



INTRODUCTION

This newsletter highlights some of the learning from our planning work on this important initiative supported by the Green Shield Canada Foundation.

ENHANCED CLIENT SERVICE

Sometimes people who call 211 want information, such as eligibility for, or details about a service. But most people who call 211 describe an issue that they need to address. Sometimes these needs are urgent such as lack of food or imminent loss of housing. Often the person feels a bit helpless and confused about where to turn and what to do.

The community navigation provided by the information and referral specialist who answers 211 includes an assessment with the person, actively listening with empathy and problem solving with them. Together with providing suitable referrals, the community navigation is likely to help the person make a plan of who to call first and how to prepare to make that call. Often with people who are trying to manage multiple issues, the large and complex task is best broken down into steps based on priorities. We usually do not know the outcomes for the person. This initiative will change that.

The offer to follow up will be increased with people who present needs related to *determinants of health, such as poor health, precarious housing or work, financial hardship, lack of food or social isolation*. People who would like follow up will receive support getting their needs met or understand better the barriers they are facing, such as lack of suitable programs. Further assessment, problem solving and follow up may be offered because services might not be readily available.

DATA ENHANCEMENTS

Arising from caller needs and with input from agencies, the data available to support community navigation will be enhanced. This includes consistent capture of gaps in services, expansion of

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existing records and identifying new programs, services and community initiatives that are relevant to addressing needs of vulnerable people.

SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

Consultation with provincial associations of health and food related services, has opened doors for webinars and conferences for knowledge exchange, and introduced new contacts and approaches.

An advisory group with representatives from seven urban and rural United Ways is supporting the initiative with ideas and connection to aligned community initiatives.

SYSTEM CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

A small group of people with lived experience, whose call to 211 indicated they would be a potential participant for the offer of follow up, were surveyed. They said:

"I really need help, I don't know where to turn."
"Mother would appreciate the support; it is difficult to navigate the system." *"A check in to see how we are doing would be helpful."*

211 is supporting vulnerable people to ensure that they find doors open to them.



Quality assurance is being supported by guidelines for scripts for I&R Specialists and related training resources.

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

The pilot phase is being delivered in 211 Central and 211 Central East regions which together serve 40% of residents of Ontario. Call tracking will enable extensive aggregation of data which will complement qualitative information. Current priorities are close monitoring of the pilot phase, applying the learning, improving the tools and evaluating outcomes for people.