
“211 State by State:” Nationwide Implementation of 211- Accessed Information and Referral Services

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Introduction

This report was written in the spring of 2001 in order to assess the state of 211 services nationwide. The newly approved telephone number to route callers to health and human services referrals promises to be a highly useful mechanism for more efficiently serving people in need. The information here was collected primarily through telephone calls, email contacts and by searching web sites, and we caution readers that, given the pace of change in these efforts, it is incomplete. This document represents a first view of the evolving service communities' implementation efforts and is designed to highlight strategies, difficulties, and successes. It is a working document, and we plan to update it periodically. If you have additional information to provide, please contact Judy Windler, the project sponsor, at Texas Health and Human Services, judy.windler@hhsc.state.tx.us.

Executive Summary

This report assesses efforts across the United States to implement health and human services Information and Referral (I&R) telephone call centers accessed by "211" dialing codes. We have investigated the most pertinent aspects of 211 implementation including organizational issues, system design models, management approaches, relationships between service providers and state bodies and telephone providers, technological issues, and common obstacles faced by implementation groups. The bulk of this research is based on interviews with representatives from planned and currently operating 211 I&R services and was supplemented by interviews with telephone companies as well as documentary research from the Internet.

As 211 implementation is an ongoing process, so it is a constantly changing set of data. Data reflected in this report should not be taken as the ultimate characterization of the nature or state of 211 implementation efforts. Many of the efforts described here have progressed considerably since data were first collected. Rather, these data are a reflection of the best available information regarding the "state of affairs" of 211 implementation in each location. Nor is the list of 211 implementation efforts in this report necessarily comprehensive. 211 implementation efforts do exist in locations not covered in this report, but were not available for data collection at the time this report was researched and compiled.

The highlights of this report are as follows:

- **Many 211 implementation efforts have faced similar obstacles. Common obstacles include opposition and "competition" among I&R providers, telecommunications costs, cooperation issues on the part of telephone service providers (Local Exchange Carriers), and support issues from state utilities bodies.**

Though obstacles from location to location are similar, the strategies employed for overcoming them have proven quite distinctive.

- **The support of state utility commissions can be very helpful in smoothing negotiations with telephone service providers and with facilitating arrangements among I&R providers.**

While it is no longer necessary to petition state utility regulators for reservation of 211 dialing codes for I&R purposes, these bodies can still play a crucial role in 211 implementation. Often, utilities commissions choose to mediate pricing negotiations between Local Exchange Carriers (LECs) and 211 providers. Active involvement by commissions can prompt LEC cooperation and provide an “objective” third party to guide the development of relationships.

- **It is difficult to obtain valid cost estimates from telecommunications providers.**

Most LECs are not closely familiar with I&R, its benefits, or its technical requirements. This unfamiliarity can lead LECs to overestimate the technical needs of a 211 provider in terms of call identification, etc., and therefore provide inflated pricing schemes. Therefore, 211 providers must work to educate LECs about I&R. In turn, 211 providers must attempt to educate themselves to the greatest extent possible about telecommunications systems in the interest of providing LECs with detailed technical requirements and implementation plans.

- **It is important for regional I&R providers to unify around a shared vision of the system they hope to offer. An accepted mechanism for solving problems or adjudicating competing claims is helpful.**

Generally, a single I&R organization will emerge as the “developmental leader” for 211 implementation. This organization may partner with other bodies in the interest of developing an inclusive group with sufficient political capital to claim authority in 211 development. Often, it will fall to this group to approve applications from potential 211 providers, and a standardized method of judgment is helpful in these negotiations.

- **A clear business plan is a necessary prerequisite to operational status.**

Seemingly an obvious factor, a clear and detailed business and development plan is potentially the most crucial aspect of a successful 211 bid. Commonly, such a plan is a basic requirement for entering negotiations with LECs, potential funding partners, and utilities commissions.

- **The majority of 211 implementation efforts follow a fairly predictable series of steps from initial interest among social service providers to fully operational services.**

Deployment and implementation strategies do vary from location to location as the local I&R service topography, state telecommunications vendors, and state PUC environment differ. Nevertheless, patterns emerge from location to location as full implementation is realized.

- **Three design models characterize the majority of planned and operational 211 systems.**

Again, while there is some variation in the strategies for deploying 211 resources from location to location, knowledge of broad models for system design can aid those interested in 211 implementation in making decisions about appropriate strategies. The three basic design models are: Centralized Administration/Single Call Center (called Model One in this report – generally utilized in smaller geographical areas), Decentralized Administration/ Multiple Call Centers (called Model Two here – usually seen in larger states with larger populations), and Centralized Administration/Multiple Call Centers (Model Three).

211 History and Background

U.S. residents in need of social service assistance ranging from domestic violence hotlines to elderly or homeless housing assistance to simple assistance in paying utility bills are often obliged to negotiate a labyrinthine system of referrals and misdirected inquiries before locating help. At times, assistance is never reached, even if it is available in the area. The common difficulties encountered by those in need in securing social service assistance and those desiring to provide it led to a nationwide effort to create a system of simple, easily-recalled telephone access to health and human services. The utility of nationally ubiquitous three-digit dialing combinations - “abbreviated N11 services” - for emergency services (911) and directory assistance (411), as well as the growing use of non-emergency police services (311), led Information and Referral (I&R) representatives and organizing bodies to conclude that the public interest would best be served if “211” were reserved for access to social service I&R services.

Some exemplary use of 211 was demonstrated by the June, 1997 installation of a 211-based I&R service operated by the United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta. This system made use of an existing I&R service, its call center and expertise. The creation of Atlanta 211 was followed in 1999 by a similar, though statewide, system operated by the United Way of Connecticut and has been joined by a growing national movement of I&R services and coalitions interested in building similar systems.

In May, 1998, the National 211 Collaborative, including the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS), United Way of America, United Way 211 (Atlanta), United Way of Connecticut, the Florida Alliance of Information and Referral Services, Inc. (FLAIRS), and the Texas Information and Referral Network filed a petition with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requesting national assignment of 211 dialing codes for social service Information and Referral. Recognizing that N11 dialing codes are a scarce resource, the 211 Collaborative argued that a compelling public need exists for this use of 211 that is not satisfactorily met by existing 911, 411, or 311 services. The FCC ruled July 21, 2000 in favor of 211 proponents, declaring that this use of 211 best satisfies the public interest.

Since the FCC ruling, efforts toward implementing 211 services have continued in some states and begun in many others, with widely varying results. Some 211-accessed I&R systems have become operational within a few months of initial efforts, while others have met considerable obstacles on many fronts, including challenges from within the I&R community, prohibitively high rates from Local Exchange Carriers (LECs) – local telephone companies – for delivery of 211 service, and opposition from other N11 service providers. To date, every operational 211 I&R service consists of a single, centralized call center servicing a locality (defined here as a metropolitan area or limited county grouping) or a very small state [see “211 System Design Models”]. Many non-statewide 211 systems are designed with the express intention of “scaling up” to include greater geographic scope, often with the assumed goal of joining with other 211 providers to facilitate statewide coverage. Currently, Connecticut’s Infoline is the sole *statewide* provider of 211-accessed I&R services, though most other providers’ implementation plans include statewide coverage as an eventual goal.

Stages of 211 Development.....

Implementing 211 services varies a great deal from location to location in terms of specific obstacles faced by 211 providers, specific strategies adopted for ensuring success in implementation, and the organizational features of the group backing 211. It is nevertheless possible to see certain common features across efforts as 211 groups progress from no organization to fully operational 211 systems. These commonalities can be grouped into four main development stages, as detailed below. Understanding the common approaches and problems among 211 service groups is useful for groups just beginning to think about 211 implementation as they can help to shape implementation strategies. We identify features of development in terms of negotiations with local telephone companies, the internal organizational structure of the groups or collaborative backing a 211 plan, communications with and endorsement of plans by state utility commissions, aspects of a business plan for services as well as aspects of an operational plan for providing service.

Development Stage One – The Initial Stage

In the initial stage, one or more organizations have expressed interest in developing 211 capabilities in their state. Some motions toward collaboration among I&Rs and/or service agencies have been made to this end. Meetings have been held among potential service providers, non-I&R 211 supporters, community governmental bodies, and non-211 I&R agencies to help answer questions and challenges and to provide closer collaborative support. Telecommunications industry associations, state utilities bodies, state human services bodies, United Ways, specialized and comprehensive I&Rs, and community bodies such as libraries and city councils are often included in initial collaborative formation. Initial contacts have been made with local exchange companies (LECs) and with state utilities commissions.

Development Stage Two – The Collaboration Stage

As groups gather more information and assess feasibilities, the core collaborative group has an identity and makes a concerted effort to develop operational design models and to determine what mixture of technical - database and telecommunications - resources will best meet community needs. Relationships with state utilities commissions are developed, often with the result of explicit PUC support or “official 211 designation.” Relationships with LECs are developed, and the group has established contacts and avenues by which to communicate technical requirements to the community of telecommunications providers. At this stage, groups consider database and technology issues in terms of organizing call center capabilities, and in terms of thinking through potential pilot sites for the service.

Development Stage Three – The Negotiation Stage

After these intensive planning processes, a viable business plan will be adopted, and any internal challenges between I&Rs largely have been resolved. Specific technical requirements are indicated to LECs who have made subsequent efforts to provide cost estimates. Pilot sites are fully determined and contractual agreements between service providers for service coverage may be in place. (For example some states specify that they want “rollover” service in order to keep costs down.) Support from state utilities commissions is explicit, and often they take direct action to aid, if necessary, in telecommunications negotiations.

Development Stage Four – The Operational Stage

In the final stage, 211 services are operational. While 211 services may not yet be provided on a statewide basis, plans are underway to provide or approach statewide coverage.

Table 1: Stages of 211 Development in Various States / Localities

State	Stage	State	Stage
Arizona	Initial	New York	Collaboration
California	Collaboration	Ohio	Collaboration
Connecticut	Operational	Rhode Island	Negotiation
Florida (Brevard)	Operational	South Carolina	Negotiation
Georgia (Athens)	Operational	Tennessee (Knox.)	Operational
Georgia (Atlanta)	Operational	Texas	Negotiation
Georgia (Columbus)	Operational	Utah	Initial
Indiana	Negotiation	Vermont	Initial
Louisiana (Lafayette)	Operational		
Massachusetts	Negotiation		
Maryland	Initial		
North Carolina	Negotiation		
New Hampshire	Collaboration		

Definitions:

Development Stage 1 (Initial): One or more organizations have expressed interest in developing 211 capability in their state. Some motions toward collaboration among I&Rs and/or service agencies have been made to this end.

Development Stage 2 (Collaboration): Collaborative groups have been formed and a concerted effort is underway to develop operational models, relationships with Utilities Commissions, and relationships with LECs. Database issues and technology issues in terms of call center capabilities are under consideration.

Development Stage 3 (Negotiation): A viable “business plan” has been adopted, technical requirements have been indicated to LECs who have made subsequent efforts to provide cost estimates, call center locations and technical specifications have been determined.

Development Stage 4 (Operational): 211 services are operational.

System Design Models

Existing 211 systems utilize one of three basic operational designs. The design models described here are similar to models described in previous reports, though refinements have been made. Decisions made by present or potential 211 service providers concerning designs for the interactions among call centers, database(s), and staff are generally contingent upon the scope of the project being implemented in terms of both geography and population. Predictably, large populations require more complex network systems to ensure standardized delivery of 211 services, while smaller populations’ needs can be met with simpler system designs. Slight variations in the operational details of each model are found from system to system, but each system proposed or implemented to date falls into one of the three categories.

The first and simplest model is the **Centralized Administration/Single Call Center Model (Model One)**. This model is typically utilized when 211 services are made available in a single locality (county grouping or metropolitan area) or in a very small state. The second model is the **Decentralized Administration/Multiple Call Center Model (Model Two)** and the third is the **Centralized Administration/Multiple Call Center Model (Model Three)** or “mixed” model. The latter two models are typically utilized in larger states and, to date, are often implemented via scalable installation of select pilot sites. Each model presents its own advantages and difficulties in database management, call translation costs, and staffing requirements.

Key issues in database management include questions of compatibility and scope. If data is to be shared between call centers, taxonomic standards must be adhered to and infrastructure must be provided for data transfer. Call translation varies greatly from model to model, as 211 calls may be translated to seven- or ten-digit local numbers for routing to a nearby call center or may be translated to a toll-free number for routing to a more distant call center. Predictably, call centers serving broad areas will likely experience higher call translation costs, as more central offices are involved and as toll-free services may be necessary. Staffing issues vary between design models in fairly

predictable ways as larger centers require more staff than smaller centers and in non-apparent ways as smaller call centers may have to devote greater funding to retain accredited staff for adherence to AIRS standards.

In the remarks below, we do not mean to suggest that certain states exclusively conform in all ways to the models presented. Indeed, definitions for certain elements of service may often depend on the scope of the operation. As an example, if a 211 provider operates a single call center in a single county of Ohio, operations will likely be best categorized under Model One. However, if one extends the scope of operations to Ohio as a whole, it becomes clear that Ohio should consider the elements noted within Model Two. Unless otherwise noted, all discussions of design models and implementation strategies in this report should be assumed to refer to a statewide scope. The inclusion of a state under a given model should not be taken to imply that a state’s 211 system is operational or that our evaluation is absolute. Rather, we have estimated, using available information, the status of a location’s current “state of affairs” with regard to 211 implementation. The designs below may change over time as 211 operations themselves develop.

Table 2: Chosen 211 Design Models and Implementation Stage for Various States / Localities

State	Design Model	Stage
Arizona	Currently Undetermined	Initial
California	Decentralized/Multiple Center	Collaboration
Connecticut	Centralized/Single Center	Operational
Florida	Decentralized/Multiple Center	Operational
Georgia	Decentralized/Multiple Center	Operational
Louisiana	Centralized/Single Center	Operational
Massachusetts	Centralized/Multiple Center	Negotiation
Maryland	Decentralized/Multiple Center	Initial
North Carolina	Decentralized/Multiple Center	Negotiation
New Hampshire	Centralized/Single Center	Collaboration
New York	Decentralized/Multiple Center	Collaboration
Ohio	Decentralized/Multiple Center	Collaboration
Rhode Island	Centralized/Single Center	Negotiation
South Carolina	Decentralized/Multiple Center	Negotiation
Tennessee	Decentralized/Multiple Center	Operational
Texas	Centralized/Multiple Center	Negotiation

Utah	Decentralized/Multiple Center	Collaboration
Vermont	Centralized/Single Center	Collaboration

Model One – Centralized Cost and Community Voice

The simplest model for 211 implementation consists of a single call center under the administration of a single I&R body. Typically, this model is used when 211 services are available only to a locality (small to medium-sized county grouping or in a metropolitan area) or to a small state. Examples of this model exist in Connecticut, Louisiana (Lafayette), New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont.

