

DT 04-027

**NEW HAMPSHIRE COALITION OF COMPREHENSIVE
INFORMATION AND REFERRAL SERVICES**

**Petition of the United Ways of New Hampshire and the
New Hampshire Coalition of Comprehensive Information and Referral Services for
Designation of the Coalition as Lead Implementing Agency for 211 Services**

**Order Nisi Granting Petition and Designating the New Hampshire Coalition of
Comprehensive Information and Referral Services as Lead Agency for 211 Services**

ORDER NO. 24,363

August 19, 2004

On March 4, 2004, the United Ways of New Hampshire (United Ways) and the New Hampshire Coalition of Comprehensive Information and Referral Services (Coalition) filed with the New Hampshire Public Utilities Commission (Commission) a petition requesting that the Coalition be formally designated as the lead implementing agency for “211” service in New Hampshire.

On July 21, 2000, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) assigned 211 as a national abbreviated dialing code to be used for access to community information and referral services. *See U.S. Dep’t of Transportation*, 15 FCCR 16,753 (Jul. 21, 2000). The FCC found that “[i]ndividuals facing serious threats to life, health, and mental well being have urgent and critical needs that are not addressed by dialing 911 for emergency assistance or 311 for non-emergency police assistance.” *Id.* at 16,764. In the view of the FCC, a universally and easily recognizable number, such as 211, would make it possible for callers in need to make critical connections with appropriate community-based organizations and government agencies more easily.

The Coalition was established in 2003 and comprises all five of the state’s

comprehensive information and referral (I&R) agencies. Three of these five I&R agencies provide coverage to defined communities or regional areas but without 24 hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week (24/7) coverage. The fourth I&R covers a defined area and provides specialized topical I&R, 24/7 coverage. The fifth I&R covers a defined region and provides 24/7 statewide coverage.

The Coalition states that it has developed an information system it believes will be the most complete, accurate, and inclusive available; that the Coalition has the requisite knowledge, skills, and experience in information management and an understanding of the service delivery system; and that there is an existing trust of those who currently utilize the services the Coalition offers. The Coalition proposes a 211 system that would have the ability: (1) to generate meaningful statistics on service availability and service gaps, (2) to provide for effective collaboration on behalf of clients, (3) to computerize the state and local community information databases, (4) to compile and distribute a directory of services in print or electronic format, (5) to refer to specialized I&Rs, as defined by the National Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS) Standards for Professional I&Rs,¹ and (6) to make information in the database available on a Web page on the Internet.

The Coalition proposes a 211 system that is a combination of decentralized and centralized operations. All 211 calls would route directly to an AIRS-certified I&R provider. Under the decentralized portion of the system, all 211 calls during normal working hours would route to the local certified I&R provider. Calls made after hours (including overnight, weekend,

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Specialized I&R programs maintain information about community resources that are appropriate for a specific target

and holiday calls), calls left unanswered for six (6) rings by the local I&R provider, calls placed when the local lines are busy and calls from commercial mobile radio services would route to N.H. Helpline, the centralized certified I&R provider. The Coalition proposes a live voice to answer all 211 calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

The five I&Rs are Monadnock United Way HelpLine, Southern NH Services, Inc. (which comprises Info-Bank Manchester and Info-Bank Nashua), Info Link, Headrest, and N.H. Helpline. Monadnock United Way Helpline and Southern NH Services, Inc. provide coverage to defined areas, served by Verizon, Telecom Data Services (TDS) and Granite State Telephone Company (GST), from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. Info Link provides coverage to a defined area, served by Verizon, Union Telephone Company (Union) and GST, from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. Headrest provides coverage to a defined area, served by Verizon, TDS, and GST, 24/7, 365 days a year. N.H. Helpline provides coverage to a defined area, served by Verizon and all the Independent Telephone Companies (ICOs), 24/7, 365 days a year and would cover the rest of the state when the other I&Rs are not providing coverage.

In order to implement 211 as a combination of centralized and decentralized operations, local exchange carriers will need to program local switches by NXX code, by day of week, and by time of day. A table displaying by NXX, day of week, and time of day where calls to 211 should be routed is available on the Commission's website at <http://www.puc.nh.gov/Telecom/211.htm> and attached to Staff's memo dated August 19, 2004.

The Coalition's request to designate 211 for I&R is consistent with the FCC's

population which link individuals who are in need of specialized services with appropriate resources.

Order. It appears the members of the Coalition have worked collectively to resolve differences that prevented implementation in the past. The proposed combination of centralized and decentralized operations will insure that residents in need of I&R service will have statewide access at all times. We therefore find the designation of the Coalition as the lead implementing agency to be in the public interest.

Pursuant to the FCC's order, state public utilities commissions retain jurisdiction over N11 codes to the extent necessary to ensure that carriers comply with I&R agencies' requests to deploy 211 expeditiously. We encourage wireline and wireless providers to cooperate fully to enable the provision of 211 I&R services to the New Hampshire public.

The Enhanced 911 Commission passed a motion at its June 14, 2002 meeting requesting that it and the Bureau of Emergency Communications be involved in any discussion of N11 requests. Accordingly, we urge the Coalition to use its best efforts to work with the Bureau of Emergency Communications in the development of the 211 service.

Based upon the foregoing, it is hereby

ORDERED NISI, that subject to the effective date below, the petition of the Parties that the New Hampshire Coalition of Comprehensive Information and Referral Services be formally designated as the lead implementing agency for 211 service in New Hampshire is hereby GRANTED; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that the New Hampshire Coalition of Comprehensive Information and Referral Services shall assume all costs associated with the development, operation, and maintenance of the 211 service in New Hampshire; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that the New Hampshire Coalition of Comprehensive

Information and Referral Services shall use its best efforts to coordinate with other state agencies, the Bureau of Emergency Communications, and the Enhanced 911 Commission in the development, implementation, and operation of 211 service to improve information and referral services in the state; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that wireline and wireless providers shall cooperate with the New Hampshire Coalition of Comprehensive Information and Referral Services in its endeavor to provide 211 information and referral services to the public and comply with the New Hampshire Coalition of Comprehensive Information and Referral Services' requests to deploy 211 expeditiously; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that the Petitioner shall cause a copy of this Order Nisi to be published once in a statewide newspaper of general circulation or of circulation in those portions of the state where operations are conducted, such publication to be no later than August 30, 2004, and to be documented by affidavit filed with this office on or before September 13, 2004; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that all persons interested in responding to this petition be notified that they may submit their comments or file a written request for a hearing on this matter before the Commission no later than September 6, 2004; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that any party interested in responding to such comments or request for hearing shall do so no later than September 13, 2004; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED, that this Order Nisi shall be effective September 19, 2004, unless the New Hampshire Coalition of Comprehensive Information and Referral Services fails to satisfy the publication obligation set forth above or the Commission provides otherwise in

a supplemental order issued prior to the effective date.

By order of the Public Utilities Commission of New Hampshire this nineteenth day
of August, 2004.

Thomas B. Getz
Chairman

Graham J. Morrison
Commissioner

Attested by:

Debra A. Howland
Executive Director and Secretary