

Halton 211 Feasibility Study

Report prepared by
the Halton Social Planning Council

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A United Way Member Agency



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211

211 is an easy to remember telephone number that simplifies access to the “first-stop” for information. Trained information and referral specialists respond to telephone calls and provide, or mediate, a non-clinical assessment of the callers' needs. Callers receive information about community, government, health and social services that will address their needs.

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1. Introduction

The four information centres in Halton (Information Burlington, Information Oakville, Milton Community Resource Centre and Halton Hills Community Support and Information), the United Way of Oakville and the Halton Social Planning Council put forward a submission to the Halton Healthy Community Fund to carry out a feasibility study of 211 for telephone access to community, social, health, and government services in communities across Canada. This is in response to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission's (CRTC) approval of an application for the assignment of 211. This report provides information on the current situation in Halton, provides feedback from key informant interviews, looks at the requirements of a 211 service and provides some options as to how a 211 service might be delivered in Halton. For the purposes of this study, an advisory committee comprised of representatives from the four information centres, the United Way of Oakville and the Community Care Access Centre of Halton was formed to assist in carrying out the study.

1.1 Scope and Purpose of a Halton 211 Feasibility Study

Preparation of this 211 Feasibility Report for Halton has been informed in a number of different ways. The development of the study has been a collaborative and community building process evolving from discussions that started with the first Halton 211 information meeting in January 2001.

A critical information source are interviews held with several key informants (Appendix A). The key informants are some of the leaders in the community who represent various constituents and they assisted in understanding the human service sector in Halton. The key informants also help to identify additional resources that would be critical in the consideration of a 211 service in Halton.

This feasibility study has also drawn on the work done on 211 over the last several years nationally and in Toronto, in preparation for the application to the CRTC, which was built on United States (U.S.) experience. In addition, this report builds on the practical implementation work done in Toronto to launch 211 in June 2002, as well as

some of the feasibility studies that have already taken place in other parts of Canada and the U.S.

The Halton 211 feasibility study set out to:

- Identify, through an inventory, which agencies in Halton provide community, social service, health and government information and referral services
- Identify and describe their existing resources including databases, infrastructure, expertise and other relevant technology within the Halton community to implement the 211 service
- Identify forms of collaboration that exist among the information and referral organizations
- Gather information from key stakeholders in the Halton community
- Identify gaps between what exists in Halton and the standards that the CRTC requires for 211 service
- Recommend possible models for a 211 service for Halton.

1.2 Background to Report

In January 2001, the members of the Halton Information Providers (HIP) convened a Halton 211 information meeting of possible stakeholders to start the discussion about the 211 application before the CRTC. Those interested in 211 ranged from a variety of community organizations to local government representatives and funders. They included:

- Burlington Public Library
- Community Care Access Centre of Halton
- Halton Hills Community Support and Information
- Halton Hills Public Library
- Halton Social Planning Council
- Milton Community Resource Centre
- Information Burlington
- Information Milton
- Information Oakville
- Milton Community Resource Centre
- North Halton Distress Centre

- Oakville Distress Centre
- Oakville Public Library
- Regional Municipality of Halton
 - Access Halton
 - Business Development
 - Health
 - Social and Community Services
- Town of Milton
- United Way of Halton Hills
- United Way of Milton
- United Way of Oakville

A delegation from Community Information Toronto (CIT), one of the applicants to the CRTC, presented the development of the 211 application to the CRTC and work already undertaken in developing a business case for 211 delivery in Toronto. Out of that meeting, a committee, composed of the HIP representatives, Community Care Access Centre (CCAC Halton), United Way of Oakville and the Halton Social Planning Council, was struck to prepare an application to the Halton Healthy Community Fund to undertake a feasibility study. The result was a submission that was approved for funding in the summer of 2001. However, a decision was made to postpone the feasibility study until the CRTC came down with its decision. The decision from the CRTC occurred in August 2001.

The United Ways across Halton (Burlington/Hamilton-Wentworth, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville) have been supportive of the 211 initiative from the beginning. This is in part because the United Way of Canada and United Way of Greater Toronto were among the applicants to the CRTC submission for the designation of 211 for community information and referral. The United Ways realize the benefit of a 211 service to both the organizations they support and the residents within their respective municipalities. The United Ways have dedicated time and support to this study and will be an important component as the development of a 211 service in Halton moves forward.

Organizations within Halton region have a long history and tradition of working together to develop unique solutions and this cooperation is evident in the area of communication technology. For example, four community information centres came together a number of years ago to develop a common database accessible via the Internet. From this initiative, Volunteer Halton partnered with HIP to develop a volunteer opportunities database that linked to the Community Information Centres' (CIC) database. This collaboration has led to the development of the Community Information Online Consortium (CIOC), which is a consortium of users of the software originally developed in Halton and now used in a number of communities across the province of Ontario.

Another example is the current development of standards and protocols between HIP, Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) of Halton and the Regional Municipality of Halton for sharing of information. This arrangement will improve flow of information and seamless access to service for all residents of Halton.

The most current initiative occurring in the Halton community is *Connecting Halton*. This initiative, with funding from the Ontario Ministry of Energy, Sciences and Technology (MEST), brings together community institutions and organizations, government, local business and other private sector partners to develop the use of information and communication technologies to provide leading edge electronic services and information. Included in this initiative is some of the developmental work associated with a 211 service in Halton.

The main providers of community information and referral in Halton are currently the Halton Information Providers (HIP). The purpose of HIP is to support the needs of the residents of the Regional Municipality of Halton by maintaining consistent and credible standards of community and human service information. Currently, the HIP partners maintain a common database of about 4,500 records. Maintaining the records within the database requires approximately 4,500 hours a year or about the equivalent of 2.5 full time staff working constantly throughout the year to stay in touch with each organization

to keep the records accurate and up-to-date. Due to existing funding patterns, much of this maintenance work is carried out in a fragmented manner through the use of summer students and project grants. However, through a Halton Healthy Community Fund grant received in June 2002 (\$25,000 per year for two years), the HIP group will be hiring a part-time co-ordinator. The proposal identified the diverse needs of other organizations using the current HIP database. These organizations include CCAC of Halton, Regional Municipality of Halton and the Halton Early Years Centres. The co-ordinator will identify these needs and seek to introduce a more integrated system of data collection in Halton, one that will eliminate duplication of records both internally and externally and ensure that all information records meet the existing and proposed 211 standards.

The goals and objectives of HIP include: importance of local/grassroots information gathering; minimizing duplication in management of information; maintaining a common database (Halton Community Services Database); keeping abreast of the changing information needs of the population they serve; and publishing the Halton Community Services Directory.

Each individual centre is primarily concerned with helping residents in their municipality access the services they need for survival and general well being, including emergency services that assist with personal and family crises. The four Community Information Centres in Halton (CICs) are all accredited members of the Association of Community Information Centres in Ontario and data is collected and maintained according to the standards of the Association.

The Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) of Halton provides home care services, placement into long-term care facilities such as nursing homes, and information about community services to Halton residents. The CCAC is also developing information and referral services for its clientele. Its focus is on health care services. The CCAC currently utilizes the HIP database for much of its Information and Referral (I&R) function while development of its own database, which will focus on health services, is

underway. As mentioned earlier, the CCAC, HIP and the Regional Municipality of Halton are working together to develop standards and protocols that allow for the sharing of information between the organizations.

1.3 Information and Referral

The rest of chapter 1 (sections 1.3 – 1.7) borrows heavily from other sources for the description of information and referral; opportunities associated with 211; components of a 211 service; the CRTC application process and 211 decision; and plans for 211 services in other communities. Since several documents had already developed comprehensive descriptions on information and referral, as well as the various aspects of 211 service, it was felt that utilizing those resources would be most prudent. This information was derived from *York Region 211 Feasibility Study: Final Report to the Task Group on Access* (Jonquil Eyre Consulting, January 2002), *United Way 211 Revised Business Case, December 15th, 2000* (Community Information Toronto and United Way of Greater Toronto), *211 Toolbox No. 1* (Compiled by United Way of Greater Toronto and Community Information Toronto, October 19th 2001).

