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MORE

Saskatchewan



Summary of Where We Are - May 2012

WHAT IS 211?

211 is an easy-to-remember, three-digit, non-emergency telephone number that connects callers to a full range of community, social, government and health service information. It is free, confidential, multilingual and available 24 hours a day. Calls are answered by a trained Information and Referral Specialist who assesses the caller's need and refers them to the best service available. The database that supports 211 is available on the Internet, allowing users to find their own way to programs and services, if they choose.

In Canada, approximately 60 % of Canadians have access to 211. Both Nova Scotia and the North (provinces and territories) are actively setting up their Information on a 211 Database. 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 eliminates all this confusion. 211 connects callers 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?

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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.
- **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.
- **Support for the Voluntary Sector** – 211 will link people with volunteer opportunities and charitable organizations that need assistance. For individuals, there will be more opportunities to contribute to their communities. For charitable organizations, there will be increased access to volunteers with skills that are aligned with their organization's needs.
- **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.

HOW WILL 211 SASKATCHEWAN OPERATE?

At this point it is the understanding that 211 Saskatchewan will be incorporated as a not-for-profit organization. A board of directors that includes broad representation of service providers and client groups will provide governance for 211 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.

WHAT LEADING EDGE TECHNOLOGIES WILL 211 SASKATCHEWAN UTILIZE?

Telephone Network:

It is recommended that 211 Saskatchewan will be part of the 211 Canada standardized telephony technology thus sharing in the cost effectiveness of participating with all other provinces.

Database :

A necessary component in the provincial 211 system is a single, comprehensive, integrated, province-wide database and data management application containing information from which Information and Referral Specialists can make referrals. While some agencies, like the Healthline and Farm Stress Line, have databases specific to their own services, a comprehensive province-wide databank does not yet exist. A 211 Canada database will serve as the host with Saskatchewan having its information as part of that.

Public Website :

All of the non-confidential information in the 211 database will be available on a public website, so users can locate information for themselves, if they wish. Saskatchewan will have its own web-site that will contain local information.

Call Tracking System :

All calls to 211, information provided, and referrals made will be tracked. 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.

HOW WILL 211 BE IMPLEMENTED?

211 Saskatchewan will be implemented in three phases.

Phase 1 - Building partnerships with local social and health service agencies, creating the database that supports 211 and the web-site that supports this information. This phase is currently underway. Included in this phase is a pilot of the information in Saskatoon and Regina.

Phase 2 - A detailed study and business case for the governance direction of 211 Saskatchewan. It also includes looking at how the telephone technology and Information and Referral Specialists organization will fit into the 211 Canada vision. Based on sustainable funding being received, This phase then includes the implementation of the 211 telephone part of the system. This phase is just beginning.

Phase 3 - At the same time as Phase 2, this phase begins the Provincial rollout of 211, one geographic region area at a time, as data for each region is entered into the system initially on the web-site and ultimately served by the 211 telephone line.

HOW MUCH WILL 211 COST?

211 Saskatchewan will need start-up funding and sustainable ongoing funding.

Start-Up Funding - United Way Saskatoon and Area and the United Way Regina have funded Phase one of this project. Phase 2 and 3 are still to be funded.

Operational Funding - Operating costs will be less than the original \$1.2 million per year once the system is fully implemented. It is not clear with the 211 Canada wide system what the actual costs will be. The operational cost to gather and maintain accurate data in the human services database will remain the same.

Sustainable Funding - Provincial government funding for the service is required for it to be sustainable. Without sustainable funding the service is not feasible, as no service agency will take on service delivery province-wide without knowing that they will have the funds to operate.

WHAT COMMITMENTS ARE NEEDED?

In order to make 211 a reality, commitments are required from the Government of Saskatchewan and the community.

Government of Saskatchewan

All ministries - Provide data to populate the database and keep it up-to-date

Provincial Government - Provide funds to cover the cost of populating the provincial roll-out of 211 and two-thirds of other start-up costs, along with two-thirds of the annual operational costs.

Community, With Leadership from United Way

- Provide one-third of the start-up costs through corporate gifts and municipal support
- Provide one-third of annual operational costs through ongoing partnerships and fundraising.
- Provide up-to-date information for the database on an ongoing basis.
- Promote 211 Saskatchewan, so all citizens become aware of this valuable service.