Databases under this model are typically housed at the call center where they also are maintained and updated. Calls are commonly routed through a 211-to-toll-free-number translation, though 211-to-local (seven- or ten-digit) or “local long-distance” number translation is possible as well when the service area is sufficiently limited (as is the case in Lafayette, Louisiana). Generally, the costs incurred for 211 translation services are the lowest of the three models.

One consideration for a Centralized Administration/Single Call Center 211 system (particularly those systems covering the entirety of a small state) is the maintenance of “community presence.” Based on the notion that a caller from a given community is best served by a specialist explicitly familiar with that community and its available services, 211 systems falling into Model One often employ “community specialists” who staff the central call center from the area in which they live and, in that sense, “represent” it for I&R purposes. United Way of Connecticut’s Infoline makes use of this staffing model, and Traveler’s Aid/Helpline of Rhode Island will likely follow suit.

Model Two – Utilization of Community Resources

For larger states and populations, multiple call centers, whether local or regional in scope, are generally necessary. Often, a 211 collaborative or partnership group will exist in a state with the purpose of guiding and facilitating 211 implementation, and it may administer a local or regional call center itself, but will not have the capability or interest in directly administering the larger group of 211 call centers as a whole. In these cases, previously existing and generally comprehensive I&R providers may be enlisted to help the collaborative group, each administering its own call center(s) and database capabilities. This requires negotiating independent contracts with LECs as necessary to provide service in the areas, with the collaborative group often providing marketing support and standards (e.g., with respect to training staff, ensuring that databases are current, and so forth) oversight services. States utilizing these elements include California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, North Carolina, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, and Utah.

Databases in this model are generally housed at respective call centers and are administered, maintained, and updated by staff employed by the call centers themselves. Varying degrees of database “shareability” and compatibility are evident across the states. It should be made clear that this categorization does not preclude statewide database construction and sharing, though *most* Model Two states do not yet have

concerted efforts to create such database facilities. Calls are commonly routed through a 211-to-toll-free-number translation, though 211-to-local (seven- or ten-digit) or “local long-distance” number translation is possible as well when the service area is more geographically limited.

One consideration for call routing under this model is “rollover capability”. Call volume may not justify providing 24-hour coverage in all of a state’s 211 call centers. Nevertheless, adherence to AIRS 211 standards requires 24-hour coverage. Thus, after-hours calls placed in the service areas of smaller call centers can be routed or “rolled-over” to larger, 24-hour call centers. This routing is achieved “transparently,” although it generally incurs further charges from LECs since central offices must be programmed to translate 211 to one “point to” number during business hours and another for evening/night/weekend coverage. To date, Community Connection of Athens, Georgia is the only 211 center that “rolls-over” to a 24-hour I&R (in this case, Atlanta 211). In such cases, provisions must be made to provide the 24-hour call center with database information from the smaller center. In the Georgia example, Community Connection’s database is accessible via the World Wide Web and therefore is readily available to Atlanta 211.

A large variation is seen among states pursuing these more regional approaches in terms of specific implementation strategies. Salt Lake City’s Information and Referral Center (the lead 211 developer in Utah), for example, appears to take a somewhat more *laissez faire* approach to implementing 211 service statewide, as I&R providers in areas outside Salt Lake City determine their own needs, capabilities and strategies for 211 implementation. United Way of North Carolina approaches implementation with a highly coordinated rollout of pilot site 211 systems scheduled to begin May, 2001. Indiana will utilize five to seven regional call centers while Ohio’s version of the model could *potentially* see a 211 provider in each of its 88 counties, though, in reality, many of Ohio’s call centers will provide service for a multi-county area.

The majority of states pursuing 211 implementation fall into the characterizations offered as Model Two. While some of these systems may eventually demonstrate characteristics more reflective of an advanced stage of development, current data suggest that initial rollout plans adopt the operational elements presented above.

Model Three – “Transparency” in Technology

A centralized administration with multiple call centers achieved by one organizational body represents a different model. States utilizing this model include Massachusetts and Texas.

As call center operations are centrally administered, so too database operation and maintenance under Model Three are centralized. Typically, call centers are linked to each other and to a centralized database via a Wide Area Network (WAN), which in turn may utilize broadband T1 circuits or Internet Protocol (IP) communications. Each call center is responsible for maintaining its own “section” of the statewide database, and updates are generally carried out daily. It should be made clear that utilization these elements does not necessarily preclude the construction, maintenance, and housing of individual databases by individual call centers. Rather, it is the use of a centralized database for essential operation that distinguishes the design. Calls are commonly routed as in other models. This model generally allows for simpler “rollover” between call centers, particularly with respect to database access. No state yet demonstrates an

operational system that is centralized in this fashion, although the two states mentioned above plan to move in that direction.

Additional Design Variation – Regional Technical Centers

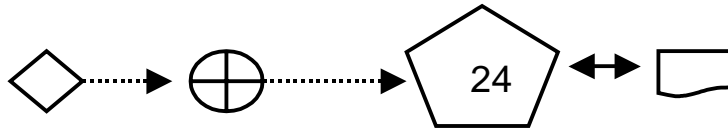
While most states' 211 implementation models can be categorized into one of these models, variations in specific model elements still exist. One example of this variation is seen in the California 211 Steering Committee's investigation of Regional Technical Centers (RTCs). RTCs allow for the provision of enhanced telecommunications services to smaller call centers that may not be able to afford such services on their own. Some of these enhanced services include natural voice recognition (for efficient and appropriate call routing) and TTY services, and the RTCs can be designed with the capability of easily adding in future enhancements.

As an example, if an RTC provided coverage for a three-county area in Southern California, a 211 call placed in Bakersfield would be routed to the nearest RTC. The RTC would determine the caller's location, the basic nature of the inquiry, and the most appropriate 211 call center to answer the inquiry. The most appropriate call center would *likely* be one in or near Bakersfield, but could also be the call center that handles Bakersfield's off-hours calls. The call would then be routed to the call center, with relevant information regarding the basic nature of the inquiry accompanying it, thereby allowing the call to be answered in the most appropriate manner.

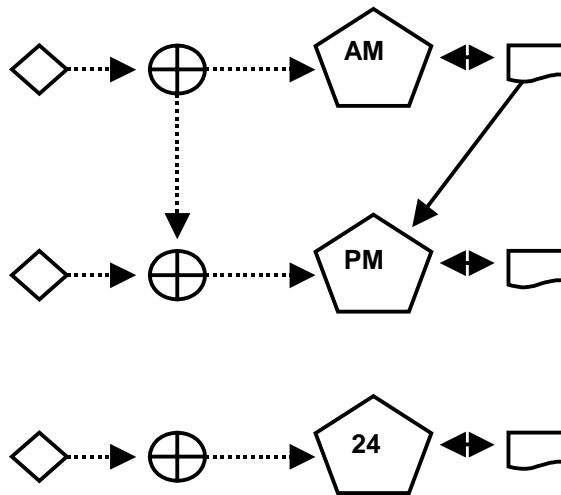
Regional Technical Centers are an expensive undertaking. PacBell has indicated that installation of a single RTC in Southern California providing services similar to those in the example above would cost approximately \$1.4 million. Some of these costs could potentially be distributed among the call centers serviced by the RTC. With the cost also comes a greater degree of efficiency and "transparent" service. Inquiries rolled-over to a 24-hour call center are answered with the caller never knowing that the call center is not in the immediate community. Information regarding the basic nature of the call allows for the most appropriate response to the caller's problem. Finally, RTCs allow for such enhanced services to be provided without individual call centers being required to fund expensive technical enhancements in-house.

Figure 1: 211 System Design Models

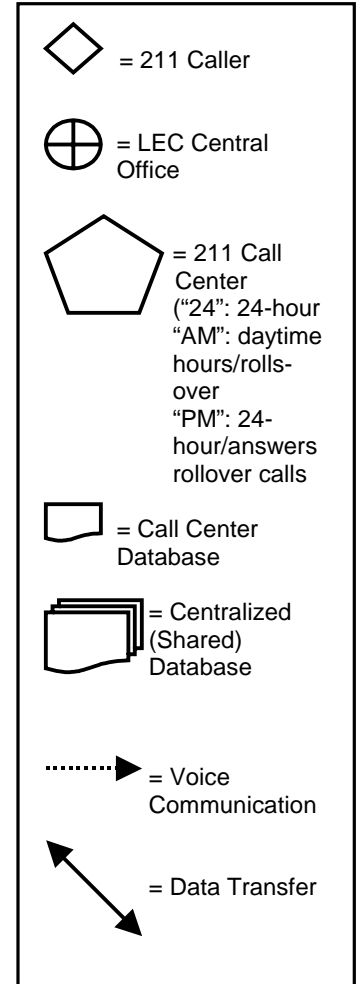
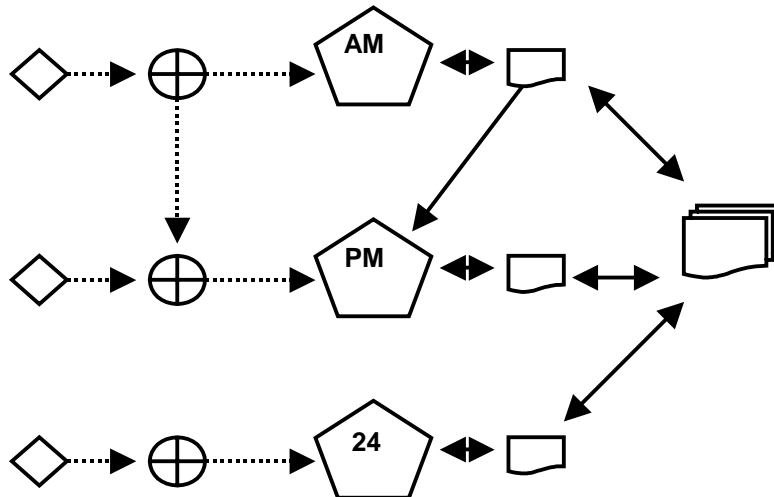
Model One



Model Two



Model Three



Issues in 211 Implementation and Possible Solutions

The favorable FCC ruling on assigning 211 to health and human services referral was only the beginning of a challenging implementation phase. Organizations attempting to implement 211 systems face considerable obstacles on a number of fronts. Reluctance on the part of LECs to provide timely information regarding pricing requirements, prohibitively high telephone service fees, lack of support by state utilities bodies, and challenges from other competing I&R providers are among the most commonly-cited problems encountered by members of the 211 movement.

I&R Opposition

A common and contentious obstacle faced by some organizations involved in 211 implementation is opposition from other groups and organizations providing I&R services. Smaller, specialized I&R providers often fear that their services will be rendered redundant (or will be perceived as such) by the introduction of an easily marketed, easily remembered dialing number for I&R access. This fear is especially acute when providing 211 service requires expanding database capabilities in an existing I&R, thereby often duplicating referral information housed in smaller agencies' databases. Doubts are occasionally voiced concerning a comprehensive 211 provider's ability to handle the difficult counseling protocols necessary among specialized, crisis-oriented hotline services.

This issue is frequently resolved via the maintenance of strong avenues of communication among I&R service providers. For example, Tennessee's Knoxville Information and Referral, Inc. (currently operating a 211 system known as Just Ask!) conducts monthly meetings for area I&R agencies focusing on inter-agency communication and information sharing. Referral statistics are shared, database taxonomies are refined, agencies are profiled, advice is given, and so on, in an effort to build community among I&R providers. Queries best handled by specialized agencies are directed to those agencies by Just Ask! In this forum, 211 is positioned as a tool rather than a hindrance to more specialized I&R services.

I&R "Competition"

At times, inter-agency disputes occur when more than one I&R agency in a given service area wishes to be the designated 211 provider for that area. Particularly in large metropolitan areas, multiple comprehensive, 24-hour I&Rs may exist and may appear equally qualified to deliver 211 service in terms of call center capability, database management, and so on. Even when not "equally" qualified, smaller I&Rs may challenge the right of another I&R service to provide 211 coverage. As the FCC 211 ruling does not specifically describe a means of evaluating "competing" I&Rs, and as AIRS is a guiding and accrediting rather than a *governing* body, 211 service commonly ends up being "granted" to the first agency able to negotiate agreements with LECs.

At times, a particular I&R or collaborative group will be designated by the state's Public Utilities Commission (PUC) as the "lead" developer of 211 service. Generally, the lead developer will be "vested" with the ability to evaluate agencies applying to provide 211 service and to grant contracts accordingly. While the FCC's 211 ruling does not specifically describe state PUCs as the designating authority for 211 services, the PUC relationship to LECs can determine the tenor of negotiations between LECs and

I&Rs. Specifically, if a PUC rules that LECs must negotiate provision of 211 service with “lead developers”, LECs will favor those officially-designated leaders over “competitive” I&Rs. States with PUC-211/I&R relationships and designating “authority” of this type include Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, Texas, and Utah.

Upon designation as a “lead developer” for 211 services (whether by PUC rule or collaborative consensus), a lead organization then has the authority to designate future 211 service providers - in effect, to choose among any “competing” applicant agencies to determine who is to provide 211 service. Methods for this determination are varied. Mass211, Inc. accepts and directly administers Request For Proposal (RFP) bids by candidate agencies [see Appendix A]. The Ohio Council of Information and Referral Providers asks that “community bodies” (libraries, city councils, area social service agencies, etc.) provide letters of support to candidate agencies, effectively allowing community bodies to “vote” for who is to provide 211 service in their area [see Appendix A] California’s 211 Steering Committee has adopted the evaluation method seen in Ohio.