Community information and referral is a critical component of the human service infrastructure in communities across Canada.¹ Information and referral (I&R) organizations collect and maintain a comprehensive database of available services, and through trained information and referral specialists help individuals and families connect to the services they need. Currently more than 120 community information and referral agencies operate across Canada, more than forty of which are in Ontario. They provide services of 30 or more hours each week to agencies and area residents. In 2000, over one million information and referral calls were answered in Canada.

Examples of calls received by information and referral services include:

- A senior citizen wanting home care support in order to live independently.
- A homeless person seeking a shelter bed, or a place to get out of the cold and to have a hot meal.
- A family facing eviction that doesn't know where to turn for help.
- A recent immigrant needing language and employment training.
- A young mother worried about how to properly care for her newborn child.
- A laid-off worker wanting to find out about employment insurance.
- A family searching for child care services in their community or close to work.

¹ The recent successful application to the CRTC for a 3 digit telephone number (211) for community information and referral (I&R) provides the basis for this overview.

- A union counsellor who calls on behalf of a colleague as part of an employee assistance program.
- A parent asking where to get food for her family.
- A concerned neighbour trying to help a friend in an abusive relationship.
- A family trying to find services for their son with a newly diagnosed illness.

The core business of community information and referral organizations is collecting and maintaining a database with relevant, accurate, current and comprehensive information, and staffing telephone and walk-in services to the public and agencies. Staff are trained to assess caller needs and refer callers to existing services that could address their needs. These organizations also provide information in a variety of languages (as needed) and in a manner that is culturally sensitive. The queries that the community information and referral organizations receive also are useful in providing improved social reporting in the community through the identification and communication of gaps in service and social trends.

A provincial and a national body link information and referral organizations together. InformOntario (also known as the Association of Community Information Centres in Ontario – ACICO) is the professional information and referral provincial network that holds annual conferences, maintains Web sites and has an active bulletin board that assists in the transfer of skills and collaboration between similar organizations in the province. At the national level, InformCanada coordinates professional information and referral agencies and will be setting the standards for 211.

Comprehensive information and referral organizations cover the entire spectrum of human need while specialized information and referral organizations concentrate on a particular aspect of human services.

Community information and referral complements existing and new organizations that provide services such as employment, housing and education, or health where a clinical assessment with clients may be conducted prior to working closely with individuals and families. Accessing 211 provides the road map for individuals, families and agencies to reach such services.

The scope, history and capacity of community information and referral organizations varies. Some information and referral organizations are programs of multi service agencies, and some are departments of libraries, social planning councils or volunteer centres. Some information and referral organizations are located in community centres, others in shopping malls or government offices. The commonality between comprehensive information and referral organizations is that most provide the majority of their service via the telephone, all maintain information on a broad range of community, government health and social services required by their communities, and they disseminate their information via lists, brochures, mini-directories, Blue or Red Books and increasingly via the Internet.

Where community information and referral services already exist, 211 is expected to build on these strengths and enhance services to meet identified 211 standards. 211 services will provide information and referrals to individuals on a wide range of services available in their communities. Areas of primary service need are typically related to:

- Food, shelter and clothing
- Emergency assistance
- Crisis intervention
- Financial assistance
- Employment assistance
- Access to permanent housing
- Physical and mental health support
- Home support services
- Child care
- Legal and correctional services
- Immigrant and refugee services
- Drug/alcohol intervention and rehabilitation
- Counselling and support services
- Individual and group advocacy
- Social action and community development
- Volunteer opportunities

Information and referral providers do not know the caller's identity. The service culture emphasizes confidentiality, a non-judgmental attitude and the concept of choice, by ideally providing three or four appropriate referrals to a caller.

1.4 Opportunities and Benefits of 211

Simple access through the 211 telephone number can provide:

- More effective use of services by more efficiently linking people to available services.
- A central access point for information on new community initiatives.
- A culturally sensitive response to local community needs through multilingual services.
- Help for people who simply do not know where to go to get the help they need.
- Improved social reporting by providing information on demand for services and gaps in meeting the need.

Those in the greatest need are often the least able to find the support or resources that are available in their community to assist them. Some populations find it especially difficult or impossible to locate the agency or service that will serve their needs. These groups include:

- Older adults
- Children and youth
- People who are homeless
- Persons with disabilities
- People who speak neither official language
- Individuals with low levels of literacy
- Individuals incapacitated by crisis such as domestic violence

The highly visible 211 telephone number will eliminate confusion and be especially valuable for the groups identified above. 211 is an easy to remember telephone number that simplifies access to the "first-stop" for information. Trained information and referral specialists respond to telephone calls and provide, or mediate, a non-clinical assessment of the callers' needs. Callers receive information about community,

government, health and social services that will address their needs. The 211 contact or call centre, provides centralized information and referral with decentralized access to services.

The value of 211 as a first-stop for individual, family and agency access to community information and referral has been illustrated by the experience of several cities and states in the United States. Metropolitan Atlanta has the most experience and has operated a 211 service since 1997.

1.5 Components of a 211 Service

The following are some of the key components of a 211 service. A critical element to the successful 211 service will be the obtaining of funds to sustain the local service.

- (1) A collaborative community effort to bring skills and resources together.
- (2) Quality assurance in a number of areas including adherence to established quality standards for effective information and referral services, sound business management, community governance and access for people who face barriers arising from language or disability.
- (3) Qualified information and referral specialists to answer phones and assess caller needs, and qualified resource specialists to manage the database. Training and professional development opportunities for 211 staff are critical.
- (4) The development of a comprehensive and accurate database of community services to support the work of information and referral specialists. Mechanisms and policies to keep the information in the database current and relevant are necessary.
- (5) Call centre technology and the necessary facility and equipment infrastructure.
- (6) Sustainable funding to cover start-up costs, development and maintenance of the service, including expansion as call volume grows.
- (7) Capacity to deliver a public awareness and communications plan to keep the public and organizations informed about the service.
- (8) Endorsement of the provider of the 211 service by the level of government responsible for the area to be served by 211.
- (9) Local/grassroots access to gathering necessary information.
- (10) Information provision must have integrity and must be perceived to be equitable by the public.

1.6 CRTC Application and 211 Decision

In June 2000, four organizations jointly filed an application with the Canadian Radio-television Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), requesting that the telephone number 211 be assigned for community, government, health and social service information and referral. The four partner organizations are United Way Canada - Centraide Canada, InformCanada, United Way of Greater Toronto and Community Information Toronto. The application, which was accompanied by 80 letters of support from local and national organizations, requested 211 for national use to be implemented locally as communities become ready.

In November 2000, the CRTC announced the process to solicit public and telecommunications industry input for their decision. Two rounds of input were invited: Comments by January 5, 2001, and Reply Comments by February 12, 2001.

On August 9, 2001, the CRTC assigned the abbreviated dialling code 211 for the purpose of information and referral for community, government, health and social services. Communities across Canada are now preparing to meet the standards proposed for 211, and where there is interest, will rollout the service as they become ready. Toronto launched the first 211 service in Canada in June 2002.

The CRTC decision includes the following:²

- Organizations providing 211 must meet agreed upon standards.
- Organizations providing 211 should present evidence of stable organizational capabilities and plans to deliver the 211 service in a sustainable manner. (para. 37)
- Organizations providing 211 should provide extended hours of service, (para. 38) a minimum of 70 hours a week. (para. 81)
- Organizations providing 211 must receive endorsement from the level of government for the area served by 211. (para. 81)

² To read the complete decision visit the CRTC Web site:
<http://www.crtc.gc.ca/archive/ENG/Decisions/2001/DT2001-475.htm>

- The CRTC obligated the telecommunications service providers to provide all wireline and wireless subscribers and pay phone users in the 211 service area, with access to the 211 service.
- The information and referral provider will bear the costs of providing the call centre services.
- A service charge for 211 will not be passed on to the subscriber or user.
- If 211 dialing is a long-distance call, the charges will be negotiated with the carrier and paid for by the 211 service provider.
- The telecommunications service providers will bear the cost of switch reprogramming to implement 211. (para. 92)
- Information and referral service providers will retain their existing seven or 10 digit numbers, so that people outside the 211 dialing area can still contact them.
- That telecommunications service providers be given a minimum 12 weeks formal notice to prepare for implementing 211. (para. 101)
- Calls placed on a wireless phone outside the regular local calling area will be routed to the local 211 number in the location of the caller. (para.93)

1.7 Other Communities Planning 211

In Toronto, Community Information Toronto, in partnership with United Way of Greater Toronto and the City of Toronto, became the first organization to implement 211 in Canada in June 2002. Community Information Toronto, which has over 30 years of history and experience as an information and referral organization enhanced and converted the current Community Helpline, 416 397 INFO, into 211.

