

For Immediate Release

United Way Answers the Call Through Delivery of New Help Line in the Central Island – bc211

September 18, 2017 NANAIMO, BC — United Way is answering the call for support in the Central and Northern Vancouver Island region by helping to launch the call and text features of the new help line 2-1-1 for all islanders.

Due to the generous support of United Way’s donors on Vancouver Island and throughout the province of British Columbia, starting today bc211.ca is now available to help British Columbians across the province access support in their local community. And it’s only a click, text or call away.

Bc211 offers a confidential telephone, texting and online referral service connecting individuals to hundreds of community, social and government services. 211 is a free information and referral service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year in over 160 languages.

Trained and certified information and referral specialists link services such as mental health supports, shelter and housing, legal aid, addictions treatment, newcomer services, or food banks to people seeking assistance. Its operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year in over 160 languages (17 of which are Aboriginal). bc211 also helps service providers instantly find resources for their clients and provides information for caregivers seeking help for their loved ones.

“Sometimes the biggest barrier to getting help is knowing where to look,” says Signy Madden, Executive Director, United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island. “bc211.ca breaks down that barrier. Anyone will be able to quickly find out what services are available to him or her no matter where they live. And our network of social service agencies will have an up to date, one-stop shop for reliable resources to help their clients.”

BACKGROUNDER BC211:

In June 2017, United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island joined nine other United Ways throughout BC to expand bc211.ca to all British Columbians. The online service directory consists of over 13,000 agency and program records related to community, social and government services. The website is also optimized for mobile devices and online chat is available seven days a week from 8am to 11pm.

On Vancouver Island, UWCNVI is now proud to launch the full bc211 services, including telephone and text to all Central and Northern Islanders. Bc211 is a confidential, multi-lingual, telephone, texting and online referral service providing information free of charge.

In 2010, United Way Lower Mainland launched the bc211 website, phone and text capabilities in Metro Vancouver. Since that time they have expanded the services to include Squamish-Lillooet, Sunshine Coast and the Fraser Valley Regional Districts.

Thanks to collaborations with 9 other United Ways in BC, now all of Vancouver Island is the latest addition to receiving the full suite of bc211 services for island residents.

With the addition of BC, approximately 70% of Canadians now have access to 211 and United Way Centraide Canada remains committed to bringing 211 to all Canadians.

In its 2016/17 fiscal year, bc211.ca had more than 276,000 unique visitors, a 17% increase in online queries over the previous year, the majority of which focused on issues of housing and homelessness, substance abuse, and health (non-clinical). Bc211 also answered over 52,000 phone calls and made over 60,000 referrals to community agencies for help.

“211 is a very important Canada-wide project for the United Way Centraide movement because it helps people at vulnerable points in their lives and provides access to the supports required to cope with life’s challenges. We are thrilled to see British Columbia come on board to help us reach our goal to bring 211 to all Canadians. Over 70% of Canadians now have access to the service, either online or by phone and text,” says Bill Morris, National Director, 211 at United Way Centraide Canada.

United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island would like to thank all of our generous donors and in particular, the Nanaimo Foundation for a two-year investment with UWCNVI to help support and actualize this important initiative.

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Central and Northern
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