



Saskatchewan

www.sk.211.ca

211 is an information and referral system that connects citizens to a full range of community, social, government and health service information.

It is free, confidential, and available 24 hours a day. 211 is available on a website allowing citizens to find their own way to programs and services. 211 is also a phone number where calls are answered by a trained Information and Referral Specialist who assesses the caller's need and refers them to the best service available.

In Canada, approximately 60 % of Canadians (BC, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia) have access to 211. In the United States, 85 percent of the population has access to 211.

Why 211?

Individuals and families looking for help often do not know where to turn, and the maze of phone books, help lines, directories and voicemail may be overwhelming. A single call to 211 or search on the Internet eliminates all this confusion. 211 connects people to information about:

- basic human needs such as housing, food banks, shelters, clothing depots
- services for children, youth and families
- physical and mental health services
- assistance for people with disabilities, seniors and newcomers to Canada
- employment support

Why is 211 Saskatchewan Important?

211 Saskatchewan is currently under development. In Saskatchewan, the 211 service will be available province-wide, providing information and referral to every citizen regardless of location, culture, language or circumstance. Whether one lives in an urban centre, a rural farming community or on a First Nations reserve, 211 will be available. 211 Saskatchewan will join the other provinces as part of 211 Canada providing this important service to its citizens.

How will 211 Saskatchewan Operate?

211 Saskatchewan is currently available online at www.sk.211.ca. The database has over 2000 organizations and 5000 programs and services. Future enhancements include a mobile version of the website which will be implemented in the fall of 2013. United Way continues to seek sustainable funding to implement the 211 telephone service in Saskatchewan. 211 Saskatchewan will adhere to national operational standards and will be equal in quality to similar services across Canada. The vision for 211 across Canada is further being defined and 211 Saskatchewan will follow that vision. 211 Saskatchewan will follow the national model for governance which could involve having an incorporated not-for-profit organization. A board of directors that includes broad representation of service providers and client groups would provide governance for 211 Saskatchewan.

What are the Benefits of 211 Saskatchewan?

The benefits of 211 are far-reaching. There are benefits to individual citizens, to families, to service agencies, to corporations and to the community as a whole. Benefits include:

- **Improved Access to Services** — 211 will link people rapidly and easily to the services they need, eliminating the stress and confusion of reading multiple phone books and databases. All it takes is one phone call or database search
- **Support to Saskatchewan's Aboriginal Population** — Aboriginal peoples make up more than 14 percent of Saskatchewan's population. 211 can steer them to Aboriginal-specific programs and services, ease the transition from rural to urban areas, and offer them services in their own language.
- **Support to Immigrants and Refugees** — 211 can help newcomers settle into their new community by speaking to them in their first language, by connecting them with services specifically designed for newcomers, and with health, social and educational programs in the larger community.
- **Emergency Preparedness** — Emergencies and disasters such as floods, severe blizzards and multiple-vehicle traffic accidents place extraordinary demands on emergency personnel and ordinary citizens. 211 can play an immediate and long-term role in disseminating information during crises and in coordinating the efforts of volunteers.
- **A Healthier More Productive Workforce** — When employees with problems have immediate access to the services they need, problems are resolved more quickly. There is less dysfunction on the job, less absenteeism, and quicker return to work. 211 can also be used by employers to refer their staff to job-related services such as literacy classes, English as an additional language classes, education and training, tax assistance, and child and elder care.
- **Relief for Emergency Telephone Lines** — 211 will relieve pressure on 911 and other emergency telephone lines by off-loading non-emergency calls and calls for information. 911 operators in communities where 211 has been implemented report a significant decrease in the number of non-emergency calls.
- **Tracking unmet needs** - All calls to 211, information provided, and referrals made will be tracked. As well all searches on the internet will be tracked for search criteria, patterns and end results. Unmet needs will also be tracked. The pattern of calls will enable government, non-profit organizations and community agencies to determine the services that are most requested in each area of the province, to identify gaps in service, and to pinpoint services that are underutilized or redundant. Armed with this information, government and community can better tailor their services to respond to community needs.

211 Saskatchewan is an initiative of:



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Saskatoon & Area



United Way
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