Telephone Company Cooperation

With few exceptions, one of the more difficult subjects encountered in 211 implementation concerns 211 providers and the local telephone companies on which they are technically dependent. Often, I&R providers have little technical knowledge of telephone communication beyond intra-office, PBX-type switching systems. Likewise, LECs often have little knowledge of the technical requirements (or even the very function) of I&R providers under 211. Commonly, this leads to an over-estimation of potential costs on the part of LECs negotiating with 211 providers as LECs assume that 211 will require technical capabilities similar to those needed for emergency 911, non-emergency 311, or other “enhanced” three-digit dialing services. As no standard pricing scheme has been outlined or adopted for 211 service, LECs generally are free to determine costs with little reference to the actual costs of services provided. In fact, since 211 services should guarantee anonymity to callers, the expensive capability to identify and locate callers is precisely what 211 services do not need or want. Furthermore, as three-digit dialing, or “N11” services are considered a scarce and potentially lucrative resource, LECs often oppose their designation for I&R services. Taken together, these three factors – lack of knowledge of technical requirements and preferred system design by potential 211 providers, lack of understanding on the part of LECs regarding these same concerns, and a preference on the part of some LECs for alternative uses for 211 – often lead to slow movement on the part of LECs in 211 negotiations.

For example, to date the Traveler’s Aid Society of Rhode Island (TASRI) has seen its development of 211 slowed over an approximately four-month period while Verizon determines pricing requirements. As of January, 2001, TASRI was prepared organizationally, technically in terms of call center and database requirements, and financially to provide 211 service in Rhode Island. The final hurdle to 211 implementation was in LEC negotiations. Though Verizon, which provides telephone coverage for 90% of Rhode Island, was provided with detailed technical requirements for 211 setup and operation, no indication was given of estimated costs until April, 2001.

To a degree, such “extended” negotiations with LECs may also be attributable to the relatively low revenue generated by the provision of 211 service. Local Exchange Carriers often build tremendous revenue from the provision of extremely enhanced services to large clients. While an LEC might be entirely interested in providing 211 service, the revenues generated by the service do not, in themselves, justify a great deal

of attention on the part of the LEC. The provision of 211 service is therefore given a low priority, with resulting negotiations taking far longer than seems necessary from the perspective of the hopeful 211 provider.

Telecommunication Costs

Despite the relatively low revenues generated for Local Exchange Carriers by 211 services, the cost of obtaining telecommunications services from LECs is the most common hindrance cited by hopeful 211 providers. Costs can accumulate rapidly, particularly for initial setup, and can often be extremely difficult for smaller I&R agencies to cover. As well, costs can vary tremendously from area to area and from phone company to phone company. At times, a 211 provider may service an area under the “jurisdiction” of more than one LEC, thereby requiring separate negotiations (and separate pricing plans) for complete coverage.

An example both of great variation in costs and rapidly accumulated costs is seen in Indiana in the negotiations between the Indiana 211 Partnership and the three primary LECs in the state. It should be made clear that the costs discussed here were acquired in an “off the record” manner, and should therefore not be taken as commitments on the part of any LEC. In Indiana, high costs accumulate in the Monthly Recurring Charges (MRCs) suggested by Ameritech/SBC. The amounts suggested by Ameritech/SBC are \$160.00 per central office for set up (a one time charge of \$35,200) plus \$50 per central office in MRC. Following these numbers, the approximately 220 central offices operated by Ameritech/SBC in Indiana would then accrue approximately \$11,000.00 in monthly charges. Such costs are difficult, if not impossible, for many I&R providers to support, particularly when a single LEC often cannot provide statewide coverage and other companies must be enlisted. Sprint, the third primary LEC in negotiations in Indiana, has not indicated any proposed MRC.

Support from state utilities bodies again can help to mitigate and overcome such obstacles. Public Utilities Commission rulings can provide a foundation from which negotiations can be pursued, and can provide some degree of cost regulation for 211 services. An example of this is seen in the 211 implementation being pursued by United Way of North Carolina. The North Carolina Public Utilities Commission (NCPUC) requires LECs to file separate tariffs for each of the pilot sites being made operational. As well, NCPUC has ruled that, upon submission of proposed rates for setup and MRCs by the LECs, the earliest of these submitted will be made the standard required for each phone provider (a “precedent cap”). Such precedent caps help to ensure that 211 service is provided at fair rates (see Table 3 and Appendix A for more information).

Table 3: LEC Costs for 211 Establishment and Maintenance

State	LEC(s)	Service Establishment	MRC* / Per-minute rate
Connecticut	Southern New England Telephone (SBC)	\$10,000.00 for statewide system.	\$0.06 per minute
Florida	BellSouth	\$389.90 per basic calling area plus \$182.00 per central office ¹	None.
	Verizon	\$120.00 per central office. ²	\$40.00 per central office MRC ²
	Sprint	\$107.84 per host central office and \$215.68 per remote central office (when not in the configuration of the host office) ¹	None.
Georgia (Atlanta)	BellSouth	\$30,000.00 for setup of 60 central offices ³	\$0.03 for first minute \$0.02 each additional minute ³
Georgia (Athens)	BellSouth	\$389.90 per local calling area plus \$155.00 per central office ⁴	None ⁴
	Alltel	\$500.00 per local calling area ⁵	\$35.00 per local calling area ⁵
Indiana	Ameritech/SBC	\$130.00 per central office ⁶	\$160.00 per-central office MRC ⁶
	GTE/Verizon	\$120.00 per central office	\$50.00 per-central office MRC
	Sprint	\$240.00 per host central office	None
North Carolina	BellSouth	\$110.00 per central office	None
	Verizon	≤\$125.00 per central office	Unknown
	GTE	\$125.00 per central office ⁷	Unknown
	Sprint	\$95.74 per central office	Unknown
Tennessee (Knoxville)	BellSouth (original tariff)	\$30,000.00 for setup of 44 central offices ⁸	\$1,600.00 MRC paid after first six months of operation
	BellSouth (new Tariff)	\$389.90 per local calling area plus \$150.00 per central office	None

* - Monthly Recurring Charge

¹ - Tariffed rates.

² - Verizon has chosen to provide rates on an Individual Cost Basis for each service region. The rates quoted here are exemplary and apply to the Tampa Bay service region.

³ - The BellSouth tariff applied to services established in Atlanta was designed for general N11 services. This tariff called for a \$30,000.00 service establishment charge per "Tier 1" local calling area. In January, 2001, a new BellSouth tariff specific to 211 services was adopted. See Appendix A for more information.

⁴ - The BellSouth 211 tariff adopted in January, 2001 will be applied to services in Athens. See Appendix A for more information.

⁵ - Alltel's tariff for 211 service was submitted March, 2001.

⁶ - Ameritech/SBC indicated that its tariffed rates for 211 service will likely be "similar" to existing N11 rates. Ameritech/SBC rates shown here are based on that indication and should not be taken as commitments on the part of the LEC.

⁷ - All setup costs in North Carolina are required to adhere to a tariffed precedent cap cost, established in this case by GTE. See Appendix A for more information.

⁸ - The original BellSouth tariff applied to 211 service in Tennessee was a general N11 services tariff designed largely for commercial use. Since the adoption of a tariff designed specifically for 211 service in January, 2001 (which requires no MRC and greatly lowered establishment fees), BellSouth has agreed to apply the new tariff to the previously-existing 211 system in Knoxville.

State Commission Support

Support received by present and potential 211 providers from their state's public utilities bodies can aid rapid and efficient 211 implementation more than almost any other factor. The FCC 211 ruling does not describe or recommend the role to be taken by state commissions with regard to 211 services. From the federal perspective, the specific role of state commissions is best determined on a case-by-case basis. Some overall trends, however, are discernible. Many PUCs, like LECs, are unfamiliar with the concept of Information and Referral, its requirements, purposes, and importance. In these cases, it falls to the I&R community to proactively educate appropriate PUC representatives to gain support.

Several states' PUCs have taken particularly active roles in 211 implementation. Generally, these states' 211 service provider(s) or development leader(s) had received PUC approval for use of the 211 dialing code for I&R delivery *prior* to the FCC 211 rule. State commissions that have followed this pattern include Connecticut, Georgia, Massachusetts, North Carolina, and Utah. As the FCC rule is generally interpreted as providing no particular regulatory authority to individual PUCs, other commissions have opted for a "hands-off" approach. In these cases, I&Rs often struggle in negotiations with LECs that have been given little motivation to actively pursue 211 implementation and little means to judge between different groups attempting to provide 211 service. Between these two approaches falls explicit PUC support of qualified 211 implementation organizations. Such recognition can aid LECs in determining what 211 organizations are most appropriately negotiated with, and can provide impetus for timely and active negotiations. While it is not legally necessary for 211 providers to approach PUCs (they are free to negotiate service contracts directly with LECs), PUC involvement is clearly beneficial.

Conclusions

This report has assessed efforts across the United States to implement 211-accessed Information and Referral services. While the information here is not comprehensive in terms of all areas currently initiating 211 service, it provides a useful portrait of the trends shaping 211 implementation and the issues facing the organizations involved.

The trajectories and issues described here can serve 211 organizations at various implementation points by providing examples of effective strategies and approaches utilized in other areas. For established 211 organizations, whether currently operating 211 services or close to doing so, this information can familiarize them with other efforts as well as provide ideas for system expansion, technical enhancements, and so forth. These data can help to educate telephone company representatives about the basic function of I&R services and the technical necessities of an operational 211 system. State utilities bodies may use this information to similar ends as well as to understand what actions equivalent organizations in other states have chosen to take with regard to 211 implementation. In particular, the role that utility commissions can play, the issue of obtaining cost estimates and system designs from telecommunications providers, working out strategies and jurisdictional issues with local and regional I&R providers, and assembling a comprehensive business plan are all fundamental factors that appear to be important in launching 211 services.

Further research must be conducted as 211 efforts unfold. Strategies will change and new trends will emerge in accordance with the establishment of more numerous 211 systems and with technical developments in telecommunications and I&R services. Eventually, a truly nationwide, 211-accessed, I&R network will become available. The efforts detailed here each offer a distinct piece of that vision and represent integral parts of its realization.

Appendix A: 211 Implementation – State By State

This section presents findings from research conducted by the Telecommunication and Information Policy Institute, University of Texas at Austin, from January-May, 2001. The bulk of the data shown here were compiled via a combination of telephone interviews with representatives from 211 providers and implementation groups and research of Internet publications.

As 211 implementation is an ongoing process, so too it encompasses a constantly changing set of data. Data reflected in this report should not be taken as the ultimate characterization of the nature or state of 211 implementation efforts. Many of the efforts described here have progressed considerably since data were collected. Rather, these data are a reflection of the best available information regarding the “state of affairs” of 211 implementation in each location at the time that individuals were contacted. Nor is the list of 211 implementation efforts in this report necessarily comprehensive. We know that 211 implementation efforts do exist in locations not covered in this report, but information was unavailable at the time this report was researched and compiled.

State	ARIZONA
Company/Project	Community Information & Referral Service (CIRS)
Development Leaders	United Way of Arizona, Community Information and Referral Service, Inc., etc.
Utilities Commission	The Arizona Public Utilities Commission has indicated that it intends to facilitate relations between 211 providers and LECs. Few specific steps have yet been taken.
System Design	No specific system design has yet been determined. The centralized model (single call center under centralized administration seems the likeliest strategy, as it would utilize currently available call center resources.
Databases	CIRS currently utilizes a self-designed database containing information on 9,000 service programs offered by 2,500 agencies. It seems likely that existing database facilities would be retained in 211 implementation.
Notes - Project	<p>- CIRS is an independent, not-for-profit, 24-hour, comprehensive, multi-county information and referral service established in 1964. CIRS is based in Phoenix and provides I&R services for 10 of Arizona's 15 counties (the remaining 5 counties are serviced by an I&R provider in Tucson). CIRS received 177,606 inquiries in 2000.</p> <p>- Currently, plans are underway for the formation of a collaborative body which will work toward 211 implementation. To date, one meeting has been held among the "key players" in the process - CIRS, United Way, the Governor's office, 911 representatives, police bodies, etc. - and a feasibility study is planned for 211 implementation.</p>
Major Issues - Project	The greatest issue expressed by CIRS representatives is the considerable cost likely faced in 211 implementation, both in LEC involvement (central office programming, monthly recurring charges, etc.), and in potentially increased staffing requirements to meet projected increases in I&R inquiries. A need for information regarding recommended avenues and strategies for funding has been expressed.
Telco Involvement	Qwest
Rate Structure	Unknown.
Tariff	None yet proposed.
Surcharge	None yet proposed.
Setup Costs	Unknown.
Maintenance Costs	Unknown.
Notes - LEC	Due to the relatively early development level of 211 implementation in Arizona, substantial relationships with LECs have not yet been created. No specific information on costs is available.
Major Issues - LEC	
Source	Roberto Armijo, Community Information & Referral [phone interview 3/22/01] [updated 4/30/01]

State	CALIFORNIA
Company/Project	California 211 Steering Committee
Development Leaders	CAIRS, INFOLine Los Angeles, etc.
Utilities Commission	The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) is currently being petitioned by the Steering Committee to provide regulatory assistance in LEC service negotiations and in technical standards provision for 211 service providers. The petition is divided into two major areas: the first consists of arguments for active PUC involvement in 211 implementation while the second consists of recommendations for the actual language that is to be issued by CPUC concerning 211 should the Commission opt for involvement.
System Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decentralized. Current preferences expressed by the steering committee consist of an implementation strategy closely resembling that of the Ohio 211 Collaborative. This plan calls for implementation of 211 service on a county-by-county basis. Each 211 provider will operate on a county scope, with some providing services for surrounding counties as well. Those county-based agencies with specialized, non-comprehensive I&R capability will take steps to ensure more comprehensive coverage. As well, agencies that choose not to provide 24-hour service for their county will be required to contract with a 24-hour I&R provider in to receive "off-hours" calls. Whether a service provider chooses to expand to 24-hour coverage or to contract with a 24-hour call center, 24-hour service will be provided. - As well (and distinct from the implementation plans expressed in Ohio), Regional Technical Centers (RTCs) may be utilized as enhanced service support. RTCs can provide natural language recognition (for locational purposes), TTY service, etc. that many small I&R providers find financially prohibitive to pursue. RTCs serve multi county areas, and are an integral part of the switched 211 network. For example, an RTC in Southern California might handle a three-county area. If a 211 call is placed from Bakersfield, the call will be routed to the RTC, which will then determine, via natural language recognition, that the call is best answered by the Bakersfield 211 call center which will then receive the call accompanied by basic information pertaining to the nature of the inquiry. If the community's call center does not provide 24-hour service, the call will be routed/"rolled-over" to the appropriate nearby call center. Estimated costs for installation of an RTC servicing a three-county area as described above are approximately \$1.4 million.
Databases	Database facilities will be maintained individually by 211 call centers. Compatibility standards will be considered for call centers that are to roll-over to larger call centers for 211 service. Currently, no plans are explicitly made for the creation of a statewide database.
Notes - Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The California Alliance of Information and Referral Services (CAIRS) helped form the 211 Steering Committee in late 2000. CAIRS prefers that some form of statewide oversight is provided, either by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) or by a specific 211-oriented body as determined in agreement with CPUC and the Steering Committee. Such oversight will help to provide standardization in service and can help to mitigate potential disputes between "competing" I&Rs wishing to provide 211 services in a given area. - INFOLine Los Angeles has been operational since March, 1981 as a comprehensive, 24/7 I&R service. INFOLine serves more than 150 LA metro area municipalities with an annual budget of \$5.2M. INFOLine provides services in over 160 languages and TTY and handles approximately 180,000-220,000 transactions per year.

