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FIRST CALL FOR HELP

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Bringing People & Services Together

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WISCONSIN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

March 31, 2003

Lynda Dorr, Secretary to the Commissioner
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
PO Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854

Dear Ms. Dorr,

First Call For Help respectfully petitions the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin to designate the telephone number 2-1-1 for use throughout the following counties in western Wisconsin: Buffalo, Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, Vernon.

The 211 service would provide Comprehensive Information and Referral regarding health and human service programs to residents of western Wisconsin 24 hours a day.

Enclosed is an original and 20 copies of our application for designation. Attached to the original are some supplementary pieces.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. I can be reached at (608) 775-6335.

Sincerely,

Mary Mundt Reckase

Mary Mundt Reckase
Director

MFC
Tel/20

La Crosse • (608) 775-4344 Winona • (507) 454-2528 Toll-Free in the Tri-State Area • (800) 362-8255

P.O. Box 426 • Onalaska, Wisconsin 54650-0426 • Business Phone (608) 775-6339 • Fax (608) 775-4766 • www.firstcallforhelp.org

A Service of the United Way and Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center, Inc.

First Call For Help – La Crosse
211 Proposal to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

History

A. Comprehensive Information and Referral (I&R)

First Call For Help is a community service of Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center in La Crosse providing telephone services to residents of a seventeen county region in western Wisconsin, southeast Minnesota and northeastern Iowa. First Call For Help serves as the region's central comprehensive information and referral service, offering helpline counseling, and providing crisis intervention services on a 24 hour a day basis. Since its inception in March 1979, First Call For Help has received over 400,000 calls for a wide variety of problems and concerns.

B. 211 Experience

First Call For Help's service area includes counties in three states – Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa. First Call For Help is currently either implementing 211 or applying for 211 designation in all three states.

Wisconsin 211. First Call For Help is submitting this proposal to the Public Service Commission for designation as the 211 provider in these counties in western Wisconsin: Buffalo, Crawford, Grant, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Richland, Trempealeau, and Vernon.

Minnesota 211. First Call For Help currently serves as one of ten regional call centers for First Call Minnesota 211. In its role as a 211 call center for Minnesota, First Call For Help takes calls from the following three counties in southeast Minnesota: Fillmore, Houston, and Winona. A comprehensive database of health and human services information is maintained for those three counties in Minnesota. In addition, First Call For Help serves as the after hours call center for Minnesota 211. Information and referral specialists have access to a statewide database of health and human service information to provide referrals to callers. Staff also continue to serve on statewide committees to coordinate 211 activities throughout the state.

Iowa 211. First Call For Help has made application to serve as the 211 call center for the following five counties in northeast Iowa: Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Howard, and Winneshiek. First Call For Help has served northeast Iowa since 1979 and maintains a comprehensive database of health and human services information for this five county area. Staff from First Call For Help serve on a statewide 211 planning committee in Iowa.

C. Statewide Public Health Information and Referral Hotlines

In addition to serving as the region's comprehensive Information and Referral service, First Call For Help has been awarded a number of contracts through the Wisconsin State Division of Health to operate the following 24 hour specialized statewide I&R services:

Maternal and Child Health Hotline – Operated since October 1994, staff have responded to over 50,000 requests for information and referral on programs and services for pregnant women and young children.

Wisconsin First Step Hotline – Operated since August 1995, staff have responded to over 5,000 requests for information on programs and services for children with special needs and their families.

Wisconsin Women's Health Hotline and Services Hotline for Women, Children and Families – Both operated since January 2000 providing information on a variety of women's health issues and services and programs for families.

D. Other Information and Referral Contracts/Services Provided by First Call For Help

First Call For Help has ongoing cooperative relationships with the following agencies:

- Specialized I&R's – First Call For Help has contracted to act as an after hours contact point for the Aging and Disability Resource Centers in La Crosse, Jackson and Trempealeau counties. The Aging and Disability Resource Centers provide information on programs and services for the elderly and those people with disabilities. In addition to providing back up telephone services, First Call For Help Resource Specialists provide the database utilized by the Resource Centers when providing referrals for clients.

