

In many states, dialing “211” provides individuals and families in need with a shortcut through what may be a bewildering maze of health and human service agencies’ phone numbers. By simply dialing 211, those in need of assistance are referred, and sometimes connected, to appropriate agencies and community organizations.

Background

In July 2000, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reserved the 211 dialing code for community information and referral services. The FCC intended the 211 code as an easy-to-remember and universally recognizable number that would enable a critical connection between individuals and families in need and the appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies. Dialing 211 helps the elderly, the disabled, those who do not speak English, those who are having a personal crisis, those who have limited reading skills, or those who are new to their communities, among others, by providing referrals to, and information about, health and human services organizations and agencies.

Currently, active 211 systems cover all or part of 39 states, Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico. To find out whether 211 services are offered in your area and to obtain more information, visit www.211.org.

How 211 Works

211 works a bit like 911. Calls to 211 are routed by the local telephone company to a local or regional calling center. The 211 center’s referral specialists question callers, access databases of resources available from private and public health and human service agencies, match the callers’ needs to available resources, and link or refer them directly to an agency or organization that can help.

Types of Referrals Offered by 211

- **Basic Human Needs Resources** – including food and clothing banks, shelters, rent assistance, and utility assistance.
- **Physical and Mental Health Resources** – including health insurance programs, Medicaid and Medicare, maternal health resources, health insurance programs for children, medical information lines, crisis intervention services, support groups, counseling, and drug and alcohol intervention and rehabilitation.

(More)



Types of Referrals Offered by 211 (cont'd.)

- **Work Support** – including financial assistance, job training, transportation assistance and education programs.
- **Support for Older Americans and Persons with Disabilities** – including adult day care, community meals, respite care, home health care, transportation, and homemaker services.
- **Children, Youth, and Family Support** – including child care, after school programs, educational programs for low-income families, family resource centers, summer camps and recreation programs, mentoring, tutoring, and protective services.
- **Emergency Suicide Prevention** – referral to suicide prevention help organizations. Callers can also dial the following National Suicide Prevention Hotline numbers operated by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the Department of Health and Human Services:
 - 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)
 - 1-888-SUICIDE (1-888-784-2433)
 - 1-877-SUICIDA (1-877-784-2432) (Spanish).

Individuals who wish to donate time or money to community help organizations can also do so by dialing 211.

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This fact sheet is for consumer education purposes only and is not intended to affect any proceeding or cases involving this subject matter or related issues.

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For More Information

For more information about this issue or any other telecommunications-related issues, visit the FCC's Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau Web site at www.fcc.gov/cgb, or contact the FCC's Consumer Center by e-mailing fccinfo@fcc.gov; calling 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; faxing 1-866-418-0232; or writing to:

Federal Communications Commission
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division
455 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554.

