



211 ACROSS CANADA AND BEYOND:

- 211 is operational in Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto, the Niagara Region and Simcoe County. The newest addition to the 211 family is Cochrane and area which was launched in January of this year.
- Areas still in the planning stages of implementing 211 include the province of British Columbia, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, Windsor, York Region, Kingston, Ottawa, Hamilton and Halifax.
- In the United States, 212 systems in all or part of 41 states offer 211. The goal is to eventually make 211 available throughout North America.

WHO MAKES 211 POSSIBLE?

211 Calgary is a joint initiative of United Way of Calgary and Area, Distress Centre Calgary and The City of Calgary.

Distress Centre Calgary delivers the 211 service and houses the Information and Referral Specialists.

United Way and The City provide on-going funding.

Calgary Health Region, through its role in maintaining the informcalgary/InformAlberta database used by 211, is also an important contributor.

Calling from outside Calgary

People who reside outside of Calgary, Cochrane and the surrounding areas can access 211 by calling (403) 266-1605. However, please be aware that the information available at this time pertains primarily to Calgary and Cochrane and the immediate areas surrounding those communities. TTY access for the hard of hearing is also available by dialing (403) 543-1967.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Dial 2-1-1

Visit www.211calgary.ca