United Way of Winnipeg, is working with CONTACT, its local community information and referral organization, to implement 211 for the province of Manitoba in the fall of 2002. One of Contact's strengths is its experience with a province-wide database. United Way of Winnipeg will contribute management, fundraising and communications skills to the 211 initiative.

The Support Network and community partners in Edmonton, and Information Services Vancouver for the Lower Mainland have expressed a readiness to launch 211 by early 2003. In the Greater Toronto Area, York Region has completed a feasibility study and

Peel and Halton Regions are conducting 211 feasibility studies. Over fifteen other collaborative groups are exploring 211 in other locations across Canada. It is expected that as these organizations explore their options, a number of them will decide to collaborate on the implementation of 211.

Within Ontario, Inform Ontario, in collaboration with United Ways of Ontario, Community Information Toronto, and United Way of Greater Toronto, was successful in securing a Trillium Foundation grant in March 2002. This project's stated purpose is "to assess the current infrastructure of community information services and 211 activity and develop a strategic vision for how 211 services could be rolled out across Ontario in the most efficient, effective and sustainable fashion". Current 211 explorations already underway would be part of the assessment.

2. Halton Situation

2.1 Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were carried out with various Halton community stakeholders (Appendix A). These interviews provide important information about the community and its capability and readiness to implement a 211 service, as well as insights that will support the development of a 211 service solution that best meets the needs of the Halton community.

Value of 211 Service

There is consensus among the key informants interviewed for the Halton 211 feasibility study, that 211 would be a significant and valuable service for people. In particular, the key informants state that:

- Any effort to create a “no wrong door” approach for citizens will be positive.
- 211 will be even more important as we experience a growing seniors population.
- There would be less confusion for people trying to access information if 211 were operational in Halton.
- It will take the pressure off organizations that now field information and referral calls (like municipal governments and the 911 call centre)
- It’s a brand that is easy to remember and simple
- Possibility of bringing in government, community and business together – they all have a common interest
- This can provide a uniting force for information centres, those now providing information
- Opportunity of pooling resources e.g. Technology is there to allow call centres in other communities
- A 211 service can create the infrastructure so that there is greater harmony and less tension between the various information providers in the community.

Key informants point out that 211, which can be easily recalled and will be a well-publicized phone number, will be of assistance to everyone in providing effective access to information and referral. However, there are barriers faced by some Halton Region residents in accessing services once they have been identified. These barriers include lack of transportation, geographic isolation, lack of supports to utilize services, service waiting lists and lack of resources such as income. Also, 211 has the potential to make

human service providers more visible, which could lead to a greater demand for services. Can services deal with increased demand? Recent research on the not-for-profit sector in Halton suggests that agencies are already under stress to meet the present demand on their services.³ Increasing expectations without the capacity to meet them produces distrust and frustration, if not anger.

Some of the cautions expressed by the key informants include:

- Usually there are not many information calls at night, so we might not need a 24 hour service
- For smaller communities, much of the information is “underground”
- How does the development of a 211 service affect current infrastructure?
- Downside of 211 – this will make service providers more visible and place more demand on services. Can services deal with increased demand?
- Level of referral will strain human services system
- The infrastructure of current human service organizations needs to be braced for the potential that they will be inundated by referrals. Will it let down potential users of human services? The right information needs to be provided.
- The development of a 211 service in Halton should not duplicate other efforts. It should be done in collaboration with other initiatives so that everything flows together.

Current Information and Referral Sources

When asked where individuals or organizations currently go to get information, the key informants mention the following sources:

- Local information centres (HIP) – Internet database, print directory or phone call
- Local government (Region, local municipality)
- Internet web sites
- Blue pages (government services) in the telephone directory
- Informal networks (family, friends, neighbours)
- Elected officials
- Chambers of Commerce

³ Halton Social Planning Council – *Halton Social Profile 1999* (1999); *Oakville: An Audit of a Community in Transition* (2000); *The Hidden Faces of Poverty* (2001); *Book of Proceedings – The Voluntary Sector and Volunteers: Building Our Future Together* (2001);

- Parks and Recreation Directory/Leisure Guide
- Community contacts
- Places of worship
- Self-help directory
- Internal organizational networking
- Toronto Blue Book

Difference 211 Would Make In Halton

The key informants were asked what would be different in Halton with an active 211 service. The responses ranged from thinking that it would not be very different to noting how less confusing it could be for all residents in Halton trying to access information. Most responses indicate that this would be positive for everyone in the Halton community, because it will provide more convenient and easier access to human services. It will help those in crisis reach the appropriate services more quickly. Moreover, a 211 service could take the pressure off of the 911 service which currently receives inappropriate calls.

A number of key informants also note that a 211 service could help identify those falling through the cracks; in other words, it would provide a social reporting function. In this way, there would be a better picture of community needs and how services are being accessed. This could assist organizations to reach their client populations more effectively, which would contribute to a healthier social fabric.

Other comments include:

- Extend hours of information and referral service. A more consistent service would be provided. Right now information and referral service is disjointed because of inadequate funding. There could be a realignment of agencies working together and this could create an atmosphere for developing standards in managing community information.
- Insure that distress/crisis callers get transferred to appropriate distress lines.
- More helpful for people providing service; exploratory calls that people make will be handled by 211 instead of inappropriate organizations
- Lots of expectations – people need to know what it is

- A lot more calls would occur
- People might feel more comfortable calling 211 – it would be more anonymous and confidential

Special Considerations In Developing A 211 Service In Halton

There is a wide range of responses from the key informants when asked about special considerations that will have to be taken into account as a 211 service is developed for Halton.

Coordination and Cooperation

Many respondents indicate that the 211 service needs to have a very clear mandate. “Don’t duplicate services!” It needs to remain focussed on information and referral and not do what other help lines are doing. Most respondents feel the community should build on what is already in place. This would involve coordination within the existing infrastructure, and finding and maximizing current resources. Also, respondents indicate that change has to mean something. For them, the Halton community should not do this for the sake of being on the leading or “bleeding” edge of this type of service. Other comments include:

- Organizations need to get beyond territorial issues and where necessary, concessions need to be made.
- A very cooperative approach is what is important.
- The community should be developing partnerships to make this sustainable and share the burden.
- This is an opportunity to support and strengthen the existing community.
- The various information and referral services will need to meet regularly to discuss issues and jointly resolve them.

Training

Training is also an important element in the development of a 211 service. Key informants feel that there needs to be proper training for the 211 staff, such as AIRS (Alliance of Information and Referral Systems) certification and skills for the proper management of crisis calls. The front line staff should receive instruction in crisis intervention to supplement their expertise in information and referral. The 211 staff

should not have to handle difficult situations that they are not equipped or trained to handle. This type of service needs professional staff, preferably certified specialists. Everyone needs to have the same standards.

Language

The key informants did not place service in various languages as a current high priority issue but undoubtedly, as Halton's population grows in size, there will be greater diversity. The informants indicate that 211 will not be beneficial if the service is only available in English. The service needs to be accessible to large language groups. Some of the larger language groups identified by the Halton Multicultural Council include Spanish, Punjabi, Chinese, Polish, Serbian and Croatian. Providing a 211 service in multiple languages could imply partnering with services in other regions.

Urban/Rural Differences

Key informants indicate that Halton has a diverse urban and rural population, particularly indicated through differences between the north and south of Halton and even between Oakville and Burlington. The urban and rural split needs to be recognized and considered in the development of a 211 service. In particular, many human services provided on a regional basis have their offices located in the south part of Halton, which raises issues of accessibility.