- Crisis Centers – First Call For Help contracts with the Monroe County Domestic Abuse Project and Fillmore Family Resources to provide after hours services for victims of domestic violence.

- 911 Centers – First Call For Help receives calls from individuals regarding crisis situations such as suicide, domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and drug and alcohol abuse. In some situations, First Call For Help staff need to work in a cooperative basis with 911 centers and other crisis resources such as law enforcement to ensure that the needs of those in crisis are met. A letter of support from the La Crosse Emergency 911 Dispatch Center is attached.

- First Call Minnesota 211 – Since 1998, First Call For Help has provided after hours back up for First Call Minnesota which is a statewide project that provides information and referral services to citizens throughout the state of Minnesota.

In addition to the above, First Call For Help coordinates the Runaway Bridge program that offers a 24 hour crisis line for runaway youth and their families, short term family counseling and shelter services. First Call For Help also provides crisis telephone services for Jackson County Human Services Department and serves as an after hour system for a La Crosse based agency, Coulee Council on Addictions.

Finally, First Call For Help provides after hours services to a number of Gundersen Lutheran departments including: Employee Assistance Program, Sexual Assault Services and Bereavement Services.

Training and Staff Development

Training

A. Information and Referral Specialists

An intensive three week training program is provided to all Information and Referral staff. Areas addressed in the training include:

- Client interviewing techniques including assessment, and establishing rapport to ensure that callers are treated with dignity and respect

- Components of the information and referral delivery process including computer software, database resources, referral giving, follow up and advocacy

- Correct procedures for the logging and recording of client calls

- Crisis intervention training including dynamics of a person in crisis, role of the interventionist, linkage to other services and follow up

- Specialized training in the operation of each hotline and specialty services offered through the agency

After the completion of the three-week training period, all new staff work with an experienced staff person for a period of two weeks before working a shift on their own. During this time, new employees respond to calls and obtain feedback from an experienced staff member who has observed them.

B. Resource Specialists

Resource Specialists receive the same training as Information and Referral Specialists and periodically provide phone coverage. Resource Specialists also receive specialized training in the following data base related areas: Human Services Systems, inclusion/exclusion criteria for health and human services data bases, identifying new community resources, interviewing new agencies and services, as well as indexing using the AIRS/Info Line Taxonomy of Human Services.

Staff Development

Ongoing staff training is provided once a month at Inservices that are scheduled as part of regular staff meetings. An agency Education Committee establishes yearly goals for continuing education/development for all staff.

Each year staff members also attend the Wisconsin State Conference for Information and Referral Providers, the national Conference of the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems and the annual convening of Crisis Intervention Personnel in Chicago. Each of these conferences provides an excellent opportunity for exposure to a wide range of topics pertinent to Information and Referral and Crisis Intervention service provision as well as personal and professional growth.

Resource House

Resource House is the computer software used at First Call For Help for data base development and maintenance, to search for agencies and services for caller referrals, to produce directories and listings, and as an online caller data logging tool. Features of the search program include searching by AIRS/Info Line taxonomy terms, searching by people's taxonomy terms, and searching by names of agencies and services. Resource House automatically sorts search results by zip codes starting with agencies closest to the caller. Resource House automatically tracks referrals made to specific programs and by taxonomy categories.

The Resource House Internet search engine incorporates a six-step process for users to search the database. Users may create an ID and password and can save favorite searches and print listings and mini-directories. Users can also send and receive email messages from agencies. The web site also includes the capability for agencies to update their information on-line.

