



COMMUNITY CONNECTION

For Immediate Release

July 13TH 2009

CALGARY – Calgarians have significant worries and tough questions. 211 answers.

In times of economic hardship, many people need assistance to cope with the changes to their lives. Increasingly, Calgarians are turning to 211 to seek information on where they can get help. 211 has seen a steady increase in call volume over the last 6 months. In the most recent quarter, there was an 11.5% increase in call numbers. That's 1000 more calls in a three month period.

Financial concerns top the list of pressing issues that people are calling in for, seeking help and relief. These calls accounted for 21% of all issues related to 211 in June.

The complexity of cases is increasing, requiring more advocacy by staff on a caller's behalf. Staff will advocate for people who have had difficulty accessing services. These are people who 211 staff believe to be eligible for the programs they've referred to; but who have, due to some barrier, been unable to get connected themselves. "211 staff are going above and beyond their regular roles for callers," says Jerilyn Dressler, Call Centre Supervisor. Many people calling 211 are unfamiliar with the network of services and haven't had to depend on social supports before.

Another important role of 211 is the collection of social data. Whenever there is a request that is unable to be filled and that points to a gap in the community, an 'unmet needs' report is made. June 2009 saw the most unmet needs logged to date; for 38 callers no appropriate service existed to refer them to. 35% of these unmet needs were for financial assistance where people had exhausted all available resources.

Dial 2-1-1 to be connected to a full range of community, government, health and social services information.

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For more information:

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211 is a 24 hr free, information and referral number; connecting people to community services they need. 211 Calgary is a partnership between the United Way of Calgary & Area, the City of Calgary and Distress Centre Calgary.





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