

Need help but don't know who to call? Just dial 211.



by Regional Chair Gary Carr

211 is a brand new program being delivered by Halton Region that provides a single window of access to information about community, health and social services. Whether you are a senior looking for a flu shot, a recent

immigrant seeking language training, or parents looking for child care, 211 can help. As of June 27 you can simply dial 211 to be connected with the best available resources in the community to meet your needs.

211 is a free, confidential and multilingual source of information about what services exist, which are best suited to a particular situation and how to access them. Simplifying access through 211 is especially important for vulnerable people or those who face barriers in accessing services. Customer Service Representatives in our call centre, Access Halton, assess the caller's needs and use a comprehensive database professionally maintained by the Halton Information Providers to find the most appropriate resource in the community. The Halton Information Providers (HIP) is an informal coalition of Information Burlington, Information Milton, Information Oakville and Links2Care. The database is also available at www.211halton.ca to serve people who prefer the convenience and self-help nature of 211 online.

Planning for 211 service in Halton has been going on since 2002, after the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) assigned 211 as a toll free information and referral service for community, government, health and social services. Bringing this service to Halton residents has been a truly collaborative

effort between the four United Ways in Halton, Halton Information Providers and other community partners.

Across Canada and the United States, 211 is delivered by a range of community-based organizations. Halton Region will be the first municipality in Canada with responsibility for governance, operation and actual delivery of 211 service through its own call centre.

This model of service delivery was chosen as the most effective because it leverages the investments Halton has made in its Access Halton call centre and the expertise and existing databases of the Halton Information Providers. A 211 Halton Citizen Advisory Committee has been formed to advise and assist Regional Council in the delivery of 211 service.

Halton Region has been at the forefront in innovative customer service delivery and is considered an industry leader in that area. Providing 211 service to Halton residents is a further opportunity for us to build on our past successes in collaboration with our partners in the community.

What is 211?

Dialing 211 is a simple way to get information and referral to community, health and social services.

- 211 is an easy-to-remember 3-digit non-emergency telephone number
- 211 provides free, confidential service
- 211 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year
- 211 service can be provided in more than 150 languages
- 211 is available online at www.211halton.ca

Who calls 211?

Anyone can call 211, any time of the day or night. The following are sample types of calls:

- A newcomer to Canada looking for a language class.
- New parents wanting to learn about options for child care.
- A family seeking counselling for a teen having school or social issues.
- A laid-off worker wanting to know about employment insurance.
- A caregiver for an elderly parent feeling overwhelmed and needing support.
- A concerned relative or friend of a senior looking for available home support services.

Facts and figures

- Projections are that 41,000 Halton residents will use the 211 service in its first year of operation. This number will grow as Halton's population increases, and as the service becomes more widely known.
- An independent 2005 evaluation ranked the Access Halton call centre among the top 5% of private and public contact centres in North America, with 83% of callers "very satisfied" with the service.
- Canada's first 211 service was launched in Toronto in June of 2002. Since then, 211 has been launched in Edmonton, Calgary, Niagara Region, and in Collingwood.
- Planning for 211 service is under way in a number of other Ontario locations including Ottawa, Peel, Thunder Bay and Windsor.



COMMUNITY CONNECTION

"Finding out what services are available can be quite confusing, especially if a person is already trying to deal with a difficult situation. The easy-to-remember 211 telephone number will reduce unnecessary delays and frustration, particularly for people who face barriers to accessing information."

—Rick Craven, Regional Councillor and Chair of the 211 Halton Citizens Advisory Committee

"The four information and referral services that make up the Halton Information Providers have worked collaboratively for years to support the information needs of Halton residents. We are very pleased to be a supporting partner in providing 211 service in Halton."

—Christine Berry, Manager, Community Information, Oakville Public Library

211 is for non-emergency calls

9-1-1 is for fire, police and medical emergencies only

The burden of non-emergency calls to 9-1-1 is a serious issue because these calls can delay 9-1-1 handling real emergency calls.

July Meetings at Halton Region Headquarters

July 4, 9:30 a.m.

July 4, 1:30 p.m.

July 5, 9:30 a.m.

July 11, 9:30 a.m.

Planning & Public Works Committee

Administration & Finance Committee

Health & Social Services Committee

Regional Council Meeting

We welcome your feedback. Contact Access Halton at accesshalton@halton.ca
905-825-6000 • Toll free: 1-866-4HALTON • TTY: 905-827-9833 • www.halton.ca
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