Facilities and Staff

First Call For Help is located in the Fauver Hill building near Gundersen Lutheran's Onalaska campus which also houses Gundersen Lutheran

Telecommunications and Gundersen Lutheran Telephone Nurse Advisor Program. Each staff person on duty has a workspace that includes a computer workstation and a telephone system which is capable of handling the large volume of calls generated by a regional information and referral service. First Call For Help's computer system is part of Gundersen Lutheran's computer network which stores the First Call For Help database and gives all staff access to the Internet and email.

Presently there are twelve Information and Referral Specialists including full time and part time staff. There are four Resource Specialists, an Office Assistant and a Director. Additional staff hours are currently being added including a new Line Supervisor position and some additional line hours as well. It is anticipated this expanded staffing level will meet the projected increase in call volume.

Currently there are eleven workstations. One to two additional workstations are available to accommodate the expected 211 increase in call volume from western Wisconsin. First Call For Help is already serving as the 211 center for southeast Minnesota. The agency has already experienced an increase in call volume from Minnesota in the first quarter 2003.

Telephone Capabilities

First Call For Help presently has a multi-line telephone system with six incoming lines dedicated to First Call For Help. In addition, the telephone system includes separate dedicated lines for the specialty services provided by First Call For Help such as the statewide Public Health Hotlines and the after hours services provided to regional agencies. It is anticipated that the present system is capable of absorbing an increase in the number of incoming calls. Additional lines will be added as needed during 211 implementation.

First Call For Help has been in contact with CenturyTel, the main provider of telephone services in the region. A number of conversations and meetings have taken place with regard to 211 issues. CenturyTel is supportive of First Call For Help's proposal to the Public Service Commission. In addition First Call For Help has informed the other telephone company providers of its plans to establish a regional 211 Call Center in La Crosse.

As a part of Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center, First Call For Help is currently working with a Telecommunication Specialist in the Information Systems Department to explore options for upgrading our existing telephone system to more efficiently accommodate a greater volume of calls. Automated Call Distribution (ACD) and/or IP Technology will be pursued to expand our current capabilities to distribute and monitor the incoming flow of calls. Both technologies will allow First Call For Help to track the following: call volume, number of abandoned calls, speed of answering and average call length.

Access to Services for Non-English Speaking and Hearing Impaired Callers

Since 1981 First Call For Help has provided access to all of its services through the use of a TTY device. First Call For Help staff are trained not only to be proficient in the use of a TTY but also to be sensitive to and understanding of needs and concerns which are unique to hearing impaired individuals.

Since October of 1994, First Call For Help has utilized Language Line Services to meet the needs of non-English speaking callers. Language Line Services is the world's largest provider of over the phone interpretation and provides 24 hour telephone access for more than 140 languages.

Database

First Call For Help has over twenty years experience in developing and maintaining a centralized integrated database of health and human service information. For the past 17 years the database has been computerized. Currently Information and Referral Specialists have access to a health and human service database of nearly 4,000 agencies and 20,000 services as possible referral sources to callers including the general public and providers. The database covers a wide variety of areas including the following:

Self Help Groups
Support Groups
Counseling Agencies
Homeless Shelters
Food Pantries
Domestic Violence Services
Volunteer Opportunities
Hospitals and Clinics
Transportation Services
Social Service Agencies
Home Health Care
Psychiatric Resources
Consumer Issues
Parenting
Recreational Resources

Websites

www.firstcallforhelp.org
First Call For Help's web site provides Internet access to information on First Call For Help and all of the specialty services offered. Also included on the website is a data base search engine providing users with access to nearly 2,000 organizations in a 17 county area in southwestern Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota, and northeastern Iowa as well as Wisconsin, and Iowa statewide data and national organizations.

www.mch-hotlines.org
This web site provides Internet access to the Wisconsin Public Health Hotlines funded through the State of Wisconsin. General information on the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Hotline, Wisconsin First Step, Wisconsin Women's Health Hotline, and the Services Hotline for Women, Children and Families is provided

as well as information on major program areas identified for each hotline. Also included on the web site is a data base search engine providing users with access to nearly 3,000 organizations throughout the state of Wisconsin, statewide data and national organizations.