Transportation

Transportation remains a barrier to access to many services that people are referred to, as they are located in south Halton. At present, transportation links are inadequate between north and south Halton, which creates difficulty for residents attempting to access these services. This is particularly true for seniors, as they are often isolated when contacting information services. Recently, a new service was introduced to provide comprehensive information on transportation options in Halton. The Halton Information Providers (HIP) worked with the Transportation Action Group (TAG) to expand and enhance the HIP database regarding information about transportation options. *TransInfo* provides a toll free phone number for residents of Halton to access

this service and this initial work could provide the foundation for transportation information provided by a 211 service in Halton.

Specialized Information

The 211 service will need assistance from organizations that have knowledge about specific population groups. This will be important in making sure that all aspects of service are considered.

Border communities

Key informants raise the issue of providing information for those residents in communities on the fringes of Halton, such as Acton. This issue is included since some services provided in surrounding regions are closer or more accessible. Arrangements need to be considered with those providing 211 services in neighbouring regions.

Hours of Operation

A number of respondents also want further consideration of an over night shift. Some maintain that currently there is not a demand for information calls at night. Several respondents ask whether a service that is available 24 hours a day and seven days a week is realistic for Halton. There are not many services a person could be referred to during the night time hours, since most services are only open during regular business hours during the day.

Telephone Infrastructure

When appraising the technical infrastructure, several respondents indicate that a quick telephone link between information centres must be developed. They wonder how the cost of maintaining these telephone links will impact sustainability. The costs would include long distance charges especially in consideration of the 519 area code for Acton. Most respondents state that there should not be automated services. In other words, there needs to be a live person on the line. When dealing with the issue of telephone exchange boundaries, the key informants want to make sure all parts of Halton are included in the 211 service area. The development of the 211 service should

also consider a way for police to have a direct connection between 911 & 211, to transfer calls that would more appropriately be handled by the other service.

Marketing

From a marketing perspective, the key informants indicate that the 211 service needs to be marketed so people understand it is a referral service. There also needs to be clarity around what level of information is being provided and how human services are defined (e.g. recreation, arts and culture). An easily understandable distinction needs to be made between 211 & 911 so that citizens effectively use the appropriate number.

Funding

The cost of undertaking a 211 service will be significant, especially at the outset as a call centre is established. Therefore, the funding of this new service is a visible concern to all key informants. There is the sense that if there is not long term funding support to make 211 sustainable, then maybe 211 should not be implemented in Halton. 211 is not to be viewed as a project but as an ongoing service. There is recognition that little room exists in present funding structures to transfer to a 211 service. A more centralized funding source would be desirable, supplemented by further funding from a broader partnership. There may be different funding sources for start-up costs vs. ongoing operating costs. Some informants note that integrity needs to be maintained (i.e. non-commercial, no strings attached), no matter what the funding arrangement.

When asked about potential funding partners, most respondents believe that various levels of government should be involved because of the benefits of this service to all citizens. This would include the four local municipalities (Burlington, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville), the Regional Municipality of Halton, provincial and federal governments. Several respondents suggest that this kind of service is particularly beneficial to various levels of government, since it would help direct citizens to appropriate services and redirect some of the calls they now receive for information.

Many also feel that there is a funding role for various United Ways in Halton (Burlington and Greater Hamilton, Halton Hills, Milton and Oakville). Some respondents wonder what the impact would be on the capacity of our smaller communities to raise funds in support of a 211 service. Related to this are the different funding capabilities of Halton's four United Ways. There needs to be dedicated human resources to assist in the implementation. Other human service funding opportunities might exist through the Trillium Foundation (short-term) and community foundations.

A number of key informants feel that the private sector might have some involvement, either in kind services or through donations. If there is to be corporate involvement, some indicate caution should be applied so that the 211 service remain "logo free", for example, there should not be a "MacDonald's 211".

Who could deliver 211

When the key informants were asked who might be able to provide a 211 service in Halton, there was a range of responses. Many respondents do not see any one organization capable of taking this task on alone. They feel that some form of partnership among existing information and referral organizations is needed to share the duties of implementing 211. As discussed earlier, organizations working in the Halton community have a tradition of working in collaboration around many initiatives and this would be just another example. This is of particular importance when considering the CRTC requirement of the hours of operation (70 hour minimum). Some indicate the possibility of sharing responsibility between organizations, depending on the hour of the day. Also, some respondents feel that the 211 service needs to be operated by a neutral organization on behalf of the community (i.e. not connected to a government body or corporation).

The question was raised regarding the cost of shared responsibility versus the creation of a new organization. However, most do not see a new infrastructure being developed for 211 and would rather expand the capacity of the existing infrastructure so organizations can take on expanded roles of information and referral. Among the

organizations most often cited as working in partnership are the Halton Information Providers, the Regional Municipality of Halton, local municipal governments and crisis lines/distress centres. Other possible 211 delivery agencies that have been suggested include hospitals and United Ways.

A few respondents believe that the organizations providing 211 would be dependent on the geographic area covered by a provider; that is regional vs. larger scale over several regions. A partnership among several adjoining regions may be necessary in order to offer the service. A suggestion that a third party better organized to offer service after hours (i.e. overnight) service might be an option.

As part of their deliberation concerning a delivery agency or agencies, the key informants also suggest two important characteristics essential to the development of a 211 service for Halton. First, they believe that 211 should be built on what currently exists, taking into account other initiatives locally and provincially. This would include, for example, building on telephone infrastructures already in place, like those linking the Region, municipalities, CCAC and HRDC. Second, they emphasize the role of training in the successful development of a 211 service. Proper training of professional staff would be paramount in the launch of a 211 service and as such, require ongoing financial assistance for training.

Many respondents indicate that some form of call centre is desirable, but that there also be a parallel focus on the development of an Internet database. It would be important for all community organizations to have access to the 211 database. There needs to be a collaborative effort to ensure the database contains all of the information. This includes making full use of existing databases in the community, like the HIP database.

2.2 Existing Services

Residents and agencies in Halton typically access information in four ways: in person by approaching people at agencies, by phone, by using the Internet and by consulting printed directories. In addition to the directories, there are other materials produced

such as information brochures. Moreover, some of the information may be included as part of local community guides delivered to homes by local municipalities.

The kinds of organizations that provide information can be broken into three groups:

- Those in which the core business is providing comprehensive community information and referral,
- Organizations that provide a broad range of services and are also expected to provide community information and referral, and
- Specialized services that provide specialized information and referral and often include counselling and case management, and have other mandates.

Organizations in which the core business is providing community information and referral are of two kinds, comprehensive and specialized. Comprehensive information and referral organizations cover the entire spectrum of human need for all types of people and situations within a geographic community. Specialized information and referral organizations concentrate on a particular aspect of human services and apply detailed knowledge and resources to a specific, and usually vulnerable, client base, for example victim support, health or childcare line.

Examples of existing services in Halton that fall into these three groups are illustrated below. This listing is not inclusive.

1. *Comprehensive community information and referral providers*

- Halton Hills Community Support and Information
- Information Burlington
- Information Oakville
- Milton Community Resource Centre

2. *Organizations that are expected to provide community information and referral*

- Chambers of Commerce
- Community services
- Family doctors
- Government offices: Municipal, Regional, Provincial and Federal
- Hospitals
- Libraries

- Places of worship
- Schools

3. *Examples of specialized services that provide information, including clinical assessment, direct services and counselling*

- Baby and Child Line
- Canadian Mental Health Association
- CCAC
- Distress Centre Oakville
- Halton Adolescent Support Services
- Halton Child Care Registry
- Halton Children's Aid Society
- Halton Multicultural Council
- Housing Help Centre
- North Halton Distress and Information
- SAVIS
- Telecare Burlington
- Telehealth
- Transportation Action Group

Halton Information Providers (HIP)

The four organizations (Information Burlington, Information Oakville, Milton Community Resource Centre and Halton Hills Community Support and Information) that comprise the Halton Information Providers (HIP) have experience, history and a good reputation for providing comprehensive community information and referral as one of their core businesses. HIP is involved in the 211 feasibility study and has been an integral part of discussions. The HIP partners also own a web server and several domain names on the Internet.

