

## *211 Initiative Information Kit*

Here is the media kit in the "FCC Petition" version. As you know, this media kit is designed to be parsable – so that, with alterations, it could be used to tell both the stories of the federal petition and of local 211 organizations. Therefore, before making the decision to send the kit to media outlets, users should ask themselves the following questions:

**Who is the target audience for this information?** (Is it local Public Utilities Commission members and Local Exchange Carriers? They will need to hear a different message than the general public – who will just want to know when and how it will be working in their area.)

**Does the information currently in the kit adequately describe the message we are trying to convey?** (If not, change it.)

**How does the release of the kit fit in with our overall strategy to push for 211?** (If you are using the kit as part of the strategy to have the FCC set aside 211 nationwide, you could probably begin using it now. If you want to use it to increase local awareness, you should talk with your telecommunications lawyer and your fellow organization members.)

### **DO'S AND DON'TS**

The lawyers working on the petition have given us some advice on using the kit. I think it is well worth following. Here it is:

**DO** use the kit only if you think it is the right time. Using the kit too early can awaken competition for funding, or confuse readers and viewers and cause them to dial 211 before it is operational in their area. Sending the kit out when other, larger stories have completely captured the media's attention can cause the story to be buried. Some localities may want to wait several months before using the kit – when their 211 organizations are in place.

**DO** emphasize the positive arguments of the petition when talking to press. The following three are especially important to the FCC: 1) that setting aside 211 is the highest possible public use of that number; 2) that only 211 (not some other, longer number) can be used as effectively to reach people – many of whom are prone to slip through the cracks otherwise; and 3) that there exists a nationwide infrastructure ready and willing to take on the challenge of implementing 211. Of course, if it is more important to argue points other than those above that are important to the local message you are trying to send, then do so.

**DON'T** use mudslinging tactics. It is more effective to use our limited air time and print space to push for our cause, not fight against those who oppose us.

**DON'T** direct your comments toward the FCC staffers who are currently reviewing the petition. Unlike the Commissioners, they are not politicians. Comments directed toward staffers are more likely to annoy them than convince them of our position.

## CONVERTING THE KIT TO COVER LOCAL 211 ORGANIZATIONS

1. The first step to doing this is to take out the Press Release. As you can see, many elements listed in the Release (such as the "Washington, D.C." dateline and the contact information) are inaccurate when applied to the local story.
2. The second step is to evaluate the Key Reasons for Designating 211 page. This page was designed to inform federal officials of why they should support 211. All of these points may not be applicable to a local movement. You may want to change this page by taking out some arguments, or by inserting others that are more important on the local level.
3. The third step is to make up a list of local contacts. You may wish to keep some of the contacts listed in the kit for their specializations (i.e., keeping Lori Warren's name on the list so people can call her about 211 Atlanta), but most of the contacts should be local.
4. The fourth step is to add any materials to the kit that will "localize" the story. Perhaps local reporters would like to know about the history of I&Rs in your area. Perhaps the local LEC are worried about different issues than the FCC is. Please examine the kit closely to be sure it meets your needs.

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- [FAQ](#)
  - [Press Release](#)
  - [Quotes](#)
  - [Related Statistics](#)
  - [Contacts](#)

### Key reasons for designating 211

#### **1. 211 eliminates confusion.**

- A. Many cities host hundreds of social service organizations. Often these services are not listed in the phone book by service.
- B. 211 would eliminate complicated searches through phone books, and give people a number to call when there is no phone book.

#### **2. 211 serves people not covered by 911 and 311.**

- A. Many people in crisis may not call 911 and 311 because they don't want to talk to police.
- B. These people include alcoholics and drug addicts who want information on rehabilitation, and runaway teenagers who need to speak to youth counselors.

#### **3. 211 serves vulnerable people not otherwise helped.**

- A. Some people in crisis are not able to search for phone numbers at all.
- B. These people may be illiterate, incapacitated by crisis (such as natural disaster), travelers who don't know where to turn, elderly, or non-English speakers.

#### **4. 211 is efficient.**

- A. Setting aside 211 gives people one number to call when they are in crisis – they won't have to dial agency after agency searching for appropriate help.
- B. 211 can help deliver services more efficiently by using centralized data in community planning.

5. **211 builds on an existing infrastructure.**

- A. Anyone who wants to join the coalition can utilize the joint experience of the almost 1000 AIRS members and 1400 United Ways across the country.
- B. This experience is evident in the Information and Referral Standards developed by AIRS and the United Way, which Information and Referral organizations can use to assure quality in their operations.

Source [airs.org](http://airs.org)