www.minnesotahelp.info
This web site is a collaborative effort between First Call Minnesota and the Minnesota State Board on Aging. First Call Minnesota is made up of First Call For Help's across Minnesota who contract with the Minnesota State Board on Aging to provide a specialized data base consisting of over 14,000 health and human service providers focusing on senior citizen and disability areas. First Call For Help regional centers also provide 211 access throughout the state of Minnesota. First Call For Help-La Crosse serves as the regional data base and 211 call center for the Minnesota counties of Fillmore, Houston, and Winona. In addition First Call For Help serves as the after hours 211 call center for First Call Minnesota.

Resource House Search Engine
The search engine used in all of the above web sites is called The Resource House and was written by North Light, Inc. This software allows users to search by People's Taxonomy categories, keywords, and names of providers. Users also can create their own sign-in name and password that gives the capability of saving favorite searches, sending and receiving email messages from providers, and printing specialized listings. Also included on the web site is a Provider Annex that allows providers to update their data on-line and submit to First Call For Help for inclusion in the data base.

Community Planning for 211

First Call For Help has conducted a number of activities to inform, involve and plan for 211 with agencies, funders, other service providers and telephone companies in western Wisconsin. These include:

- First Call For Help's Community Advisory Committee has been kept informed on an ongoing basis of the national 211 effort. The Committee has provided guidance regarding the planning process for First Call For Help in all three states that it serves.

- First Call For Help has worked collaboratively with the United Way of the La Crosse Area to move forward with 211 planning. The United Way has a strong interest in establishing a 211 service in the La Crosse Area. A letter of support is attached.

- First Call For Help informed all County Departments of Human Services within its western Wisconsin service area of its plans to pursue 211 designation and invited their questions and involvement.

- First Call For Help has worked closely with the La Crosse County Department of Human Services with regard to 211. The Director of this agency served on the First Call For Help Advisory Committee and has a strong personal interest in establishing a 211 Call Center in La Crosse. A letter of support is attached.

- First Call For Help has made contact with the La Crosse Emergency 911 Dispatch Center with regard to 211 planning. For many years, First Call For Help has enjoyed a successful professional relationship with 911 working collaboratively to serve callers in life threatening situations. A letter of support is attached.

- Contact has been made with CenturyTel, the main provider of telephone services in the region. A number of conversations and meetings have taken place between First Call For Help and CenturyTel with regard to 211 issues. CenturyTel has had experience with 211 in other parts of Wisconsin and is supportive of First Call For Help's proposal to the Public Service Commission.

  In addition First Call For Help has informed the other telephone company providers of its plans to establish a regional 211 Call Center in La Crosse. First Call For Help has also had contact with staff from the Wisconsin Telecommunications Association with regard to 211 related planning issues.

- As a member of Information and Referral Providers of Wisconsin (IRPW), First Call For Help has been able to draw on the experiences and suggestions of other Information and Referral agencies in Wisconsin who have pursued 211. A staff member of First Call For Help is on the IRPW Board.

- Gundersen Lutheran, a sponsor of the service, is informed and aware of First Call For Help's interest and plans to pursue 211 designation. Gundersen Lutheran has provided long term support and commitment to the service and is very supportive of First Call For Help's efforts to evolve into a 211 Regional Center. A letter of support is attached.