All four organizations currently are focused on their respective municipalities, due in part to funding; however they also respond to some region-wide calls. Currently, the HIP partners maintain a common database of about 4,500 records. All four organizations have trained staff, utilize the Community Information Online Consortium (CIO) software application, and are members and participants in the provincial umbrella organization InformOntario, which shares information among, and represents more than 40 community information and referral providers in Ontario. For more detailed information about the individual organizations, see Appendix B.

Other Services

There are also two distress services in Halton that currently provide 24/7 phone support for those in crisis. Representatives from these services indicated that while they also provided some information and referral functionality, they rely on either a printed list of commonly asked for services or on the existing Halton Community Services Directory for their information.

The Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) in Halton has been mandated by the Ontario Ministry of Health to provide information and referral services to its clients. CCACs provide information and referrals to other community services, including:

- information on housing
- community support services such as Meals on Wheels, Friendly Visiting, transportation services, day programs and caregiver respite programs
- volunteer-based community programs

However, its database capability is still in the development stage and will focus largely on health related information. Also, at this stage, the CCAC database under development would only be accessible to CCACs across the province as part of a provincial database.

The Regional Municipality of Halton has developed a call centre functionality that focuses largely on services it is mandated to deliver. The Regional Municipality has a database of programs/services they are responsible for, but this database is currently undergoing revisions and review. Staff is currently building a knowledge database for the Regional Municipality, which will include a search of services online. Also, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for each program/service is being developed to assist in the delivery of information about Regional Government services. The Regional Municipality of Halton is the official Government Information Centre for the Halton community and has electronic access to federal databases and is to have provincial database electronic access in the summer of 2002. The Regional Municipality relies on the HIP database for much of its community services information needs.

Together, HIP, the CCAC and the Regional Municipality of Halton are currently developing standards and protocols that would allow for the sharing of information among the organizations. This arrangement would allow for improved flow of information and seamless access to information for all residents of Halton.

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) provides information and referral on mental health services from their own database, which is paper-based at the current time. Persons call the main contact line and staff have access to a resource binder which is updated regularly. Many of the referrals come from doctors and other health professionals, with about 5% of calls from outside of Halton.

The distress centres/crisis lines typically provide listening and crisis intervention telephone services for anyone who has a problem they cannot handle alone. Callers are referred to community services and agencies where appropriate. However, the referral service provided by these groups is only a small percentage of their service.

2.3 Call Volumes

Background

The Toronto model for projected 211 call volume growth builds on the experience of Metropolitan Atlanta and the State of Connecticut, where region-wide community information and referral services existed prior to the introduction of 211, but awareness of the services was limited.

The Atlanta and Connecticut 211 services saw initial call volume grow by between 40-50% and the volumes continue to grow at 10 to 20% a year. In Toronto, population 2.4 million, the information and referral service currently receives 125,000 calls a year and operates 14 hours a day. Toronto is projecting a call volume increase of 50% once its 211 service is launched and hours are extended to 24/7.

In the U.S., 211 call volume is significantly impacted by public promotion of the service. In Toronto, communications and operations staff will continue to work very closely to ensure that the impact of public promotion of 211 is matched with capacity to answer the projected increase in calls. The U.S. experience with 211 also indicates that 211 services receive more calls in times of recession when food and shelter, income and employment concerns are prevalent, as well as times when any type of uncertainty or disruption exists such as anticipated Y2K problems, strikes etc.

When urgency is not an element and where individuals have access to the Internet, one would expect to see an increase in the use of Web based databases as an alternative to telephone calls. However, for people who face barriers to access as a result of language, age, culture, race, poverty, lack of education, low levels of literacy, physical or mental health issues, unemployment or fear of violence, the telephone may remain the preferred channel for accessing information. There is also the issue of mediated service offered over the telephone where, through discussion, one finds out what people actually need.

Calls to an information and referral centre are not evenly distributed throughout the day. To manage this variation in the number of incoming calls, staff scheduling will need to be flexible. Information and referral services find that the hours between midnight and six a.m. receive significantly fewer calls. These calls tend to be longer and more complex. Providing 24/7 service effectively and economically could include combining services with other “overnight” services (such as the distress centres) that meet the 211 standards or forwarding calls to a 24/7 211 service in another area. Increasingly, call answering can be done from remote locations with transparency to the caller, provided there is access to the local database.

There are economies of scale in a 211 service. It is expected that an information and referral specialist may be able to answer up to nine calls per hour when the annual call volume is approximately 300,000 calls. In addition to time spent answering calls, information and referral specialists may conduct satisfaction surveys, make return calls,

document outcomes, follow up with database specialists, participate in training, stay abreast of community events that are impacting caller information requests and prepare reports.

A 211 service is likely to heighten the awareness of all services and is expected to increase the number of appropriate calls to those services.

Halton Situation

The four information centres in Halton together currently receive approximately 15,000 – 20,000 calls a year. In addition, the online Halton Community Services database received 125,853 hits from May 15, 2001 to May 15, 2002. There has been a steady decline in the number of phone calls fielded as the database has continued to grow on the Internet. Also, due to funding reductions, there have not been the resources to actively promote the existing services. With the introduction of a region-wide 211 service for Halton (population 375,000), it is estimated, based on the U.S. experience, that call volumes will increase at least 50%.

Projected calls in year one of 211	% increase on current 20,000 calls a year
30,000	50%
35,000	75%
40,000	100%
45,000	125%
50,000	150%
60,000	200%

2.4 Telecommunications

Background

The location of the telephone exchange boundaries will determine the exact perimeter of the geographic area to be served by a 211 service. Once 211 is implemented, individuals, families and agencies will simply dial 211 to be routed to a ten digit number at one contact, or call centre. People will also be able to reach the centre by dialling the organization's ten-digit phone number, if they are out of the area.

Answering calls to 211 with a person, and not by an automated response, is the recognized standard. People answering the phone will be qualified Information and Referral specialists who are trained to assess callers' needs, problem solve with callers, research available options, and provide callers with relevant referrals.

If the 211 call is from a location that would normally require long distance dialling to the information and referral provider, the 211 call is translated into a toll-free number, so that the call remains free to the caller. The cost of the long distance call is paid for by the 211 information and referral provider.

Wireless calls maybe unevenly routed along boundaries between two 211 calling areas.

Telecommunications in Halton

The 211 service area will align with telephone exchange boundaries which do not align with the Regional Municipality of Halton boundaries in a number of areas. The areas that do not align, are the north and east parts of the Town of Halton Hills, the north-west and east part of the Town of Milton, east of the Town of Oakville and west section of Burlington (Aldershot). As well, the town of Acton (part of Halton Hills) and part of the northwest corner of Milton fall into the 519 area code. Protocols for managing these calls need to be developed with Peel Region, Wellington County and the City of Hamilton. An explanation of the perimeter of the 211 service area will need to be part of the 211 public awareness campaign.

There are approximately 12 telephone exchange areas within Halton Region. The switches, within all of the exchanges will be translated or re-programmed for 211 implementation. Following the switch translation, which will be conducted by, and at the expense of, telecommunications service providers, all 211 calls from individuals, families and agencies within Halton will be routed to the ten digit number at one call or contact centre. From this contact centre, any calls, including after-hours calls or overflow calls at busy times, could be forwarded to another service if the decision to do so is made and if the technology is in place.

Long distance charges will apply to some calls in Halton Region because there are a number of local calling areas, as well as two area codes. The location of the call centre will determine which calls are long distance. However all calls will be at no charge to the caller, as stipulated in the CRTC decision.

2.5 Existing Capacity - 211 Service Requirements

The capacity that exists in Halton Region to meet the 211 service requirements is captured in the following table. The 211 service requirements combine those endorsed by the CRTC in their decision on the assignment of the N11 number for community information and referral, and those identified as important through the local consultation.