Major Issues - Project	Some smaller I&R agencies may find it difficult to impossible to adhere to full AIRS 211 standards. In these cases, and when a "more qualified" (by AIRS standards) call center is not available to provide 211 service, the non-accredited call center will still be utilized in the interest of providing
Telco Involvement	PacBell, Sprint, SBC
Rate Structure	Unknown.
Tariff	None yet proposed.
Surcharge	None yet proposed.
Setup Costs	Unknown.
Maintenance Costs	Unknown.
Notes - LEC	Due to the relatively early stage of 211 development in California, no specific information on LEC costs is yet available.
Major Issues - LEC	None indicated.
Source	INFOline Website < http://www.infoline-la.org >; Dawn Steele, INFOline Operations; Burt Walrich, INFOline Operations [phone interviews 4/17-18/01]

State	CONNECTICUT
Company/Project	United Way of Connecticut / Infoline
Development Leaders	United Way of Connecticut
Utilities Commission	The Connecticut Department of Public Utility Control (CDPUC) provides guidance and oversight regarding access issues. For example, cellular access to 211, while not currently available, is being pursued via CDPUC via development requests sent to cellular service providers.
System Design	Centralized call center with regional "community specialists" to provide "local presence". Call center uses a Lucent Definity switching system.
Databases	Call center utilizes Refer '99, a server-based database including approximately 4,300 agencies and 36,000 services (a conversion to Refer '00 is expected in Spring, 2001). Infoline uses 5 full-time employees for database maintenance, updates, and research (carried out on a continual basis). Sources for updates include surveys, printed materials (newspapers, newsletters, annual reports, etc.), information gathered by community specialists, information gathered from regular contact with agencies, feedback from follow-up (15% of all received calls), etc.
Notes - Project	Infoline was created in the mid-1970s as a comprehensive I&R service on a statewide, toll-free basis. No other comprehensive I&R services exist in Connecticut, and the transition to 211 capability made use of existing databases and call center facilities. United Way is the primary agency administering Infoline, though other agencies contribute financial resources on a partnership basis. Infoline serves a population of approximately 3.4 million, and handled approximately 205,000 referral transactions in the year 2000.
Major Issues - Project	No major obstacles in 211 implementation have been indicated.
Telco Involvement	Southern New England Telephone (SBC)
Rate Structure	Per minute: \$.06 per minute, billed in 18 second increments (rates are the same as previous system - see project notes)
Tariff	None yet proposed.
Surcharge	None yet proposed.
Setup Costs	Approximately \$9,000 to switch extant system to 211 capability (see "Notes-Project").
Maintenance Costs	No MRC is incurred for maintenance of central offices in 211-to-toll-free translation. The 211 call center utilizes three T1 circuits which incur monthly fees (currently approximately \$1,100.00 per circuit).
Notes - LEC	
Major Issues - LEC	No major obstacles with regard to LECs are indicated.
Source	Mary Hogan - Vice President for Information and Special Initiatives [phone interview 1/24/01] [updated 4/5/01]

State	FLORIDA
Company/Project	Telephone Counseling & Referral Service, Inc. (TCRS)
Development Leaders	TCRS, FLAIRS
Utilities Commission	The Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) declared that it has no authority delegated to it from the FCC ruling and therefore recommended that I&Rs work directly with telephone companies for assignment and implementation of 211 services.
System Design	Decentralized. Generally, 211 implementation will follow the 15 service districts determined by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) as a guiding framework. Some of these districts are single-county while others include multiple-county areas. 211 call centers, generally, will be previously-existing I&R providers which will add the number as a means to access their existing services.
Databases	No specific database collaboration standards have been endorsed for statewide use, though most call centers currently utilize IRIS software (and several are implementing web-based I&R services).
Notes - Project	Florida has 67 counties, approximately 16 million residents, and is home to 25-30 comprehensive I&R providers currently operating call centers (8-10 of these are 24-hour services and several others contract to local crisis lines for after hours call coverage). Budgets for 211 implementation range greatly between I&R agencies (ranging approximately from \$75,000 to \$200,000) depending on existing infrastructure, future increases in staffing needs, etc. Recently , an I&R provider in Brevard County became 211 operational.
Major Issues - Project	FLAIRS and the United Way of Florida are providing leadership guidance and support for 211 implementation. No single entity, however, has the authority to determine the establishment of 211 call centers or to require the implementation of operational standards. Nevertheless, FLAIRS has endorsed the standards determined by National AIRS. Many I&R agencies are adopting those standards as a matter of good faith (one agency in Florida is AIRS accredited and several others plan to pursue accreditation). Disputes between "competing" I&R agencies in one community who wish to provide 211 services have been addressed "community by community, usually with the intervention of funders".
Telco Involvement	BellSouth, Verizon, Sprint
Rate Structure	BellSouth: Tariffed flat rate for setup, no Monthly Recurring Charge (MRC) Verizon: Individual Cost Basis for each call center for setup and MRC Sprint: Tariffed flat rate for setup, no MRC is indicated
Tariff	- BellSouth submitted a 211 tariff pricing structure in December, 2000. Under this tariff, service establishment charges are \$389.90 per basic calling area plus \$182.00 per central office with no MRC ("General Subscriber Services Tariff - A13.79 211 Dialing Service", effective January 26, 2001). - Sprint plans to submit a tariff in Florida in March/April, 2001. The content of both of these tariffs is also detailed under the "Rate Structure" and "Setup Costs" heading for the respective LECs.
Surcharge	No surcharges are promoted or suggested by FLAIRS.
Setup Costs	BellSouth: Tariffed service establishment charges are \$389.90 per basic calling area plus \$182.00 per central office in the service area(s). Verizon: Provides rates on an Individual Cost Basis (ICB) for each call center. For example, the service establishment charge quoted to the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay is \$120.00 per switch (Central Office) for the initial installation. Verizon

administers 27 switches in Hillsborough County (the Crisis Center's service area).

Sprint: Tariffed service establishment charge will be \$107.84 per host central office and \$215.68 per remote central office (when it is not in the configuration of the host office).

Maintenance Costs

BellSouth: No MRC is indicated. Toll calls that originate from outside the call center's local calling area will incur long-distance charges accordingly.

Verizon: Provides rates on an Individual Cost Basis (ICB) for each call center. For example, the rate quoted to the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay is an MRC of \$40/switch. Verizon administers 27 switches in Hillsborough County (the Crisis Center's service area). As well, any toll calls originating from outside the center's local calling area will accrue charges.

Sprint: A tariffed flat rate is proposed, though no MRC will be required.

Notes - LEC

As the Florida PSC chooses not to actively administer decisions pertaining to 211 assignment and implementation, it falls to individual I&Rs to negotiate directly with LECs concerning 211 assignment and subsequent service contracts. Each LEC can determine how 211 is to be assigned, "many have taken a 'first come, first serve' approach", and each LEC has a distinct process for the assignment of the number. For example, BellSouth requires that each I&R submit request documents to Price-Waterhouse-Coopers (first come, first serve) while Verizon requires some level of community consensus verification that the 211 applicant is the preferred provider. Due to the "first come, first serve" approach, FLAIRS and the United Way of Florida have encouraged respective members to submit requests quickly to avoid being preempted by non-I&R entities.

Major Issues - LEC

Due to lack of PSC authority, FLAIRS and the United Way of Florida conducted a meeting with LEC representatives (12/12/00), with the cooperation of the Florida Telecommunications Industry Association (FTIA), to facilitate the building of relationships between I&Rs and LECs.

Source

Randy Nicklaus; TCRS Executive Director (and FLAIRS Board member) ["Summary of Florida Efforts to Implement 2-1-1"; submitted 2/23/01]

BellSouth. *General Subscriber Services Tariff - A.13.79: "211 Dialing Services"*. January 26, 2001. <<http://www.bellsouth.com>>

State	GEORGIA (Athens)
Company/Project	Community Connection of Northeast Georgia (CCNG)
Development Leaders	CCNG, United Way, etc.
Utilities Commission	Georgia Public Service Commission (GPSC) administers applications submitted by service providers for the assignment of 211 status.
System Design	Centralized - A single call center answers inquiries for a multi-county area around Athens, Georgia. CCNG is not a 24-hour I&R. Off-hours calls in the Athens service area therefore "roll-over" to United Way 211's call center in Atlanta (this service is tentatively due to begin in July, 2001). Currently, due to the low off-hours call volume originating from the Athens area, rollover service will be provided via a no-cost contract.
Databases	CCNG utilizes an IRis database and posts this database to the World Wide Web for access by citizens and other call centers. The Web-based database will be the primary referral tool for United Way 211 (Atlanta) when off-hours Athens calls are answered.
Notes - Project	CCNG received GPSC approval for delivery of 211 service in August, 2000. Initial installation of 211 service began in January, 2001, and was completed for the Athens service area in March, 2001. GAIRS has expressed a desire for CCNG to provide 211 services for an expanded area in the future. - CCNG has been operational since 1984 and is a private, not-for-profit organization serving a population of approximately 350,000. CCNG operates a comprehensive I&R (now the 211 call center), and two specialized I&R services as well as providing human services of its own.
Major Issues – Project	
Telco Involvement	BellSouth, Alltel
Rate Structure	BellSouth: A tariffed flat rate for setup, no MRC is indicated Alltel: A tariffed flat rate for setup and a flat rate MRC based upon local calling areas and monthly call volume. [see "Tariff" for more information]
Tariff	BellSouth: The original BellSouth tariff applied to 211 service in Georgia consisted of a "generalized" N11 service tariff designed for commercial use ("General Subscriber Service Tariff - A39. Abbreviated Dialing", effective September 25, 1999). Initial setup costs for three area counties indicated to CCNG were determined via this tariff (\$10,200.00 for one "Tier 2" calling area setup and \$2,650.00 for each of two "Tier 4" calling area setups). The new BellSouth tariff, designed for specific 211 dialing service ("General Subscriber Service Tariff - A13. Miscellaneous Service Arrangements", effective January 13, 2001), calls for setup charges of \$389.90 per Basic Local Calling Area and \$155.00 per central office in that area. No MRC or additional usage charges are indicated in this tariff. BellSouth has agreed to apply the new 211 tariff to services rendered for CCNG. Alltel: A tariffed setup charge of \$500.00 per basic local calling area (three calling areas are involved) and a tariffed MRC of \$35.00 for each basic local calling area will be incurred. This MRC is an initial charge, and may be increased in the future depending on call volume. Call volume will be determined by a calling study conducted each May and adjusted accordingly if necessary. Flat rate MRCs are as follows: 1-500 calls per month = \$35.00 MRC; 500-1000 calls per month = \$70.00 MRC; 1001+ call per month = \$100.00 MRC. ["General Customer Services Tariff - Section 11.1: 211 Access to Community Information and Referral", effective March 3, 2001]

Surcharge

No surcharge has been proposed.

Setup Costs

See "Tariff" for setup cost information.

Maintenance Costs

See "Tariff" for MRC information.

Notes - LEC

January, 2001 began initial central office programming in the Athens area. Complete coverage was achieved in March, 2001 (outlying counties experienced some degree of "programming difficulty"). Original costs indicated to CCNG by BellSouth (and subsequently accepted) for 211 setup were determined via the application of the original, general N11 services tariff. Costs under the new tariff are a great deal lower and, presumably due to the timing of 211 installation, will be the costs actually incurred by CCNG [see "Tariff" for more information].