Funding

First Call For Help is a community service of Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center in La Crosse. Other sources of funding include the following:

Jackson County Telephone Crisis Program
Jackson County Aging and Disability Resource Center
Trempealeau Co Aging and Disability Resource Center
La Crosse Co Aging and Disability Resource Center
La Crosse County Human Services Department
Monroe County Domestic Abuse Project
Fillmore Family Resources
Coulee Council on Addictions
United Way – La Crosse
United Way – Prairie du Chien
State of WI – Runaway Bridge
WI Association for Runaway Services
Southeast Minnesota Community Action Corporation
First Call Minnesota – After Hours Contract
First Call Minnesota – Minnesota Board on Aging
First Call Minnesota – Minnesota Department of Human Services

The Public Health Hotlines are funded by:

Maternal and Child Health Title V Services Block Grant
Maternal and Child Health Bureau
Health Resources Services Administration
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Birth to Three
State of WI – Birth Defects Prevention Surveillance Program

Projected 211
Information and Referral Center Operating Budget
Mid-2003 – Mid-2004
(Includes First Call For Help – La Crosse and Public Health Hotlines)

Personnel Expenses

Total Salaries and Wages	$582,275
Director	
Office Assistant	
Information and Referral Line Supervisor (new position)	
Information and Referral Specialists (additional hours in 2003)	
Database Coordinator	
Resource Specialists	
Total Fringe Benefits	203,795
Total Salary, Wages and Benefits	$786,070

Non-Salary Expenses

Supplies	7,395
Equipment	4,600
Telephone upgrade/equipment (in kind),	
Computer workstations	
Telephone (Includes Projected 211 Development Expenses)	19,050
Training/Development (Educational materials)	4,580
Travel	2,500
Occupancy Costs (In kind)	
Copy/Postage	7,525
Marketing (Includes 211 promotion)	29,000
Purchased Services	33,815
Multiple website development, maintenance agreements,	
contracted services	
Other	1,250
	$895,785

National Standards for 2-1-1 Centers

Recommended by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems
Adopted by the National 2-1-1 Collaborative 5/5/2000

First Call For Help provides the following response to the Recommended National Standards for 2-1-1 Centers:

1. Ensure the provision of 24 hour coverage year round

   Since March of 1979, First Call For Help has provided comprehensive information and referral, short-term telephone counseling, crisis intervention and specialty services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to residents of western Wisconsin, southeastern Minnesota and northeast Iowa.

   All lines are answered live at all times. Answering systems or automated messages have not been utilized to date.

2. Ascribe to the AIRS Standards for Information and Referral

   First Call For Help is a member of good standing with AIRS and ascribes to the standards and principals of this organization.

3. Have a plan in place to become or be accredited by AIRS

   First Call For Help plans to become accredited by AIRS during the period 2003-2005.

4. Utilize Certified Information and Referral Specialists and Resource Specialists

   First Call For Help has the following goals for Information and Referral certification:

   - Employees who have worked at First Call For Help for five or more years will complete their certification requirements by fall of 2004.
   - Employees who have worked at First Call For Help for fewer than five years will complete their certification requirements by fall of 2005.

5. Demonstrate cooperative relationships with specialized I&R's, crisis centers, 911's and 311's, where applicable

   First Call For Help has ongoing cooperative relationships with the following agencies:

- Specialized I&R's – First Call For Help has contracted to act as an after hours contact point for the Aging and Disability Resource Centers in La Crosse, Jackson and Trempealeau counties. The Aging and Disability Resource Centers provide information on programs and services for the elderly and those people with disabilities. In addition to providing back up telephone services, First Call For Help Resource Specialists provide the database utilized by the Resource Centers when providing referrals for clients.

- Crisis Centers – First Call For Help contracts with the Monroe County Domestic Abuse Project and Fillmore Family Resources to provide after hours services for victims of domestic violence.

- 911 Centers – First Call For Help receives calls from individuals regarding crisis situations such as suicide, domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse and drug and alcohol abuse. In certain situations, First Call For Help staff need to work in a cooperative basis with 911 centers and other crisis resources such as law enforcement to ensure that the needs of those in crisis are met.

6. Have means of tracking call volume, number of abandoned calls, average speed of answering, average call length

   As a part of Gundersen Lutheran Medical Center, First Call For Help is currently working with a Telecommunication Specialist in the Information Systems Department to explore options for upgrading our existing telephone system to more efficiently accommodate a greater volume of calls. Automated Call Distribution (ACD) and/or IP Technology will be pursued to expand our current capabilities to distribute and monitor the incoming flow of calls. Both technologies will allow First Call For Help to track the following: call volume, number of abandoned calls, speed of answering and average call length.

