



United Way
Central and Northern
Vancouver Island

bc211 we can help
In partnership with
the United Way

Help is just a click away through United Way and bc211

June 14, 2017 NANAIMO, BC — 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 away.

bc211.ca is an online information service that is an up-to-date, reliable gateway to community, social, non-clinical health and government services. The service directory database includes over 12,000 current entries that document and describe services and organizations available to help people. The website is optimized for mobile devices and online chat is available seven days a week from 8 am to 11 pm. Some of the information available includes:

- Mental health and addiction services
- Housing options including shelter locations
- Employment support
- Senior's services
- Children's and youth programs
- Legal assistance, and much more.

bc211 launched in 2010 with phone and an online directory serving Metro Vancouver, which has since expanded to Squamish-Lillooet, Sunshine Coast and the Fraser Valley. Text capability was added in 2015, and in 2017, web chat was added.

All eight United Ways in BC, including United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island (UWCNVI), have joined together to expand and bring bc211 online services to the entire province. This project showcases the collaborative nature of United Ways to benefit local communities.

"British Columbians need and deserve reliable information and help they can trust. We're here to ensure that people don't have to rely on Google to deal with sometimes difficult and often very personal situations. At bc211.ca, we have prompts that help people narrow down their search, assist them in finding the services that most meet their needs, and closest to where they live," says Nathan Wright, Executive Director, bc211.

"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."



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In 2016, bc211.ca had more than 287,000 unique visitors, a 22% 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).

“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 Ways on Vancouver Island are fundraising to bring the additional service of phone and text option of bc211 to Vancouver Island. In the next phase, the confidential and multi-lingual phone line will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, and in over 160 languages. For anyone interested in making a contribution to this project, please contact Wanda Hamilton, Director of Development at (250) 591-8731 or dd@uwcncvi.ca.

United Way Central & Northern Vancouver Island would like to thank all 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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