211 Service Requirements		Existing Halton Region Capacity
1. Community Collaboration		
1	A collaborative community effort to bring skills and resources together.	There is a widespread commitment to enhance integration of services, which is reflected in the evolving partnerships within the existing infrastructure. There are already various initiatives underway, including work by HIP, CCAC and the Regional Municipality to better manage community information.
2	Cooperative relationships with specialized information and referral organizations, crisis centres and local community service providers.	<p>The key informants indicate that there is broad support for more efficient access to community services, including a way for employees of direct services to assist their clients to access other community services.</p> <p>Service providers need to be assured that the non-clinical assessment of the caller's needs is professionally conducted and that the information and referrals provided, are based on comprehensive and current information. Also the service is confidential and non-discriminatory.</p>
3	Consultation with telecommunications service providers and coordination of telecommunications issues.	<p>Those in Halton are working closely with the participants in Toronto who are coordinating national 211 roll out decisions with telecommunications service providers.</p> <p>There are long distance implications for 211 in Halton Region.</p> <p>Communication to develop protocols to manage situations where telephone exchanges straddle 211 service areas has begun.</p>

211 Service Requirements		Existing Halton Region Capacity
2. Quality Assurance		
4	High quality standards in customer service at all times.	The staff of the 211 call centre will need to be well trained, with recognized certification as appropriate.
5	Adherence to established quality standards as determined by professional associations.	There is widely held recognition of the importance of professional standards. Different standards are currently applied by different organizations. AIRS and InformOntario have standards that are widely used benchmarks for information and referral.
6	Professional and properly managed organization with a formal & comprehensive business plan, which includes call volume projections, staffing models, call answer targets and a sustainable revenue model.	Management and administrative system expertise exists in many organizations that support 211 implementation.
7	Broad based community governance	There are a number of well-informed stakeholders engaged in initiatives to improve access to community services, who might participate on a Board or advisory committee.
8	Cultural sensitivity and multi lingual accessibility on site or through interpretation services.	About 0.5% or 2,000 of Halton Region residents do not speak English or French (1996 Census). The Halton Multicultural Council identified approximately six languages that are key to serving Halton Region residents. Interpretation services are available through local organizations, like the Halton Multicultural Council. Other arrangements might be necessary in the implementation of a 211 service.

211 Service Requirements		Existing Halton Region Capacity
9	Provides barrier-free access to its services for people with special needs, e.g., TDD/TTY ⁴ access for people with hearing impairments; and physical access for people with disabilities if the information and referral service sees inquirers at its facility.	This will become a requirement of the provider of the service.
10	Evaluation and monitoring to continuously improve the service to meet community expectations.	The Board or advisory committee will determine the process.
11	Extended hours of service operating a minimum of 70 hours a week.	<p>The existing information centres have varied hours, with the hours of 8:30-4:30 Monday to Friday being fairly typical. The two library-based centres (Information Burlington and Information Oakville) are already open 70 hours a week in the winter (between the two of them). While a number of key informants endorse a 24/7 service, there are others who wonder if it is necessary or affordable.</p> <p>Decisions about how the service will be provided should include consideration of purchase of service from an existing provider for such services as night service or to provide a fall back during peak periods. This could include Community Information Toronto, who is already providing a 211 service, or partnering with neighbouring regions/communities.</p>
12	Adequate protocols to address emergency service calls that should be handled by 911 and/or emergency services.	Police, fire and emergency medical services are being kept informed about the exploration of 211 implementation. Prior to the launch of a 211 service, protocols will have to be developed.

⁴ Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf (TDD) include TTY (teletypewriter) systems that enable people who are deaf to use the telephone.

211 Service Requirements		Existing Halton Region Capacity
3. Human Resources		
13	Qualified information and referral specialists who will answer the phones in person, assess the caller's needs, refer the caller to the appropriate services, and who are capable of handling crisis calls if and when they occur.	<p>There is widely held recognition of the importance of qualified staff. Several organizations have Certified Information and Referral Specialists including the CCAC Halton Region.</p> <p>Training and professional development opportunities for Certified Information and Referral Specialist Staff (CIRS) are available.</p>
14	Qualified information and referral resource specialists to develop and maintain the database.	<p>The concern expressed about duplication of collection and the difficulty of maintaining current databases, could be addressed by qualified people in the positions of data managers. The issue of the development and maintenance of a database should also be resolved through agreements of current information providers working together and sharing databases.</p> <p>Training and certification for information and referral resource specialists (CRS) is available.</p>
4. Database		
15	A comprehensive, accurate and computerized information and referral database with a standard classification system to serve the entire population in the 211 service area.	<p>The closest Halton comes to a region-wide database is the one maintained by the Halton Information Providers (HIP) using the CIOC software. As of April 30, 2002, this database has a total of 4,477 records. Of these, 1,751 were Burlington, 1,712 Oakville, 550 Halton Hills and 464 Milton. There are also 129 TransInfo records.</p> <p>The new CCAC database will be available on-line only to CCACs provincially at the outset.</p> <p>There are also records kept in various other organizations that are more specialized in nature. For the purposes of 211, finding a common delivery platform will be important in minimizing duplication. There are already discussions underway between HIP, CCAC and the Regional Municipality of Halton to develop protocols and standards for sharing information.</p>

211 Service Requirements		Existing Halton Region Capacity
16	Database management mechanisms, policies and criteria to determine inclusion and classification of services and to update information regularly so that it is current and relevant. This includes current community activity and special event information.	<p>There is varied expertise and experience, yet we would argue that there are many collaboratives.</p> <p>A number of organizations describe the process as difficult and expensive and some agency data being out of date. HIP members update their database daily, as changes occur as information is gathered (self reported by organizations, information from other sources such as newspapers, newsletters, etc.).</p> <p>Best practices for data management are available and should be drawn upon. Similarly, inclusion policies, such as processes for agency verification prior to adding new services, are also available.</p>
17	Internet access to the database to enable searches by individuals and agencies.	A region-wide comprehensive database of community, government, health and social services information is already available through HIP and its use of the CIOC software. This database is Web enabled and available through the Internet, which makes it widely accessible.
5. Facility, & Technology and Equipment		
18	Call centre infrastructure and telephone technology to ensure that the anticipated volume of calls can be received and managed, (plus handling spikes) and means to track call volume, number of abandoned calls, average speed of answering and average call length.	<p>Telephone technology for call centres is now commonplace. Requirements include call forwarding either for overflow calls and/or after-hours calls.</p> <p>The specifications of the required equipment will be better understood once the service provider is determined, e.g., level of wiring in the building, requirements for forwarding calls, reporting requirements and queuing priorities required.</p>
19	A safe and secure work location for information and referral specialists on the phone, and specialists working on the database.	<p>A number of facilities meet the requirements.</p> <p>The decision on the provider(s) of the service will precede this discussion.</p>

211 Service Requirements		Existing Halton Region Capacity
6. Sustainable Funding		
20	Funding to cover the cost of start-up, development and maintenance of the service, including expansion as call volume grows.	Potential partners include the various United Ways in Halton (Burlington and Greater Hamilton, Oakville, Milton and Halton Hills); various levels of government, including the four local municipalities, the Regional Municipality of Halton, provincial and federal governments; Trillium Foundation (short-term), community foundations, corporate sponsors.
7. Communications		
21	Comprehensive public education, promotion and outreach plan to educate the public on 211, both during service launch and on an on-going basis.	A variety of organizations have extensive skills in this area. There is extensive capacity to communicate with residents and agencies through a variety of stakeholders and their existing communications strategies.
8. Endorsement		
22	Endorsement by the municipal and/or regional authority for the area served by 211.	Regional and municipal politicians and other key stakeholders need to be kept informed and involved in the process to guarantee their support and ultimately, their endorsement of a 211 service.

3. Models of Service Delivery for 211

3.1 Potential Criteria for Model Selection

These criteria, with modifications as suggested by the research advisory committee and key informant consultations, are borrowed from *York Region 211 Feasibility Study: Final Report to the Task Group on Access* (Jonquil Eyre Consulting, January 2002). The final criteria that will establish the minimum standards for a 211 service delivery in Halton Region will need to be identified and endorsed by the 211 Advisory Committee.