Major Issues - LEC

Source

Tim Johnson - Executive Director, CCNG [phone interview 4/26/01]

BellSouth - Georgia. *General Subscriber Services Tariff - A.13.79: "211 Dialing Services"*. January 26, 2001. <<http://www.bellsouth.com>>

Alltel. *General Customer Services Tariff - Section 11.1: "211 Access to Community Information and Referral"*. March 3, 2001. <<http://www.alltel.com>>

State	GEORGIA (Atlanta)
Company/Project	United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta (UWMA) / United Way 211
Development Leaders	United Way of Metropolitan Atlanta
Utilities Commission	Georgia Public Service Commission administers applications submitted by service providers for the assignment of 211 status.
System Design	Centralized - a single call center handles inquiries from a 13-county metro area, maintains its own database, etc. United Way 211 also provides off-hours I&R services for 211 call centers in Athens and Columbus.
Databases	<p>- Consists of an IRIS database (Win NT server-based system) with the hope of finding more "Internet-friendly" software systems in the future. UWMA conducts 6-month surveys of service agencies to update database information.</p> <p>- 211 call centers in other areas (Athens, Columbus) that 'roll-over' to UWMA's call center for off-hours service deliver database information for their communities via the World Wide Web.</p>
Notes - Project	<p>- 211 status granted by GPSC July, 1997. UWMA administered previous First Call For Help I&R service.</p> <p>- As well, 211 service has become operational in Columbus, Georgia.</p>
Major Issues - Project	
Telco Involvement	BellSouth, Alltel (provides coverage for an extremely small community in the metropolitan area).
Rate Structure	See "Tariff" for past and current rate structure information.
Tariff	<p>- The original BellSouth tariff applied to 211 service in Georgia consisted of a "generalized" N11 service tariff designed for commercial use ("General Subscriber Service Tariff - A39. Abbreviated Dialing", effective September 25, 1999). Setup costs incurred to UWMA were determined via this tariff (\$30,000.00 per "Tier 1" Local Calling Area). Usage charges under this tariff were per-call, per-minute (\$.03 for initial minute, \$.02 each additional minute). Subsequent 211 systems in Georgia have incurred charges based on the new tariff outlined below.</p> <p>- The new BellSouth tariff is designed for specific 211 dialing service ("General Subscriber Service Tariff - A13.79 211 Dialing Service", effective January 13, 2001). This tariff calls for setup charges of \$389.90 per Basic Local Calling Area and \$155.00 per central office in that area. No MRC or additional usage charges are indicated in this tariff.</p>
Surcharge	None yet proposed.
Setup Costs	Approximately \$30,000 for setup of 60 central offices. See "Tariff" for past and current setup cost information.
Maintenance Costs	None.
Major Issues - LEC	UWMA representatives have described relationships with LECs as extremely friendly and smooth since initial inception of 211.
Source	<p>Joan Smith-Hague - Director, 211 Expansion; Bob Hamby - Manager of Data and Information Systems [phone interview 1/24/01] [updated 4/26/01]</p> <p>BellSouth – Georgia. <i>General Subscriber Service Tariff - A39. Abbreviated Dialing</i>. September 25, 1999. <http://www.bellsouth.com></p> <p>BellSouth - Georgia. <i>General Subscriber Services Tariff - A.13.79: "211 Dialing Services"</i>. January 26, 2001. <http://www.bellsouth.com></p>

State	INDIANA
Company/Project	Indiana 211 Partnership, Inc.
Development Leaders	Indiana I&R Network
Utilities Commission	While the Indiana Utilities Regulatory Commission (IURC) has not been formally engaged, the Commission chairman made a strong statement in support of 211 implementation in an address at the state conference of the Indiana 211 Commission.
System Design	Decentralized: 5-7 regional call centers linked with "rollover" capability to provide statewide 24-hour year-round coverage with "regional voice" (2-3 centers would hold regular business hours). State interests in the Partnership prefer a centralized call center for cost concerns. The centralized model is therefore kept "on the table" to accommodate those interests. Three ideas for system design are under consideration. The first consists of a direct 211 to toll-free-800-number translation (with no call tracking capability). The second design (the model most likely to be used in Indiana) adds to the translation capability of Model One with the utilization of a T1 "frame relay" circuit linking regional call centers. This design allows for "transparent rollover" between call centers as well as high-speed data sharing. The third design replaces the T1 circuit seen in above with voice-over-IP routing between call centers.
Databases	Database ideas are under proposal only, though taxonomic and "shareability" standards will be adhered to.
Notes - Project	The Indiana 211 Partnership consists of 21 member organizations with representation including the Indiana I&R Association, the state United Way association, state social service agencies, the state library, and other social service and I&R providers (some of which operate local, regional, or specialized I&R call centers/crisis lines). While it is not a full member of the partnership, the Indiana Telecommunications Association has participated in Partnership meetings. The Indiana 211 Partnership is "inclusive" in order to meet the widest variety of concerns possible, though AIRS accreditation is required of the I&R member agencies involved.
Major Issues - Project	State government provides funding for toll-free numbers for approximately 75 services as well as I&R services provided by the Health Department. Most I&R providers in Indiana are funded through philanthropy. There is little operational coordination between I&Rs on a regional basis and no experience on statewide projects. This leads to funding often contingent upon local or regional application, with little support for statewide projects. As well, some opposition to 211 implementation is encountered from smaller service providers who fear that small I&R/crisis line services will be rendered redundant by statewide 211 implementation. Such issues are resolved through the Indiana I&R association (state AIRS affiliate). The 211 Partnership is working to overcome these issues and to integrate all comprehensive and specialized I&Rs into a statewide 211 system.
Telco Involvement	Ameritech/SBC; GTE/Verizon; Sprint - (39 LECs exist statewide; Partnership submitted estimate requests to each). The Indiana Telecommunications Association has participated in the 211 planning process.
Rate Structure	Ameritech/SBC: while it has been indicated that rates would be "similar" to those incurred by general N11 usage (currently \$160.00 per central office MRC), no specific information has been made available GTE/Verizon: \$50.00 per-central office MRC Sprint: no specific information has been made available.
Tariff	None yet proposed.

Surcharge	None yet proposed.
Setup Costs	<p>Ameritech/SBC: while it has been indicated that rates would be "similar" to those incurred for general N11 setup (currently \$130.00 per central office), no specific information has been made available</p> <p>GTE/Verizon: \$120.00 per central office</p> <p>Sprint: approximately \$4,000.00 (\$80.00 per-hour "loaded labor" costs/approx. 3 hours labor apiece for 16 host switches statewide)</p>
Maintenance Costs	No maintenance costs beyond those included in MRCs have been indicated by any of the three major LECs.
Notes - LEC	<p><i>Note:</i> While indications have been made that 211 services will likely incur charges "similar" to those incurred by other N11 services, information regarding Ameritech/SBC rates and setup costs are not official and have been acquired solely on an "off the record" basis. Ameritech/SBC plans a "product roll-out" for 211 in late 2001. The Partnership submitted requests to each of 39 LECs for projected costs, reservation of 211 (requests were submitted prior to FCC ruling), and contact information in late 2000, though contact with LECs had been made through the Indiana Telecommunications Association since 1999.</p>
Major Issues - LEC	<p>Monthly recurring charges may be an obstacle to 211 implementation in Indiana. As no single LEC can provide coverage for the entire state, multiple relationships (and therefore multiple charges) will be required. As an example, GTE/Verizon operates approximately 220 central offices in the state (and is not the largest LEC). Setup costs for per-central office translation, multiplied over 220 switches, leads to a total of approximately \$26,400. More important is the MRC. Again, as an example, the switches operated by GTE/Verizon will incur approximately \$11,000 in monthly charges.</p>
Source	Lucinda Nord, Project Coordinator [phone interview 02/01/01] [updated 4/10/01]

State	LOUISIANA
Company/Project	Southwest Louisiana Education and Referral Center, Inc. (SLERC) / 232-HELP
Development Leaders	Lafayette General Medical Center, SLERC, etc.
Utilities Commission	The Louisiana Public Service Commission administers applications to provide 211 service and assigns the number to qualified applicants.
System Design	Centralized. A single call center handles calls for a six-parish area in the Acadiana region of Southwest Louisiana.
Databases	Approximately 1,500 agencies are represented. AIRS taxonomic standards are utilized.
Notes - Project	232-HELP was established by the United Way as a comprehensive I&R for the Acadiana region of Southwest Louisiana in 1965. This largely rural, 6-parish area is home to approximately 45,000 residents. 232-HELP handles approximately 10,000 referrals annually. July 6, 2000, 232-HELP began operating under the 211 dialing code.
Major Issues - Project	Very few obstacles to 211 implementation have been indicated.
Telco Involvement	BellSouth
Rate Structure	See "Tariff" for more information.
Tariff	<p>- The original BellSouth tariff for general N11 service required one service establishment charge of \$15,000.00 for a single "Tier 2" local calling area (Lafayette) and nine service establishment charges of \$1,750.00 apiece for the outlying "Tier 4" local call areas (totaling \$30,750.00) in the counties outside Lafayette. As well, the original tariff required a per call rate of \$.10 for the first five minutes and \$.02 per minute beyond five minutes. A minimum monthly usage fee of \$600.00 for the "Tier 1" local calling area and \$100.00 apiece for the nine "Tier 4" calling areas was required, with per-call rates beyond those amounts applying as well ("General Subscriber Services Tariff - A.39 Abbreviated Dialing"; effective October 23, 1999).</p> <p>- Any subsequent 211 systems serviced by BellSouth in Louisiana will be subject to the new tariff specific to 211 ("General Subscriber Services Tariff - A.13.79 211 Dialing Service"; effective January 26, 2001) which requires a service establishment charge of \$389.90 per basic local calling area plus \$150.00 per central office with no MRC.</p>
Surcharge	None yet proposed.
Setup Costs	Approximately \$30,750.00 in initial fees to switch extant system to 211 capability (see "Tariff" for more information).
Maintenance Costs	See "Tariff" for more information.
Notes - LEC	Calls are routed via 211-to-seven-digit translation.
Major Issues - LEC	No major obstacles to 211 conversion are indicated by SLERC representatives.
Source	<p>Jewel Lowe, SWLERC, Inc. [phone interview, 3/6/01]</p> <p>232-HELP website: <http://www.232-help.org></p> <p>Dan Lucas, Manager-Regulatory - BellSouth [phone interview 4/25/01]</p> <p>BellSouth – Louisiana. <i>General Subscriber Service Tariff - A39. Abbreviated Dialing</i>. October 23, 1999. <http://www.bellsouth.com></p> <p>BellSouth - Louisiana. <i>General Subscriber Services Tariff - A.13.79: "211 Dialing Services"</i>. January 26, 2001. <http://www.bellsouth.com></p>

State	MASSACHUSETTS
Company/Project	Mass211, Inc.
Development Leaders	Mass211, Inc., MAIRS, COMUW (see "Notes – Projects" for more information)
Utilities Commission	The Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy (DTE) granted regulatory approval to Mass211, Inc. (then the Mass211 Task force) in May, 2000. Since then, DTE has taken little part in 211 regulation or negotiations.
System Design	Decentralized (but with central coordination and oversight). Seven I&R service regions are established. Mass211 will route incoming calls to the appropriate regional center, will maintain the statewide database, and will monitor call centers for quality control, etc.
Databases	Databases will be centrally coordinated and regionally specific. Each regional 211 provider will carry responsibility for maintaining, administering, and updating its own regional section of the statewide database, which will be administered by Mass211. Updates to the database will be made roughly upon a daily basis. No decisions have yet been made regarding how the database will be shared (World Wide Web, WAN, etc.).
Notes - Project	<p>- The Mass211 Task Force was formed in 1999, was led by the Council of Massachusetts United Ways (COMUW), and the Massachusetts Association of Information and Referral Services (MAIRS) [Mass211 website], and gained regulatory approval from the Massachusetts Public Utilities Commission in May, 2000 (prior to the FCC ruling). The task force was incorporated as a private not-for-profit organization in April, 2000 and currently utilizes a 9 member board of directors (of which 3 directors are appointed by MAIRS, 4 are appointed by COMUW, and 2 are appointed by the governor).</p> <p>- Mass211 pursued state funding from the 2000 legislative session but was not granted it due to late decisions by DTE. Mass211 has lobbied extensively during the 2001 session. Bills have been filed in both the Senate and House of Representatives requesting allocation of \$1.5M for initial setup and operation. An additional \$600,000 will be provided by COMUW, leading to a total of \$2.1-2.2M in funding for the first year of 211 operation.</p>
Major Issues - Project	I&Rs wishing to provide 211 service must submit contract bids to Mass211. If more than one I&R in a given area wishes to provide service (which has occurred in two service regions), Mass211 expects collaboration between organizations in order to resolve disputes and to "pool resources".
Telco Involvement	Verizon
Rate Structure	No specific information on rate structures is available.
Tariff	None yet proposed.
Surcharge	None yet proposed.
Setup Costs	The only information indicated by Verizon has been an estimated cost of approximately \$54,000 for the setup of switches on a statewide basis. Routing will be accomplished via 211-to-toll-free-800-number translation from user to the "central office" and, "transparently", from that office via 211 WAN to the appropriate regional office.
Maintenance Costs	None yet indicated.

Notes - LEC

While Mass211 and the overall 211 implementation movement in Massachusetts has built a relatively detailed business plan in terms of the organization and operation of call centers, etc., little substantial progress has been made with regard to telco relationships. While Verizon has not taken a specifically oppositional stance to Mass211's efforts (with the exception of the PUC challenge outlined in "Major Issues - Telco") little effort has been made to assist Mass211 in determining viable technological models, etc.

Major Issues - LEC

Prior to the July, 2000 FCC ruling, Verizon challenged the 211 PUC petition filed by Mass211. This challenge was pursued on the grounds that, while Verizon was neutral on the topic of 211 implementation, it felt that DTE should not make a decision (and therefore prompt 211 implementation) before the FCC's decision was made. Verizon felt that this would help to avoid the possibility of having to dismantle a 211 system (or parts of one) if the FCC ruled against the national petition.

Source

David Voegele, Executive Coordinator - Mass211, Inc. [phone interview 2/28/01] [updated 4/10/01]

State	MARYLAND
Company/Project	2-1-1 Maryland Task Force / United Way Central Maryland
Development Leaders	Maryland State Association of United Ways, United Way of Central Maryland,
Utilities Commission	The Maryland Public Service Commission (MPSC) met with the Maryland 2-1-1 Task force and expressed its desire to maintain a "hands-off" approach to 211 implementation. MPSC has recommended that the Task Force pursue the adoption of a telephone surcharge for funding purposes. As well, MPSC has offered to lend advising assistance in LEC negotiations.
System Design	A specific decision has not been made concerning system design. If a decentralized model is pursued, between 3-5 call centers are expected and a centralized, shared database will be utilized. If the decentralized model is pursued, the Task Force Executive Committee will likely determine which I&R agencies will provide 211 services. A decision concerning specific system design is expected by late summer, 2001.
Databases	The likeliest option for database design, regardless of the eventual use of centralized or decentralized call centers, is a centralized design. For these purposes, the Task force has expressed interest in a database software product offered by North Light, Inc. If chosen, the North Light product will be used as a pilot program by 211 providers in Maryland.
Notes - Project	The 2-1-1 Maryland Task Force was formed in August, 2000 as a collaborative effort of the Maryland State Association of United Ways, I&R providers, local and state government leaders, and local and state health and human services agencies. Three committees have been formed within the Task Force: a design group focusing on the most efficient 211 design for Maryland, an information group working to determine the best database resources to utilize, and a development group encouraging participation by concerned organizations. A business plan is expected by mid-summer, 2001.
Major Issues - Project	No specific obstacles have been expressed by Task Force representatives.
Telco Involvement	Verizon
Rate Structure	Unknown.
Tariff	None yet proposed.
Surcharge	None yet proposed.
Setup Costs	Unknown.
Maintenance Costs	Unknown.
Notes - LEC	Due to the relatively early stage of 211 implementation in Maryland, no specific information regarding LEC costs is yet available. Preliminary dialogue with Verizon has been accomplished, but no specific determinations have yet been made.
Major Issues - LEC	
Source	Saundra Bond, Chair; John Geist, Project Manager - Maryland 2-1-1 Task Force [phone interview 4/14/01]

