



PRESS RELEASE

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Connecting the Homeless with Shelters

Portland, Oregon - December 11, 2009 - As bitter cold sets in, our community's homeless look for warmth and shelter to survive. Yet, finding reprieve is challenging. By calling 503-721-1500 or 2-1-1, those in need will speak with an expert who can guide them to available shelters and warming centers without the hassle of going door-to-door or combing through a phone book.

As the organization that manages both lines, 211info utilizes its unique position as a hub for community information to connect people with these essential services, while providing an extra layer of support.

"A man in Multnomah County called on one of the coldest nights of the year. He had no place to stay and no transportation to get to downtown Portland where most of the shelters are. Though, that night, there was an emergency warming center that he could walk to. He wouldn't have known about it if he hadn't called us," said Deborah Willoughby, 211info call center specialist.

211info is a local nonprofit build upon 25 years of providing free and easy access to the answers Oregonians and Southwest Washingtonians need. For more than a decade they have managed the Winter Shelter Hot line for Multnomah County and the City of Portland.

"211info is a core component of our city's response system to help alleviate suffering during these brutal winter months," says Carmen Merlo, Director, Portland Office of Emergency Management.

211info receives more than 100,000 phone calls a year from people seeking food, shelter, health care, foreclosure assistance, and much more. Yet the winter months are always the busiest. Last year, from November-March nearly 60,000 calls were received. This year, the trend looks to continue or increase because of the economic challenges facing the community.

"We are getting so many calls from people who have never had to negotiate the health and community service system before. But, because of job loss or foreclosure, they are now forced to seek services from organizations they used to donate to," says Liesl Wendt, 211info CEO.

Anyone seeking shelter should contact the 211info Winter Shelter Line (503) 721-1500. 211info will be available to identify available shelter and warming center resources between 8:00 AM and 10:00 PM, Monday through Friday, and 10:00 AM - 10:00 PM Saturdays and Sundays.

About 211info

211info is Oregon and Southwest Washington's comprehensive hub for 2-1-1: a social services helpline. The nonprofit 211info is built upon a 25 year history of providing people with free and easy

access to the answers they need most. Last year, over 100,000 people turned to 211info for referrals to food, shelter, housing, foreclosure assistance, health care, and much more. 211info leads the expansion of 2-1-1 services throughout Oregon and partners with Washington state on 2-1-1 service delivery. 211info is a strategic partner of the United Way of the Columbia-Willamette. For more information, visit www.211info.org

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