1. Service

- a) Serves the entire Halton Region by providing information and referral to community services, health services, social services and all levels of government services through 211 access.
- b) Ensure a service of 70 hours/week or more. This may be in collaboration with another organization that meets the required standards. The goal is to provide a 24 hours/7 days a week service.
- c) Meet or exceed InformOntario or Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) standards for information and referral providers including database management.
- d) Staff at the contact (call) centre are Certified Information and Referral Specialists.
- e) Access to 211 for people speaking languages other than English, utilizing appropriate interpretation services.
- f) Meet or exceed standard to provide barrier-free access to services for individuals and groups who have special needs, e.g., TDD/TTY access for people with hearing impairments, and physical access for people with disabilities if the information and referral service sees inquirers at its facility.

2. Community Based Organization

- a) Demonstrates understanding of community needs, including political situation, demographic needs and trends.
- b) Evidence of stable organizational capabilities and plans to sustain delivery of the 211 service.
- c) Manages information and data collection, conducts research and analysis of data collected from the calls for service planning, to identify trends, gaps, etc. and reports on data.
- d) Ability to link from the database to other community databases.
- e) Internal operational policies in place.

- f) Ability to use and maintain physical assets including building and equipment.
- g) Makes productive use of technological tools.
- h) Administrative capacity including administrative and management systems.
- i) A legal entity or part of a legal entity.

3. Accountability

- a) Governance by a Board with broad community representation.
- b) Involves key stakeholders and demonstrates commitment to building relationships with key stakeholders.
- c) Meets contractual requirements.
- d) Accountable to consumers and funding partners.
- e) Receives endorsement from the level of government for the area served by 211, (probably Municipalities and the Regional Municipality of Halton).

4. Communications

- a) Communications and public education will recognize funding partners and key stakeholders.
- b) Effective communication and public information campaigns in which all stakeholders assist in promoting 211 and build on the work of other partners.

5. Financial Capacity

- a) A credible and proven track record of mobilizing resources including leveraging funding from different levels of government and the private sector.
- b) Adequate and sustainable funding is in place.
- c) Financial management capacity.
- d) Financial capacity and stability are very important once the model is chosen. Organizations whose financial existence is precarious have trouble making long-range plans. Any organization that needs to raise funds for its operations on an on-going basis soon has that function as its prime activity, with service-delivery becoming secondary.

6. Human Resources Capacity

- a) Accesses people for leadership and staff positions with the required skills and experience.
- b) Manages human resources congruent with labour agreements if applicable.

- c) All individuals who answer 211 calls will be Certified Information and Referral Specialists and people managing the database will be Certified Resource Specialists or people preparing for those certifications.
- d) Demonstrated plans for skills development and maintenance, orientation and training of staff.
- e) Utilizes volunteers, where appropriate, to support contact centre services and database maintenance.

3.2 Models

When looking at models of 211 service delivery, the message from the interviews clearly indicates that where possible, the service should be delivered using existing local resources. The summary of existing capacity in the Halton Region, outlined in section 2.5, suggests that there is no one organization in Halton Region that is immediately capable of providing the 211 service.

From consultation with key informants, many indicate that a 211 service can be provided by one or more organizations. One organization to which 211 calls are routed can provide the services of both the call centre at which information and referral specialists answer 211 calls and the comprehensive database where staff provide database maintenance.

The more common scenario discussed by the key informants has the service provided by a number of organizations. This scenario could see the call centre function being rotated around various organizations, building on existing hours of operation to meet the 70 hour minimum requirement (which the two existing library centred information centres already closely match). Database maintenance could either reside with one organization or some shared responsibility among the partners. However, issues such as accountability and economies of scale will need to be considered for the successful implementation of this model.

Four models of how a 211 service might be delivered in Halton are presented below. These models are not presented in any order of priority and are not exhaustive.

Variations on these models could be considered as part of the deliberations of the 211 Advisory Committee.

1. One Existing Core Organizations Provide Lead Services and Other Existing Organization(s) Provide Component Services

Build on:

- a) One existing organization/community information centre to provide the lead in delivering regional 211 contact centre service, with locally specific inquiries and/or after hour calls being forwarded to the other centre(s), and
- b) Existing organization(s) that currently may/may not have community information service as a core activity would collect data and maintain the integrated comprehensive region-wide database.

In addition, some of the organizations could retain walk-in information and referral services.

2. The Four Existing Core Organizations Merge to Provide Comprehensive Service

Build on merged existing community information organizations to:

- a) deliver a regional 211 contact centre service, and
- b) maintain an integrated comprehensive region-wide database

In addition, the organization could retain walk-in information and referral services, in one or more locations.

3. An Existing Core Organization Provides Comprehensive Service

Build on one of the existing community information organizations to:

- a) deliver a regional 211 contact centre service, and
- b) maintain an integrated comprehensive region-wide database

In addition, the organization could retain walk-in information and referral services.

4. Partner with surrounding regions to deliver a 211 service over a larger catchment area

The steering committee in the Region of Peel has indicated an interest in exploring 211 for an area larger than Peel Region (for example GTA). This may be an option that Some reasons identified by the Peel 211 Steering Committee for a more extended region for a 211 service include:

- i. Possible economies of scale,
- ii. Resolving some telephone exchange boundary issues,
- iii. Families live and travel across the GTA
- iv. Such a model would afford opportunities to create centres of excellence in different parts of the GTA e.g. seniors, multi-culturalism

All models should involve the creation of a new 211 Advisory Committee that represents key stakeholders, including potential funding partners. This group would provide guidance in the identification of the lead organization and assist in building organizational capacity to meet required quality assurance, and funding to start up and sustain, or purchase, delivery of the services.

3.3 Next Steps

The next steps in delivering a 211 service in Halton include:

- Distribution of the 211 Feasibility Study to stakeholders and other community members
- Presentations and discussion of the study through community meetings
- Taking the report forward to initiatives like Connecting Halton
- Continued communication with key stakeholders in the community
- Creation a broader 211 Advisory Committee
- Identification of the appropriate model to provide a 211 service in Halton
- Identification of the 211 Service Provider
- Building funding partnerships
- Monitoring of 211 developments (especially in Toronto as it rolls out, as well as other community developments)

Resources

211 Toolbox No. 1. Compiled by United Way of Greater Toronto and Community Information Toronto, October 19th 2001.

Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) web site: <http://www.airs.org/>

Application to the CRTC, June 26th, 2000, Comments to the CRTC, January 5th, 2001, and Reply Comments to the CRTC, February 12th, 2001, CRTC web site: <http://www.crtc.gc.ca/PartVII/eng/8665/C12-12.htm#2a>

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United Way 211 Revised Business Case, December 15th, 2000. Community Information Toronto and United Way of Greater Toronto.

www.211.ca Canadian 211 information

www.211.org U.S. 211 information

York Region 211 Feasibility Study: Final Report to the Task Group on Access. Jonquil Eyre Consulting, January 2002.

Appendix A – Key Informants

Joan Barham, Halton Hills Community Support and Information

Brian Bell, Halinet

Christine Berry, Information Oakville

Sandra Beveridge, Oakville Distress Centre

Betsy Cornwall & Geoff Cannon, Halton Hills Public Library

Pamela Forsyth, Halton Health Department

Jackie Gordon, Halton Police Services

Heather Jackson, Milton Community Resource Centre

Kate Johnston, Halton Region

Karen Landry, Town of Halton Hills

Sophia Makridis, Halton Multicultural Council

Anneliese Mueller-Busch, Community Care Access Centre of Halton

Kim Phillips, City of Burlington

Monica Quinlan, United Way of Burlington, Hamilton Wentworth

Priya Rana, Canadian Mental Health Association (Halton Branch)

Judy Rasanen, North Halton Distress and Information Centre

Joyce Savoline, Region of Halton

Dwight Tucker and Dixine Sullivan, Town of Oakville

Nina Truscott, Information Burlington

Appendix B – Halton Information Providers

Service	Organization: Milton Community Resource Centre
Purpose and Service	Ontario Early Years Centre of North Halton
Governance	Board of Directors
Clients -Who calls -Population -Geographic area	Seniors, new residents, parents 32,000 Town of Milton, Brookville
Hours of service	Monday to Friday, 9 am – 4:30 pm
Number of calls/annum	311
Average length of call Types of calls	2 minutes Town services, events like Good Neighbour days
Call centre - number to call -Staffing # -who answers calls -qualifications -vol/staff -training	905-875-4636 1 staff person Only staff
Budget	\$15,000 per year
Source of database information	Halinet
Database maintenance	Through Halinet and HIP
Ways of accessing the data	
Standards	
Promotion and public information	
Contact person	Heather Jackson
Other Comments	