State	NORTH CAROLINA
Company/Project	United Way of North Carolina
Development Leaders	United Way of North Carolina (UWNC)
Utilities Commission	The North Carolina Public Utilities Commission (NCPUC) administers applications for 211 service and provides policy regulating prices that ILECs may charge for 211 services (see Notes - Telco for more information).
System Design	Decentralized. Regional call centers will provide 211 I&R services.
Databases	No standard database has yet been adopted on a statewide basis in terms of software or shareability, though each site will adhere to AIRS/Infoline standards of taxonomy, etc.
Notes - Project	Four pilot sites have been approved by UWNC - Asheville, Charlotte, the "Triangle", and the "Triad", all of which will become operational in early May, 2001. Each pilot site is administered by a previously existing United Way I&R service for that area. Each will be required to adhere to AIRS standards for database operation and management as well as marketing and general operation standards provided by UWNC. Estimated total costs for pilot site operations average \$500,000 per year.
Major Issues - Project	No major "negative" issues/obstacles have been expressed.
Telco Involvement	BellSouth, Verizon, GTE, Sprint
Rate Structure	Currently being determined.
Tariff	Several tariffs are applied to 211 service in North Carolina, depending upon which LEC is being utilized.
Surcharge	No surcharge is currently being pursued.
Setup Costs	
Maintenance Costs	Unknown.
Notes - LEC	NCPUC awarded UWNC with 211 assignment in November, 1999 (approximately 9 months before the FCC 211 ruling). As well, NCPUC has provided a number of regulatory policies governing LEC provision of 211 service. First, NCPUC requires LECs to file tariffs with specific regard to setup costs. Second, NCPUC has ruled that, upon submission of proposed rates for setup and MRCs, the earliest of these will be made the standard required for all LECs (a "precedent cap"). Currently, while setup fees have been determined and are in the process of being tariffed, MRCs are still being determined.
Major Issues - LEC	
Source	Brent Ennis, Government Relations Director - United Way of North Carolina [phone interview 2/26/01] [updated 4/15/01]

State	NEW HAMPSHIRE
Company/Project	NH HelpLine / Community Services Council of New Hampshire
Development Leaders	New Hampshire Help Line
Utilities Commission	The New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission (NHPUC) administers applications for 211 service. However, NHPUC has largely taken a "hands-off" approach to 211 implementation. See "Major Issues – Projects" for more information.
System Design	Centralized (though this is currently contested by "competing" I&R agencies).
Databases	Currently, HelpLine uses a customized, MS Access-based db (web-enabled) with approximately 6,000 agencies represented. Three full-time and one part-time staff members are responsible for db maintenance, which is carried out on a 12-month cycle. If HelpLine is awarded 211, the existing database will be utilized with possible software changes considered.
Notes - Project	New Hampshire has a population of approximately 1.3 million. There are approximately 7 comprehensive I&R services in New Hampshire, of which HelpLine is the only statewide, 24-hour call center (one other is a 24-hour service but provides coverage only in the Lebanon area while the remaining five are local and/or operate on a Monday-Friday basis). Of the estimated 110,000 I&R inquiries made annually statewide to all I&R call centers, HelpLine receives approximately 56,000 calls per year (the rest are divided among the other six "comprehensive" I&R services and a handful of specialized I&Rs). As well, HelpLine's database is accessible via the web and receives approximately 9,000 hits each month.
Major Issues - Project	HelpLine filed a petition with PUC to provide 211 service in August, 2000. Response from PUC was "guarded" yet optimistic (as PUC is generally unfamiliar with I&R and therefore had little standard means of judging petitions). "Competing" I&R agencies, however (United Way agencies, for example, of which there are 11 in New Hampshire - one of which provides I&R services), filed immediate interventions stating that they preferred the number be awarded to I&Rs on a local/regional basis. These interventions appear to be motivated by fears of redundancy should 211 be awarded to a central, statewide service provider. In response to this opposition, HelpLine conducted a series of "study group" meetings, which included the intervening I&Rs and PUC representatives, to provide information concerning 211 implementation in other states in hopes of hinting at some form of standard criteria for judgment. The intervening I&Rs have, for example, expressed wishes that HelpLine provide them with its database information so that they can provide equivalent services. HelpLine generally feels that the "competing" I&Rs will be unable to deliver consistent 211 services due to, for example, under-staffing of call centers (especially with the projected 40% increase in inquiries). As well, a system of non-standard, local/regional/statewide 211 I&R services, some providing 24-hour services while others do not, will likely create an unnecessarily complex switching/rollover model in relation to telephone technology. The debate appears to have become quite contentious, with one result being PUC opting to take a relatively "hands-off" approach to petition granting. In turn, the debate has become somewhat deadlocked in regards to definitive 211 status. HelpLine has nonetheless moved forward with inquiries to LECs and general planning with the hopes that 211 status will be granted to its agency.
Telco Involvement	Verizon
Rate Structure	No specific rate structure has yet been provided by Verizon, though estimated cost projections of \$23,000-\$25,000 per year have been expressed.

Tariff	No tariff has yet been filed.
Surcharge	As New Hampshire has no state income tax, a surcharge billed to telephone customers will likely be necessary to fund 211 services. The likelihood of such a surcharge being granted soon, however, currently appears quite low, in large part due to the contentious debate being waged among the I&R community.
Setup Costs	No specific setup costs have yet been provided by Verizon, though (in terms of switch setup) estimated costs will likely mirror those of toll-free 800 service.
Maintenance Costs	No specific maintenance costs have yet been provided by Verizon.
Notes - LEC	Though Verizon has provided "efficient" response to inquiries by HelpLine, little is yet known regarding specific cost projections for setup or maintenance of future 211 systems. It is clear that calls placed via local LECs (of which 10-15 would likely be included in the system) will route to Verizon switches and in turn to the 211 call center, regardless of locality. This system of routing provides Verizon's basis for hinting that costs will be roughly equivalent to toll-free 800 service.
Major Issues - LEC	
Source	Larry Singelais, Executive Director [phone interview 2/23/01]

State	NEW YORK
Company/Project	FIRST, Inc.
Development Leaders	New York 211 Collaborative / United Way of New York State / NYSAIRS
Utilities Commission	The New York Public Service Commission (NYPSC) has opted to serve in a facilitative capacity between the 211 Collaborative (and its member agencies/potential 211 providers) and ILECs. NYPSC has offered to help mediate any potential obstacles arising within these relationships.
System Design	Decentralized. Eventually, a total of 10-12 call centers are expected, with 3 sites serving as pilots (see Notes - Projects for more information).
Databases	No statewide database has been suggested and no standard database software or protocol has been decided upon. While it is a likely goal to attempt standardization for purposes of shareability, etc., such proposals are difficult ground upon which to gain consensus.
Notes - Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The New York 211 Collaborative is a cooperative organization of some 21 varied social service and I&R agencies. FIRST, Inc. is a private, non-profit I&R service administering 3 call centers in Westchester County (2 are statewide specialized hotlines and 1 provides comprehensive referrals for Westchester and Putnam counties). FIRST handles approximately 20,000 referral transactions per year, serving a population of approximately 900,000. - 3 pilot sites are planned for 211 implementation, each utilizing existing call center infrastructure and capability: Buffalo (United Way), Rochester (United Way), Westchester (FIRST).
Major Issues - Project	The majority of disputes within the New York I&R community concerning 211 implementation have dealt with smaller I&R and hotline agencies' fears of eventual redundancy upon 211 implementation. The NY 211 Collaborative has resolved the majority of these disputes through simple communication and inclusion - potential 211 service agencies are, for the most part, encouraged to pursue their specific interests, business models, and other issues in their own manner.
Telco Involvement	Verizon
Rate Structure	Unknown
Tariff	None yet proposed
Surcharge	None yet proposed
Setup Costs	Unknown
Maintenance Costs	Unknown
Notes - LEC	The New York 211 Collaborative is in the process of determining the overall operational model and function of future 211 service. As the Collaborative's project is currently in this early stage of development, no specific information regarding potential costs, rate structures, etc., is available. The New York State Telecommunications Association (NYSTA) has officially recognized the Collaborative as the primary body with which to negotiate 211 implementation and has been characterized as generally cooperative. NYSTA hosted two educational meetings for Collaborative members and representatives of the New York Public Service Commission which outlined potential difficulties (the majority of which were technical complexity issues) facing 211 implementation.
Source	Linda Daily - FIRST, Inc. [phone interview 3/7/01]

State	OHIO
Company/Project	211 Ohio Collaborative
Development Leaders	211 Ohio Collaborative / Ohio Council of Information and Referral Providers
Utilities Commission	Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) was asked to designate OCIRP as the administrating body for 211 applicants. PUCO would maintain little other role in 211 coordination and implementation, preferring to allow OCIRP and the Collaborative to work with LECs independently, etc. As of April, 2001, PUCO had not yet responded to OCIRP's request.
System Design	The Collaborative's approach to 211 implementation is designed on a county-by-county designation. The majority of Ohio's 88 counties currently have at least one social service agency, many of which operate both comprehensive and specialized telephone I&R services, many of which in turn are operated on a 24-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week basis. Each 211 provider will operate on a county scope, with some providing services for surrounding counties as well. Those county-based agencies with specialized, non-comprehensive I&R capability will take steps to ensure more comprehensive coverage. As well, agencies that choose not to provide 24-hour service for their county will be required to contract with a 24-hour I&R provider in to receive "off-hours" calls. Whether a service provider chooses to expand to 24-hour coverage or to contract with a 24-hour call center, 24-hour service will be provided. 24-hour call centers covering more than one county will identify a caller's location by zip code and will tailor referrals accordingly. As some counties currently have no I&R providers, and others have several potential candidates, the process of implementation will be phased in over time. Pilot sites (those areas already meeting, or able to meet national standards) will likely begin implementation first.
Databases	Since 211 call centers will operate on a county-by-county basis, few database decisions have been made on a state level. AIRS taxonomic standards will be adhered to, and "shareability" will be maintained for those call centers covering more than one county or providing off-hours services for other agencies. Many currently-operating comprehensive I&R services already have established database resources, and these will mainly be retained. Other agencies will be required to decide themselves the best route taken to providing comprehensive service and AIRS standards compliance, etc.
Notes - Project	<p>The 211 Ohio Collaborative consists of 27 member agencies, most of which are I&R providers of varying specializations and scopes. The Collaborative includes agencies ranging from local services on aging or mental health to various United Way organizations to currently operating I&R call centers (InfoLine, HelpLink, First Call For Help, etc.). These agencies provide services to 34 counties with a total population of approximately 7.7 million. Combined, these agencies received a total of 754,502 I&R calls in 1999. "The...Collaborative estimates that the total number of calls accepted by community based I&R services (including those that are not currently members of the Collaborative) is approximately 850,000-900,000 a year." The Collaborative was formed in 1999 as part of the Ohio Council of Information and Referral Providers (OCIRP).</p> <p>- Founded in 1978, OCIRP provides guidance on standards for the delivery of I&R services and provides support to service agencies. OCIRP administers applications from agencies that wish to provide 211 services and provides standards oversight and guidance among those providers.</p>
Major Issues - Project	If OCIRP is designated as the coordinating body for 211 activities in Ohio, it will require interested organizations to complete an application prior to being approved as a 211 call center. In order to avoid potential conflicts in which more than one agency wishes to serve as the 211 call center in a service area, the applying agency will be required to demonstrate community support for its designation as the 211 provider. This will be accomplished

via the candidate agencies soliciting letters of recommendation from various representative community bodies (for example: city councils, county commissioners, area social service agencies, local library systems, etc.). If a candidate agency enlists the support of 80% of a given list of community bodies, that agency is granted approval over any "competitors".

Telco Involvement

Ameritech (SBC), Verizon, Cincinnati Bell, Sprint

Rate Structure

Unknown. However, due to the proposed system design (namely, a county-by-county I&R call center), routing will be achieved with direct 211-to-local-7-digit-number translation, thereby eliminating, in most cases, any costs with regard to maintenance of toll-free-800 service, etc.

Tariff

None yet proposed.

Surcharge

None yet proposed.

Setup Costs

Unknown.

Maintenance Costs

Unknown.

Notes - LEC

Due to the relatively early stage of 211 implementation in Ohio, information from LECs is regarding rate structure/costs, setup costs, and other aspects of 211 operation is sparse to nonexistent. The Ohio Telecommunications Industry Association (OTIA) currently has no representation on the 211 Ohio Collaborative, though the Collaborative has met with OTIA representatives on several occasions. LECs have expressed agreement with OCIRP being designated coordinator of 211 activities in Ohio and are currently working "in-house" to develop a proposed rate structure and timeline for 211 installation.

Major Issues - LEC

The Collaborative and LECs met with the PUCO in February, 2001 to discuss pricing and installation timeline issues. The larger LECs cited the complexity of the implementation process, indicating that it "may take some time" to develop an implementation plan. Smaller LECs do not face the same system complexities as their larger counterparts and anticipate a relatively smooth, inexpensive transition to 211.