7. Computerized I&R database with client collection capability

   First Call For Help has developed and maintains a comprehensive database of health and human service providers. The software used for this database is called Resource House. Currently Information and Referral Specialists have access to nearly 4,000 agencies and 20,000 services in the following areas: basic needs, consumer services, criminal justice and legal services, education, environmental quality, health care, income security, individual and family life, mental health care and counseling, organizational/community services, and target populations.

Resource House software includes an on-line data collection feature. Every staff person collects and documents data about each call as it is taken. Data collected includes gender of caller, age of service, county calling from, who is calling, type of call, how caller heard of FCFH, language other than English, time elapsed, follow-up, research/advocacy, and session notes. Resource House tracks referral information including specific categories and unmet needs based on the agencies searched for in the data base.

8. Use the AIRS/Info Line Taxonomy

For the past ten years, First Call For Help has utilized the AIRS/Info Line Taxonomy to classify it's data base of health and human services. One staff person is a nationally certified taxonomy trainer and has conducted taxonomy and indexing workshops on a national, statewide, and local level. All staff are trained in use of the taxonomy.

Resource House software utilizes the Info Line taxonomy in its data structure and data base maintenance and for searching capability.

9. Have the ability to publicize 211 services and educate the public on an ongoing basis

First Call For Help staff have many years of experience in utilizing various public relation methods to educate agency personnel and the general public regarding services available through the agency. Some of these methods include:

- Brochure development and distribution
- Feature articles in service area newspapers
- Public service announcements on radio and television
- Informational mailings to service area human service agencies, groups and organizations
- Informational mailings to area businesses

To publicize 211, First Call For Help will utilize all of the above strategies as well as designing additional efforts that will reach the population at large. To maximize its benefits, United Way is interested in promoting 211 throughout the La Crosse area.

10. TTY and multi-lingual accessibility either on site or access to live translation

Since 1981 First Call For Help has provided access to all of its services through the use of a TTY. First Call For Help staff are trained not only to be proficient in the use of a TTY but also to be sensitive to and understanding of needs and concerns which are unique to hearing impaired individuals.

Since October of 1994, First Call For Help has utilized Language Line Services to meet the needs of non-English speaking callers. Language Line Services is the world's largest provider of over the phone interpretation and provides 24 hour telephone access for more than 140 languages.

11. Ability to develop linkages though protocol with appropriate clearinghouse agencies that may be able to provide services such as volunteer or donation management

First Call For Help has been involved in discussions with a number of other service area agencies in regards to the development of a volunteer center which would act as a clearinghouse for those who wished to volunteer and agencies in need of volunteers.

In addition, First Call For Help has contracted with La Crosse County Department of Human Services to coordinate the La Crosse Area Need Program. La Crosse Area Need is modeled after Dane Need (Dane County) and serves those whose basic needs remain unmet through traditional sources. In addition, the program can be used to post items that an agency has to donate such as used computers, furniture, household goods, etc.

12. Ensure quality of service and inquirer satisfaction through appropriate follow up

First Call For Help offers follow up on all La Crosse Area Need calls, child abuse calls and other crisis related calls such as sexual assault, domestic violence and suicide. Follow up is also offered to all parents who contact Wisconsin First Step. Wisconsin First Step is a hotline which is operated by First Call For Help for the State of Wisconsin and provides information on programs and services for children with special health care needs and their families.

In addition, First Call For Help offers follow up to approximately one out of every 200 callers seeking information and referral regarding service area groups, organizations and agencies. First Call For Help also offers follow up to callers who receive supportive listening services. Follow up is offered, when in the judgment of staff or caller, they would clearly benefit from a follow up call due to situational stress or lack of a personal support system.