



Association Name: 211 Information and Referral Services Association

Policy Title: Data Inclusion and Exclusion Policy

Effective Date: February 5, 2013

Revised Date: November 26, 2015

Policy Statement

About the 211 Nova Scotia Database

211 Nova Scotia Information and Referral Service (211 Nova Scotia) is a free, confidential information and referral service that enables the public to easily find community, health, and social services. Maintaining an up-to-date human services database that reflects the needs of Nova Scotians is a key priority of 211 Nova Scotia.

The 211 Nova Scotia resource database is intended to provide:

- An information resource available for public access through an Internet channel.
- A source of information for 211 Nova Scotia and Referral Specialists who are specially trained to provide information and referral for citizens, groups, and professionals.
- Support for community planning or research.
- Support for specialized programs, projects and committees of 211 Nova Scotia, and its partners.

211 Nova Scotia is governed by a Board of Directors. All services are delivered by staff of 211 Nova Scotia, including the collection and maintenance of data for the 211 resource database.

Purpose of the Data Inclusion and Exclusion Policy

This policy helps define the scope of the resource database and the principals upon which inclusion/exclusion decisions are made. The policy clarifies the standards and criteria for the organizations and services that will be included and excluded from the resource database.

Areas for Inclusion

The 211 Nova Scotia Inclusion / Exclusion Policy is based on the definition of human services identified by the standardization body that accredits Information and Referral Services, the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems (AIRS).

Definition: Human services “help people become more self-sufficient, prevent dependency, strengthen family relationships, support personal and social development and ensure the well-being of individuals, families, groups and communities... Human services also facilitate the capabilities of people to care for children or other dependents; ensure that protective services are available to those who are vulnerable; provide for support of older adults and people with disabilities; offer social, religious, and leisure time activities; provide for the cultural enrichment of the community; and ensure that people have the information they need to fully participate in community life.” (*AIRS Standards for Professional Information & Referral and Quality Indicators*, V.6.0, 2009)

The resource database includes organizations providing direct services that are available to the general public. Direct services may include the dissemination of information and/or referrals to service providers. Organizations may serve the public either in person, by telephone, via the Internet (including e-mail or other online forum), or through other emerging technologies. These organizations include:

- Non-profit organizations, community-based organizations, or government entities. Non-Profit organizations providing services that require payment of fees will be included. The records will identify those services that require fees and, where appropriate, identify organizations that will consider waiving or reducing the fee for those who could not otherwise afford to partake.
- Organizations that are located outside Nova Scotia which provide services Nova Scotians can access.
- Faith-based agencies, if they provide services that are open to the community and do not require participation in the religious practices of the organization.

Discretionary Inclusion

- Certain private, for-profit, commercial organizations that provide a community service not sufficiently offered by the non-profit sector may be included if they offer a service that is both free and open to the general public. In these cases, only those services that are free to the general public will be listed.

Prioritization

211 Nova Scotia sets first and second priorities for the listing of services in the database. Priorities are subject to change as we continually evaluate the needs of the Nova Scotian community.

First priority areas

For first priority areas, every effort is made to have comprehensive listings of all eligible services. First priority areas include but are not limited to the following:

- Food banks, soup kitchens, and other food programs.
- Income support and financial assistance that help people to meet their basic living expenses. Included are programs that assist individuals with costs associated with housing, utility usage, and medical expenses.
- Facilities in which individuals or families who are temporarily or permanently without a home can spend the night. Programs that help people secure permanent housing.
- Programs that supply or help finance items such as clothing, furniture, and appliances. Programs that accept donations of material goods and coordinate the distribution of donations to persons in need.
- Public and specialized services that assist with the transportation needs of the community and programs that assist with expenses associated with transportation.
- Health programs and services that offer preventative and reactive services including mental health services, public health and public safety.
- Services providing education, employment assistance, or work-related training.
- Organizations providing crisis intervention, and/or emotional support.
- Organizations that provide law enforcement services, protection for individuals, legal information and legal aid.
- Organizations that provide consumer protection and/or register consumer complaints.
- Services targeted toward demographic groups that may face challenges due to language spoken, immigration or refugee status, ethno-cultural group, age, gender, sexual orientation, low income, low literacy level, homelessness, disabilities, or health issues.

Second priority areas

For second priority areas, collection depends on staff resources, and data maintenance agreements with other agencies. Rather than collect comprehensive information in second priority areas, 211 Nova Scotia may refer users to services that maintain current data and provide central referral for a particular service need. The following are second priority services, unless they are targeted toward one of the first priority demographics:

- Recreation programs
- Opportunities to participate in social activities, leisure activities or community events.
- Consumer services such as credit counselling, debt management, permit requests, consumer education, and assistance with tax return preparation.

Additional second priority services include:

- Organizations offering activities of interest to the community but not providing a human service are considered for inclusion. Examples include groups that aim to raise awareness about a particular issue.
- Sources where persons can find out who are the political representatives in their area.

Disclaimers

- The amount of detail, the language used and the presentation of information in describing a service, organization or branch is at the discretion of 211 Nova Scotia.
- Inclusion in the 211 Nova Scotia human services database is free and is not dependent upon the purchase of a membership, products or advertising space from 211 Nova Scotia or any of its partners.
- Inclusion of an agency or program does not imply endorsement by 211 Nova Scotia, its providers, or partners and is considered a privilege, rather than a right. Omission from the database does not indicate disapproval.
- Certain services that would not generally fit the inclusion criteria may be included, when there is evidence that inclusion would benefit the community. These decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.

211 Nova Scotia reserves the right to:

- Prioritize and limit entry.
- Exclude from the 211 Nova Scotia database any organization that it has, in its own discretion, adequate reason to believe may spread hatred or have a philosophy that could be hurtful to the well-being of individuals, groups or the community as a whole. Potential grounds for exclusion or removal from the database may include, but are not limited to: service non-delivery, fraud, misrepresentation, discrimination, criminal activities, or operating outside licensing mandates.
- Refuse to list or to discontinue listings for organizations that have had serious complaints lodged against them with a regulatory body, with 211 Nova Scotia itself, or with other organizations.
- Exclude agencies or organizations that provide services which are not available to the general public, or which are available only to persons holding membership or status in a specific group or organization. Exceptions may be made when the mission of the agency is to serve a particular underserved or underrepresented population. Generally, organizations that provide service only to other organizations and not to members of the public are excluded.
- Exclude information on services offered by private companies operating on a for-profit basis. 211 Nova Scotia recognizes that there may be clients of 211 who wish to engage private companies to meet certain human, social and health service needs. 211 Nova Scotia will endeavor to maintain data on the existence of trade or professional organizations, the members of which include private for-profit entities in the human, social and health fields. Callers will be referred to the relevant organization(s) but will not be provided with information or referrals to particular members of those organizations.
- Refuse to list or to discontinue listings for organizations that fail to respond to requests for additional information and/or updates to information.
- Refuse to list organizations that have been in existence for less than six months.

Appeal Process

Decisions to include, exclude, or remove a service listing may be appealed by writing to 211 Nova Scotia, after a reasonable attempt has been made to resolve the issue with the 211 data managers.

Signature
Executive Director, 211 Nova Scotia

Signature
Board Chair, 211 Nova Scotia