Source

Gigi Woodruff, OCIRP Project Manager [phone interview 2/9/01] [updated 4/4/01]

211 Ohio Collaborative website. <<http://www.211ohio.net>>

State	RHODE ISLAND
Company/Project	Traveler's Aid / Helpline
Development Leaders	
Utilities Commission	The Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission (RIPUC) may aid in LEC negotiations.
System Design	Centralized. A single call center will handle calls statewide 24-hours a day year-round.
Databases	Statewide database functions will be handled at the centralized call center. 1,200 services and agencies will be represented. Hopes to make database information available on the Web are expressed.
Notes - Project	The Traveler's Aid Society of Rhode Island (TASRI) operates the state's only 24-hour comprehensive statewide I&R. Approximately 12 other comprehensive but local and 35 specialized I&Rs operate throughout the state, serving a total population of approximately 1.2 million. TASRI currently handles approximately 30,000-35,000 transactions annually (32,862 in 2000). 211 operation will be partially funded through legislative appropriations (\$455,107 is to be requested during the 2001 session).
Major Issues - Project	TASRI submitted an application to RIPUC for provision of 211 service in May, 1999. Despite support from a number of major entities (Department of Human Services, United Way, Rhode Island Lottery Commission, etc.), a number of I&Rs have vocally opposed 211 service being operated by TASRI. The rationale for this opposition is the fairly commonplace fear of being rendered redundant by the existence of a 211 I&R service. While the debate became quite vocal and contentious for a time, TASRI opted to move forward with LEC negotiations, etc., in the hopes of smoother 211 implementation.
Telco Involvement	Verizon
Rate Structure	Unknown.
Tariff	None yet proposed.
Surcharge	None yet proposed.
Setup Costs	Unknown.
Maintenance Costs	Unknown.
Notes - LEC	
Major Issues - LEC	Verizon has not been forthcoming with estimates or commitments concerning setup costs, rate structures, etc., for the delivery of 211 service in Rhode Island. A "certain reluctance" has been detected in their negotiations with TASRI.
Source	Christina Amedeo, Travelers Aid Society of Rhode Island [phone interview 3/21/01] ["transcript" of presentation given to 211 representatives in New Hampshire, submitted 3/9/01 by Larry Singlais]

State	TENNESSEE
Company/Project	Just Ask! / Knoxville I&R, Inc.
Development Leaders	Knoxville Information and Referral, Inc.
Utilities Commission	The Tennessee Regulatory Authority (TRA) is separate from full utilities regulation and deals with telephone issues. TRA administers applications for 211 service providers.
System Design	Centralized. A single call center handles inquiries for Knox County (with expansion plans to include a nine county area). 2 call specialists staff the office at a time to provide 24/7 coverage.
Databases	Just Ask! uses Centaurus, a server-based database designed generally for medical applications. This database is not recommended for I&R purposes, as full taxonomic compliance and "searchability" is difficult to achieve. The database was selected by Knoxville I&R, Inc.'s board of directors, none of whom had previous experience with I&R. 608 agencies and services are included in the database (as of 02/05/01), a number which grows on a weekly basis. One full-time employee researches services, provides updates, and will continue in quarterly updates until the database grows to a point at which frequent updates become impossible. Standard Infoline/AIRS taxonomy is used.
Notes - Project	Just Ask! is operated by Knoxville Information and Referral, Inc., is a "stand-alone" agency in partnership with United Way, and is the only 211 service in Tennessee. Just Ask! became operational in July, 2000 and serves a population of approximately 350,000. The call center handles approximately 50-60 referrals each day, with monthly totals increasing with time (1,508 referrals in January, 2001; 1,162 in December, 2000; 908 in November, 2000). Similar systems are planned in Nashville, Memphis, and Chattanooga, though Nashville is the only area from which an application to provide 211 service has been submitted to TRA.
Major Issues - Project	Just Ask! has faced opposition on a number of fronts. Among the most pointed came from the local domestic violence center, the Contact Crisis Center (a telephone counseling and I&R service), and the local senior citizens I&R service (which maintains its own referral database). Concerns voiced from the first two included doubts that Just Ask!'s call specialists would be able to handle the difficult counseling protocols utilized in these services. The latter service feared that it would be rendered redundant by a comprehensive I&R provider. To deal with these concerns, Just Ask! hosts large monthly meetings for service agencies which focus on inter-agency communication and trust-building (referral statistics are shared, taxonomic terms are shared and refined as they apply to local services, one agency is highlighted for a profile each month, etc.). Just Ask! finds that such meetings are effective in engendering trust among the community of service agencies.
Telco Involvement	BellSouth
Rate Structure	Tariffed flat rate recurring monthly (see Tariff).
Tariff	The original BellSouth tariff required a \$30,000 fee for setup (switches translate 211 to toll-free) and a \$1,600/month MRC to be paid after the first six months of operation. A tariff to be applied to the other areas under proposed 211 implementation will require a \$3,000 setup fee with an unknown recurring monthly rate to be paid immediately upon operation.

Surcharge	No surcharge has been proposed.
Setup Costs	See "Tariff".
Maintenance Costs	Included in recurring monthly rate.
Notes - LEC	
Major Issues - LEC	
Source	Jan Collinson, Director [phone interview 02/06/01]

State	TEXAS
Company/Project	Texas Information and Referral Network (TIRN)
Development Leaders	Texas Health and Human Services Commission, United Way, etc.
Utilities Commission	The Texas Public Utilities Commission (PUC) amended its original language and adopted a new N11 rule affecting 211 implementation March 20, 2001. This ruling designates the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) as the administrative body for 211 development in Texas. As well, PUC is considering the adoption of a 211 implementation docket. PUC will work with LECs to facilitate the determination of technical facilities and prices for 211 needs through the implementation docket.
System Design	<p>- Decentralized: Statewide 211 services will be provided by 25 Area Information Centers (AICs), each of which provides standardized, high-quality I&R for a multi-county area. Texas I&R Network AICs are currently in the second year of a three-year phase-in process for Internet connectivity between AICs in which nine AICs were connected in the first year, eight in the second, and eight will be connected in the third. AICs consist of previously existing I&R community facilities, which often enhance and update their capabilities in order to reach full TIRN (Texas I&R Network) compliance.</p> <p>- "Distant" 211 calls in Texas will be delivered to call centers via use of the Texas General Services Commission's TEX-AN (Texas Agency Network) telecommunications backbone network. TEX-AN III is the nation's largest state telecommunications network for voice and data transport, serving over 4,500 locations with more than 25,000 circuits statewide. TEX-AN facilities are leased by the Commission from a number of telecommunications providers. This leads to an advantage for state agencies that utilize the network, as long-distance fees and 1-800 surcharges from LECs are avoided when the network is accessed. The primary advantage to this type of network usage is found in highly "transparent" rollover capabilities between call centers on the network. 211 calls are translated by LEC central offices to a toll-free 1-800 number for access to TEX-AN. At this point, the network takes over, routing calls to the nearest active 211 call center as appropriate. Further programming may also be necessary at LEC central offices to route calls within a calling center's local calling area directly to the center, bypassing TEX-AN. This avoids a call from metropolitan San Antonio, for example, being unnecessarily routed to the long-distance network simply to be routed back to the local calling area and to the San Antonio call center. A nighttime 211 call from an adjacent area not served by a 24-hour call center, however, will be routed via network access. TEX-AN currently supports several regional 911 commissions across the state.</p> <p>- An alternative design currently under consideration again deals with the routing of 211 calls to and between call centers. In this scenario, a Telecommunications Technical Center (TTC) would be constructed and would receive all 211 calls dialed in Texas. The TTC would automatically determine which 211 AIC was the most appropriate to answer the call, based on location of origin and time of day, and route the call appropriately (possibly utilizing the TEX-AN network as described above). The most important advantage offered by a TTC is in the extremely enhanced services that can be offered to TIRN, the AICs, and the public. A TTC can log all incoming 211 calls and provide a comprehensive, statewide measurement of 211 usage statistics. If a 211 user chooses to access 211 services via the Internet, he or she might access the TTC, enter the nature of the inquiry and a phone number by which to be reached, and wait. The</p>

inquiry would be passed by the TTC to the appropriate 211 call center, at which point the inquiry's pertinent data could be displayed for the 211 call specialist. The Specialist would then place a call to the 211 user. TTY and other enhancements could also be provided by a TTC. This type of statewide call management offers advantages in terms of routing "transparency" while providing enhanced technical capabilities to call centers and regions that might otherwise not be able to afford such facilities.

Databases

- Regional Databases are maintained by AICs and are combined into a centralized, statewide Internet "clearinghouse" database. AICs will carry responsibility for updating their "section" of the statewide database, which will be the basis for "rollover" I&R services. AICs will maintain their own in-house database facilities for regional service needs.

- An Internet development plan is underway for database transfer, with 17-18 AICs to be linked via IP by August, 2001 (the remaining 7-8 AICs will be linked in the following fiscal year).

Notes – Project

- The Texas Information and Referral Network is a public-private partnership organization led by bodies including the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, United Way, Texas AIRS, etc. TI&RN was formed as a means of linking the vast I&R resources in Texas in the hopes of providing greater efficiency and delivery of high standards for I&R services.

- A three- to four-year phased implementation is planned for 211 services. The first group of AICs to deliver 211 are chosen based on relative preparedness in terms of staffing, technology, central proximity to population centers, and compliance with national standards and accreditation. The first AICs to be phased in to 211 service will be centers in Dallas, Fort Worth, Amarillo, Midland/Odessa, San Antonio, McAllen, Houston, Beaumont, And Temple.

Major Issues - Project

Telco Involvement

SBC

Rate Structure

Unknown

Tariff

None yet proposed.

Surcharge

None will likely be proposed.

Setup Costs

Unknown.

Maintenance Costs

Unknown.

Notes – LEC

Major Issues – LEC

The initial bid for 211 service made by SBC was rejected by TIRN due to prohibitively high costs. Future LEC negotiations are subject to PUC oversight as detailed above and will originate via requests for proposals (RFPs). The GSC will also be involved with this bidding process.

Source

Judy Windler, Director – Texas Information and Referral Network [phone interviews 3/01-4/01]

Telecommunications and Information Policy Institute. *"Texas 211:" Implementing a Toll-Free Electronic Information and Referral Telephone Service in Texas.* November, 1998

State	UTAH
Company/Project	The Information and Referral Center
Development Leaders	United Way, I&RC
Utilities Commission	The Utah Public Utilities Commission (UPUC) designated 211 as an I&R number and I&RC as the lead 211 developer in December, 1999. The UPUC aims to facilitate LEC negotiations and has held one meeting thus far.
System Design	Decentralized. Future 211 call centers will utilize existing comprehensive I&R call centers in 4-5 counties and multi-county service regions. 8-9 smaller, volunteer-staffed call centers are potential candidates as well.
Databases	Undetermined for specific call centers. The Utah State Chief Information Officer's office, however, is helping to develop a statewide online database. Each regional call center would be expected to contribute to this database resource.
Notes - Project	The I&RC serves a population of approximately 900,000-1M in Salt Lake County and handles approximately 30,000-35,000 transactions per year between its three I&R and hotline services (a general I&R line, a specialized health line, and a domestic violence crisis line).
Major Issues - Project	Two major concerns have been stated among various I&R providers with regard to 211 implementation. The first is an insistence upon strong local voice for regional call centers. Regional I&Rs are commonly small, volunteer operated services with close ties to their communities. Little desire for centralized I&R services or oversight is seen among these services. Simultaneously, several of the smaller 211 candidates have expressed concerns over their ability to properly handle the likely increase in inquiries upon 211 implementation (and the abilities of their local social service agencies to handle increased referrals). These concerns are addressed simply by allowing regional 211 centers control over what they would like to do. When an I&R believes that it is ready to switch to 211, as the necessary funding, etc., it will do so.
Telco Involvement	US West, Qwest
Rate Structure	Unknown.
Tariff	None yet proposed.
Surcharge	None yet proposed.
Setup Costs	Unknown.
Maintenance Costs	Unknown.
Notes - LEC	
Major Issues - LEC	
Source	Josh Pederson, Director - The Information and Referral Center [phone interview 3/9/01] [updated 4/15/01]

State	VERMONT
Company/Project	Vermont 2-1-1
Development Leaders	United Way
Utilities Commission	The Vermont Public Service Board administers 211 applications and provides guidance and oversight for 211 service providers.
System Design	Centralized. A single call center will be created with sub-contracted "community specialists".
Databases	A statewide 211 database is in development and will build on existing regional databases and the online statewide database owned and maintained by the Vermont Agency of Human Services.
Notes - Project	
Major Issues - Project	Difficulties in obtaining operational funding have been expressed. A verbal commitment was received for a matching grant of up to \$3,000.00 from United Ways of Vermont. As well, Verizon invited Vermont 2-1-1 to apply for a \$5,000.00 development grant.
Telco Involvement	Verizon
Rate Structure	As it provides I&R only for Windham County, Helpline is accessed via a local call. No charges are incurred to the service provider beyond those required to maintain a local telephone account.
Tariff	None yet proposed.
Surcharge	None yet proposed.
Setup Costs	Unknown.
Maintenance Costs	Unknown.
Notes - LEC	
Major Issues - LEC	
Source	Sharon Tierra, Vermont 2-1-1 Coordinator [phone interview 1/31/01] [updated 4/4/01]

Appendix B: 211 Sources and Further Information

NATIONAL

- 211 National Collaborative, <<http://www.211.org>>
- Laura Rodriguez-Kitkowski, AIRS

ARIZONA

- Roberto Armijo, Community Information & Referral, Inc.

CALIFORNIA

- INFOLine website: <<http://www.infoline-la.org>>
- Dawn Steele, Operations - INFOLine
- Burt Walrich, Operations - INFOLine

CONNECTICUT

- Mary Hogan, Vice President for Information and Special Initiatives – United Way of Connecticut INFOLine

FLORIDA

- Randy Nicklaus, Executive Director – Telephone Counseling and Referral Service

GEORGIA (Athens)

- Tim Johnson, Executive Director - Community Connection of Northeast Georgia
- BellSouth - Georgia. *General Subscriber Services Tariff - A.13.79: "211 Dialing Services"*. January 26, 2001. <http://www.bellsouth.com>>
- Alltel. *General Customer Services Tariff - Section 11.1: "211 Access to Community Information and Referral"*. March 3, 2001. <<http://www.alltel.com>>

GEORGIA (Atlanta)

- Joan Smith-Hague, Director-211 Expansion – Atlanta 211
- Bob Hamby - Manager of Data and Information Systems – Atlanta 211
- BellSouth – Georgia. *General Subscriber Service Tariff - A39. Abbreviated Dialing*. September 25, 1999. <<http://www.bellsouth.com>>
- BellSouth - Georgia. *General Subscriber Services Tariff - A.13.79: "211 Dialing Services"*. January 26, 2001. <<http://www.bellsouth.com>>

INDIANA

- Lucinda Nord, Project Coordinator – Indiana 211 Partnership, Inc.

LOUISIANA

- 232-HELP website: <<http://www.232-help.org>>
- Jewel Lowe, Southwest Louisiana Education Resource Center, Inc.
- Dan Lucas, Manager-Regulatory - BellSouth
- BellSouth – Louisiana. *General Subscriber Service Tariff - A39. Abbreviated Dialing*. October 23, 1999. <<http://www.bellsouth.com>>
- BellSouth - Louisiana. *General Subscriber Services Tariff - A.13.79: "211 Dialing Services"*. January 26, 2001. <<http://www.bellsouth.com>>

MASSACHUSETTS

- David Voegele, Executive Coordinator - Mass211, Inc.