Service	Organization: Halton Hills Community Support & Information Services
Purpose and Service	Giving out information on local community services
Governance	Governance Board of Directors
Clients -Who calls -Population -Geographic area	Adults 48,000 Town of Halton Hills
Hours of service	Monday to Friday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm
Number of calls/annum	Approx. 850
Average length of call Types of calls	2 - 5 minutes Services (internal) plus generic information
Call centre - number to call -Staffing # -who answers calls -qualifications -vol/staff -training	873-6502 or 853-3310 14 (30+ whole agency) Staff & volunteers Basic computer knowledge 200 volunteers, 10 office Orientation
Budget	\$1,000,000 – Agency; \$3,000 I & R
Source of database information	Community
Database maintenance	Updating Yearly
Ways of accessing the data	Internet access, phone
Standards	ACICO, CIOC
Promotion and public information	Brochures – Agency & Parks & Recreation (Town)
Contact person	Lori Bowskill
Other Comments	

Service	Organization: Information Burlington, Burlington Public Library
Purpose and Service	Information Burlington is a charitable organization that offers a free, confidential information and referral service to the citizens of Burlington. Our goal is to connect people with the community and government services they need and to ensure that the public is aware of the programs and services offered.
Governance	Information Burlington is a department of the Burlington Public Library, which, in turn, is responsible to a Board of Directors
Clients -Who calls -Population -Geographic area	Any of the 139,000 citizens of Burlington call.
Hours of service	9-5 Mon-Fri
Number of calls/annum	In 2001 there were 12,515 calls and 38,548 "hits" on Burlington records on the Internet database
Average length of call Types of calls	Calls vary from 1 minute to 10 minutes. They could be on any human service.
Call centre - number to call -Staffing # -who answers calls -qualifications -vol/staff -training	The number is 905-639-4212 The lines are answered by one of approximately 20 volunteers with staff supervision. Staff consists of one full-time and one part-time person. Volunteers are members of the community who have had varied experience. Several are retired teachers, some retired nurses etc The co-ordinator has an honours degree in political science and economics. Volunteers and staff receive at least 15-18 hours of training prior to answering calls.
Budget	The budget allocated directly to Information Burlington was \$58,600 for 2001.
Source of database information	Gathering information for the database began in 1971. Try to ensure that a primary source is used i.e. a legitimate spokesperson for the organization.
Database maintenance	The database is updated regularly as changes occur. Each record on the database has to be verified for accuracy at least once per year.
Ways of accessing the data	As well as the 4,500 record database, Information Burlington uses other databases and search engines, directories such as the Qwick Index and the Canadian Almanac and Directory and various binders compiled to contain community information.
Standards	Information Burlington is accredited by the Association of Community Information Centres in Ontario.
Promotion and public information	Information Burlington is promoted as part of library services. Information is available to the public on the Internet.
Contact person	Nina Truscott 905-639-3611 ext. 160; truscottn@bpl.on.ca
Other Comments	

Service	Organization: INFORMATION OAKVILLE, Oakville Public Library
Purpose and Service	Information Oakville is a service of Oakville Public Library. Our mandate is to provide free, confidential and non-judgmental information on and referral to human and community services to the residents of Oakville.
Governance	Oakville Public Library Board
Clients -Who calls -Population -Geographic area	Individuals, agencies, newcomers, seniors, parents Oakville 145,000 Oakville and Region of Halton
Hours of service	Mon-Thu 9:30-9:00; Fri, Sat 9:30-5:00; Sun 1:00-5:00 (Sept 15-Jun 14) Mon-Thu 10:00-8:00; Fri, Sat 10:00-5:00; Sun 1:00-5:00 (Jun 15-Sep 14)
Number of calls/annum	Individual statistics no longer kept, calls to the Information desk specimen week 170 (November 12-18 2001) Hits on the database from Information Desk - 7,610 May 15-2001-May 15, 2002 Total hits on <i>Oakville</i> records in the database May 15, 2001- May 15, 2002 - 54,511
Average length of call Types of calls	Statistics not kept
Call centre - number to call -Staffing # -who answers calls -qualifications -vol/staff -training	905-815-2046 Supervisor full-time, 2 part-time assistants = 1 full time equivalent Library Information Desk staff B.A.; MLS; or Library Technicians No volunteers on the Information Desk All staff undergo training on I&R; databases and resources.
Budget	No separate budget, part of Library Information Services
Source of database information	Information is provided by the organizations listed and is updated. Phone, email, fax and mail are used
Database maintenance	Each record is updated at least once per year. New information is added as available.
Ways of accessing the data	Management, public and staff views Public access via published URL or from Oakville Public Library home page link
Standards	InformOntario - Association of Community Information Centres in Ontario CIOC
Promotion and public information	Through library; HIP; CIOC; ACICO; Community connections
Contact person	Christine Berry; Supervisor. 905-815-2042 ext 5069; berryc@opl.on.ca
Other Comments	

Service	Organization: Community Care Access Centre of Halton
Purpose and Service	The CCAC of Halton is mandated to provide: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services previously offered through the Home Care Program and Placement Co-ordination Services • One-stop access for information and referral to all long-term care community services, including volunteer based community programs.
Governance	CCACs are funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and governed by Boards of Directors. CCAC Executive Directors and Board members are appointed to their positions through Orders-In-Council from the Lieutenant Governor.
Clients -Who calls -Population -Geographic area	The Community Care Access Centre of Halton is dedicated to providing ease of access to high quality consumer focused community, personal support and health care services that are required by people throughout their life span who, because of a disability, illness, or aging, need help to function as independently as possible. Population of Halton is approximately 388,000 people and includes Oakville, Burlington, Milton, and Halton Hills.
Hours of service	0830-2200 hours 7 days a week, 365 days a year
Number of calls/annum	The CCAC of Halton responds to approximately 30,000 calls/annum. The staff of the Intake and Referral Team responds to these calls.
Average length of call Types of calls	Average length of call is 3 minutes. Types of calls include information/referral related to 1) long-term care admission 2) services provided by the CCAC of Halton, including Nursing, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Social Work Counselling, Speech Language Pathology, Dietetics and Personal Support Services and Homemaking 3) students who require health services while attending a school (public or private) registered with the Ministry of Education 4) other health care related services/programs in the Region of Halton.
Call centre - number to call -Staffing # -who answers calls -qualifications -vol/staff -training	Office Phone (905) 639-5228 Toll-Free Phone 1-800-810-0000 From 905 and 519 areas only Fax (905) 639-5320 Web site www.ccac-halton.on.ca Calls are responded to by a receptionist and transferred to a Case Manager on the Intake and Referral Team. Case Managers have a university degree in a Regulated Health Profession and are trained to provide both relevant information and to complete a referral to the Community Care Access Centre of Halton.
Budget	32 million dollar budget for the fiscal year April 1,2001-Mar.31,2002 –Budget includes all services provided by the CCAC of Halton
Source of database information	Halinet, Internet, Intranet
Database maintenance	The intranet site is supported by the Information Systems staff of the CCAC of Halton. Through Halinet and HIP
Ways of accessing the data	All Intake and Referral Case Managers, Receptionists and Team Assistants have unrestricted access to computer based data

Standards	CCAC of Halton has received full accreditation from the Canadian Council on Health Services Accreditation (CCHSA). The CCAC of Halton's performance was assessed by CCHSA surveyors against nationally developed standards.
Promotion and public information	The CCAC of Halton has a number of information brochures available to the public. Additionally, staff is available to provide presentations to community groups (including caregiver support groups) upon request.
Contact person	Lynne McTaggart Client Services Manager (905)639-5228 Ext.8798
Other Comments	