MARYLAND

- Saundra Bond, Chair – Maryland 2-1-1 Task Force
- John Geist, Project Manager - Maryland 2-1-1 Task Force

NORTH CAROLINA

- Brent Ennis, Government Relations Director - United Way of North Carolina

NEW HAMPSHIRE

- Larry Singelais, Executive Director – New Hampshire HelpLine

NEW YORK

- Linda Daily - FIRST, Inc.

OHIO

- Gigi Woodruff, Project Manager - Ohio Council of Information and Referral Providers
- 211 Ohio Collaborative website: <<http://www.211ohio.net>>

RHODE ISLAND

- Christina Amedeo, Travelers Aid Society of Rhode Island

TENNESSEE

- Jan Collinson, Director – Knoxville I&R, Inc.

TEXAS

- Judy Windler, Director – Texas Information and Referral Network
- Telecommunications and Information Policy Institute. *“Texas 211:” Implementing a toll-Free Electronic Information and Referral Telephone Service in Texas.* November, 1998

UTAH

- Josh Pederson, Director - The Information and Referral Center

VERMONT

- Sharon Tierra, Coordinator - Vermont 2-1-1

Appendix C: Excerpts of FCC Rule 00-256A1 - Assigning 211 Dialing Codes For Use by Community Information and Referral Services

Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)	
)	
Petition by the United States Department of Transportation for Assignment of an Abbreviated Dialing Code (N11) to Access Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Services Nationwide)	NSD-L-99-24
)	
Request by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, United Way of America, United Way 211 (Atlanta, Georgia), United Way of Connecticut, Florida Alliance of Information and Referral Services, Inc., and Texas I&R Network for Assignment of 211 Dialing Code)	NSD-L-98-80
)	
The Use of N11 Codes and Other Abbreviated Dialing Arrangements)	CC Docket No. 92-105
)	
)	

THIRD REPORT AND ORDER AND ORDER ON RECONSIDERATION

Adopted: July 21, 2000

Released: July 31, 2000

Petition for Assignment of an N11 Code for Access to Information and Referral Services

Background

1. On May 28, 1998, the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, the United Way of America, United Way 211 (Atlanta, Georgia), United Way of Connecticut, Florida Alliance of Information and Referral Services, Inc. and the Texas I&R (Information and Referral) Network (collectively, Information and Referral Petitioners), filed a petition for nationwide assignment of an abbreviated dialing code for access to community information and referral services (Information and Referral Petition).⁹ The Information and Referral Petitioners contend that there

⁹ The Petition requested the 211 code. Request by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, United Way of America, United Way 211 (Atlanta, Georgia), United Way of Connecticut, Florida Alliance of Information and Referral Services, Inc., and the Texas I&R Network for Assignment of 211 Dialing Code (Information and Referral Petition). In response, the Commission issued a public notice for comment on their petition. *See* Request by Alliance

is a demonstrated need for an easy to remember, easy to use abbreviated dialing code that will enable persons in need to be directed to services providing free information and referrals to community service organizations. Petitioners argue further that assigning an N11 code to such services would provide an important adjunct to the codes that the Commission has already assigned to meet other public needs.¹⁰ The Information and Referral Petitioners cite to a range of human needs not addressed by either the 911 code or police non-emergency 311 code such as housing assistance, maintaining utilities, food, finding counseling, hospice services and services for the aging, substance abuse programs, or dealing with physical or sexual abuse.¹¹ The Information and Referral Petitioners state that there is strong interest in several states for developing an N11 code for this purpose,¹² and that the tools exist to do so. The Information and Referral Petitioners contend that assigning an N11 code for such purposes is in the national interest, and commenters overwhelmingly support the proposal.¹³

Discussion

2. We find that the Information and Referral Petitioners have demonstrated sufficient public benefits to justify use of a scarce public resource,¹⁴ and we therefore assign 211 to be used for access to community information and referral services. Individuals facing serious threats to life, health, and mental well being have urgent and critical human needs that are not addressed by dialing 911 for emergency assistance or 311 for non-emergency police assistance. For example, the Information and Referral Petitioners present a call summary prepared by United Way 211 (based in Atlanta) for the year 1997, which indicates that seven percent of the calls to United Way 211 involved immediate shelter needs, 20 percent involved rental/mortgage assistance needs (for example, threatened eviction), 16 percent involved utility issues, critical in inclement

of Information and Referral Systems, United Way of America, United Way 211 (Atlanta, Georgia), United Way of Connecticut, Florida Alliance of Information and Referral Services, Inc., and the Texas I&R Network for Assignment of 211 Dialing Code, *Public Notice*, DA 98-1571, NSD File No. L-98-80 (rel. Aug. 6, 1998).

¹⁰ The Information and Referral Petitioners contend that assignment of 211 would compliment existing uses of 911 for emergency services and the assignment of 311 for police non-emergency uses in the *N11 First Report and Order*. Information and Referral Petition at 5-6.

¹¹ *See id.* at 6.

¹² In an *ex parte* dated February 22, 2000, representatives of the Information and Referral Petitioners provided Commission staff with an updated state-by-state status of 211, indicating that 211 was active in at least one locality in Connecticut and a thirteen-county area in Atlanta, Georgia. The Information and Referral Petitioners also indicated that petitions for 211 had been filed with local public utility commissions in three other states (Massachusetts, Ohio and Wisconsin) and a county in Michigan. In addition, 211 petitions had been approved in three other states (Alabama, North Carolina and Utah), with statewide information and referral models developed in three others (Florida, Texas and Virginia). Six states had made no commitment on 211, with the remaining considering 211 to some degree for access to community information and referral services.

¹³ *See, e.g.*, Linda Daily Comments (letter from private citizen stating, “[w]hether it’s a mammogram, substance abuse services, therapeutic recreation for a disabled child, or 1 of more than 4,000 human services, the issue is the same. No one knows where to start.”); Ameritech Comments at 1 (supporting Information and Referral Petition as meeting FCC policy of limiting national assignment of unused N11 codes for public purposes).

¹⁴ We reject arguments to the contrary. *See, e.g.*, CinBell Comments at 2.

weather, and nine percent involved the need for food.¹⁵ The remaining calls presented issues relating to counseling, medical aid, prescription assistance, physical and sexual abuse, and potential suicide. Other less urgent situations, also not addressed by 911 service or the current 311 service, might involve persons needing child care solutions, aging and hospice services, adolescent activities, educational programs, support groups, legal assistance, child and spousal abuse counseling, substance abuse programs, and other needs vital to the welfare of individuals, families, and communities.¹⁶

3. We believe that the Information and Referral Petitioners have shown a public need exists for an easy to use, easy to remember N11 code to efficiently bring community information and referral services to those who need them, providing a national safety network for persons to get access readily to assistance. Therefore, we find that the public interest standard has been met here. We are persuaded by the Information and Referral Petitioners' assertion that, with a large number of toll-free telephone numbers, confusion is inevitable and the increased margin for error in dialing eleven digits creates obstacles to use of community information and referral services, particularly in urgent situations.¹⁷ Moreover, as the Information and Referral Petitioners also point out, this confusion is not resolved when directory assistance for toll-free numbers is used, because directory assistance for toll free numbers lists entries by name, but not service or need category. We also are persuaded that local numbers are not viable alternatives because they are difficult to distinguish from the myriad of other local businesses and community services numbers, and may not be of service to travelers and the recently relocated, who often need temporary assistance. Moreover, people with mental or physical limitations would benefit from the use of a three-digit nationwide number, rather than having to dial various and different seven or ten digits to get access to help. We also note that the number of people served by the information and referral organizations that make up the Information and Referral Petitioners is quite large. The United Way 211 (Atlanta, Georgia and the thirteen-county surrounding area) provides free (bilingual) service 24 hours a day, seven days a week to a population of more than three million people.¹⁸ In Connecticut, Infoline provides access to community resources throughout the state.¹⁹ In Texas, regional data centers – 24-hour data centers linked to the 100 community information centers and each other – are being established to provide comprehensive health and human service information, allowing 18 million residents to have information about vital services across the state.²⁰ In Florida, information for about 40 percent of the state's counties are represented in search and data features that have been included in an integrated database, uploaded on the Florida Alliance of Information and Referral Service Internet site.²¹ The designation of a uniform national code would simplify access to information from these and

¹⁵ Information and Referral Petition at 6.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ *Id.* at 11.

¹⁸ *Id.* at 7, 14. We also note that the United Way 211 database includes public and private agencies and programs in the Atlanta region, not just United Way member agencies or those supported by United Way funding. *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.* at 4.

²⁰ *Id.* at 8.

²¹ *Id.*

other sources and would make such information readily available to new members of communities as well as existing local citizens.

4. We believe that providing access to community information and referral services using 211 has many benefits. Individuals will now have an easy to remember nationwide number to call when they need non-emergency help. Unlike 311, which is being used in some communities to provide access to non-emergency police services,²² the range of services that will be available using 211 is of a much broader scope. We are mindful that the Commission in the *N11 First Report and Order* gave local jurisdictions discretion to use 311 for access to government services that might, in some instances, overlap the services to be provided using 211. We are not convinced, as are some commenters, that this will cause confusion among callers as to which N11 code should be used to access what type of information.²³ To the contrary, we believe that the extensive education campaign that the Information and Referral Petitioners and others have undertaken to publicize the use of 211 has and will continue to eliminate any potential confusion. The Information and Referral Petitioners have invested significant resources in publicizing the use of the 211 code in some areas of the country, and we have already seen an enormous amount of support for efforts to implement access to community information and referral services using 211 at the state and local level from citizens, government officials, and organizations that provide help to others.²⁴ Thus, we believe that access to community information and referral services using 211 will provide a vital adjunct to existing 311 services. We also believe that 211 service for access to community information and referral services will provide a useful adjunct to 911 service by further reducing calls to 911 that do not require immediate dispatch of police, fire, or medical personnel.²⁵

5. We therefore assign 211 to be used to provide access to community information and referral services. Similar to the Commission's national assignment in the *N11 First Report and Order* of 311 for access to non-emergency police and other government services,²⁶ we direct that, when a provider of telecommunications services receives a request from an entity (*e.g.*, the United Way)

²² According to the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office at the U.S. Department of Justice, a number of communities have implemented 311 for access to non-emergency police services with the assistance of funds provided by the Department of Justice. These include Baltimore, Maryland; Dukes County, Massachusetts (Martha's Vineyard); Rochester, New York; Miami, Florida; Houston, Texas; City of Los Angeles, California <www.lacity.org>; Pasadena, South Pasadena, California; and Birmingham, Alabama. Other communities also have implemented 311, including Dallas, Texas; Chicago, Illinois; Washington, D.C.; San Jose, California; Hampton, Virginia; and San Antonio, Texas.

²³ See National Telephone Enterprises, Inc. Comments at 6; SBC Communications, Inc. Comments at 1-2.

²⁴ See, *e.g.*, Area Agency on Aging Comments at 1; Ask-2000 Comments at 1; Chris Bell, Houston Council Member, Comments at 1; Big Bend Hospice Comments at 1; Border Families are Valued Project Comments at 1; Brazos County Community Council Comments at 1; Mary Brennan, Florida House of Representatives, Comments at 1; The Bridge Comments at 1; Houston Mayor Lee P. Brown Comments at 1; The City of Calgary Comments at 1; The City of Atlanta, Georgia Comments at 1; Capital Area Healthy Start Coalition Comments at 1; Center for Advocacy for the Rights and Interests of the Elderly Comments at 1; HelpLine Comments at 1; Information and Referral Midland Comments at 1-2; Center for Information and Crisis Services, Inc. Comments at 1.

²⁵ See *N11 First Report and Order*, 12 FCC Rcd at 5595, para. 36; see also discussion of IAFC Petition at para. 25, *infra*.

²⁶ *Id.* at 5615, para. 83. See also para. 5, *supra*.

to use 211 for access to community information and referral services, the telecommunications provider must: (1) ensure that any entities that were using 211 at the local level prior to the effective date of this Order relinquish use of the code for non-compliant services, and (2) take any steps necessary (such as reprogramming switch software) to complete 211 calls from its subscribers to the requesting entity in its service area.²⁷ The 211 dialing code is currently in use in Atlanta, Georgia and parts of Connecticut, and we expect communities across the country will be able to make similar transition to 211. We expect community service organizations to work cooperatively to ensure the greatest public use of this scarce resource. Finally, we will reexamine deployment of community information and referral services using 211 five years after the effective date of this Order to determine whether this resource is being utilized in the manner and to the extent anticipated by the Information and Referral Petitioners. As with 511, if 211 is not being used on a widespread basis for access to community information and referral services, we may consider designating the 211 code for other uses, or removing the exclusive assignment for community information and referral services.

²⁷ *Id.* at 5615, para. 84.

Appendix D: National Standards for 2-1-1 Centers

Recommended by the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems
Adopted by the National 2-1-1 Collaborative May 5, 2000

Organizations who have implemented or have begun the process for creating and implementing a 2-1-1 Call Center have suggested the following become national standards for operation:

- 1.Ensure the provision of 24 hour coverage, year-round.
- 2.Ascribe to the AIRS Standards for Information & Referral.
- 3.Have a plan in place to become or be accredited by AIRS.
- 4.Utilize Certified Information & Referral Specialists and Resource Specialists.
- 5.Demonstrate cooperative relationships with specialized I&Rs, crisis centers, 9-1-1s and 3-1-1s, where applicable.
- 6.Have means of tracking call volume, number of abandoned calls, average speed of answering, average call length.
- 7.Computerized I&R database with client collection capability.
- 8.Use the AIRS/InfoLine Taxonomy.
- 9.Have the ability to publicize 2-1-1 services and educate the public on an on-going basis.
- 10.TTY and multi-lingual accessibility either on-site or access to live translation.
- 11.Ability to develop linkages through protocol with appropriate clearinghouse agencies that may be able to provide services such as volunteer or donation management.
- 12.Ensure quality of service and inquirer satisfaction through appropriate follow up.

Within States or Regions where more than one I&R will be providing 2-1-1 services, it is recommended that 2-1-1 Centers have the following:

An agreed upon plan to work in tandem to ensure 2-1-1 service to all areas of the state or region.
Ability to share resource data information.
Ability to track and share information on client needs and unmet needs.
A common means of measuring outcomes for the operation of a call center.
An agreed upon means of communicating with the community represented by the call center on requests for assistance, perceived gaps and barriers to service.