

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1787

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to health and human services and information referral.

Brief Description: Establishing a 211 network.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Pettigrew, Boldt, Moeller, Miloscia, Jarrett, Priest, Dickerson and Santos).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/27/03, 3/5/03 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/14/03, 81-15.

Passed Senate: 4/15/03, 46-0.

Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Creates 211 as the official state dialing code for public access to information and referral for health and human services and information about access to services after a natural or non-natural disaster.
- Creates a 211 account in the State Treasury.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Darneille, Vice Chair; Bailey, Dickerson, Miloscia, Pettigrew and Shabro.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Boldt, Ranking Minority Member.

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

Abbreviated dialing codes enable callers to connect to a location in the phone network that otherwise would be accessible only via a seven or 10-digit telephone number. Among abbreviated dialing arrangements, "N11" codes are three-digit codes of which the first digit can be any digit other than one or zero, and the last two digits are both one. There are only eight possible N11 codes, making N11 codes among the scarcest of numbering resources.

The Federal Communications Commission has exclusive jurisdiction over numbering administration, including the assignment of N11 codes. The current assignments for N11 codes are as follows:

- 2-1-1: Assigned for community information and referral services;
- 3-1-1: Assigned nationwide for non-emergency police and other government services;

- 4-1-1: Unassigned, but used virtually nationwide by carriers for directory assistance;
- 5-1-1: Assigned for traffic and transportation information;
- 6-1-1: Unassigned, but used broadly by carriers for repair service;
- 7-1-1: Assigned nationwide for access to Telecom Relay Services;
- 8-1-1: Unassigned, but used by local exchange carriers for business office use; and
- 9-1-1: Universal emergency number for wireline and wireless telephone service.

The current assignment of the 211 abbreviated dialing code originated with a petition filed by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems, the United Way of America, United Way 211 (Atlanta, Georgia), United Way of Connecticut, Florida Alliance of Information and Referral Services, Inc., and Texas I & R (Information and Referral) Network for nationwide assignment of an abbreviated calling code for access to community information and referral services. The petition cited a range of human needs not addressed by either the 911 code or police non-emergency 311 code, such as housing assistance, maintaining utilities, food, counseling, hospice services, services for the aging, substance abuse programs, and dealing with physical or sexual abuse.

The Washington Information Network 211 (WIN 211) is a private, 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation dedicated to creating a comprehensive statewide information and referral system. Member organizations of WIN 211 currently provide information and referral services in their communities.

Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill:

The 211 dialing code is created as the official state dialing code for public access to information and referral for health and human services and information about access to services after a natural or non-natural disaster.

Before a state agency or department that provides health and human services establishes a new public information telephone line or hotline, the state agency or department must

consult with WIN 211 about using the 211 system to provide public access to the information to be made available.

Only a service provider approved by WIN 211 may provide 211 telephone services. WIN 211 is required to approve 211 service providers, after considering the following:

- the ability of the proposed 211 service provider to meet the national 211 standards recommended by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems and adopted by the National 211 Collaborative;
- the financial stability and health of the proposed 211 service provider;
- the community support for the proposed 211 service provider;
- the relationships with other information and referral services; and
- such other criteria as WIN 211 deems appropriate.

A 211 account is created in the State Treasury. Moneys in the account may be spent only after appropriation. The account will include any funding for this purpose appropriated by the Legislature, private contributions, and funding from all other sources. Expenditures from the 211 account must be limited to the implementation and support of the 211 system.

WIN 211 is required to study, design, implement, and support a statewide 211 system. Activities eligible for assistance from the 211 account include, but are not limited to:

- Creating a structure for a statewide 211 resources database that will meet the Alliance for Information and Referral Systems standards for information and referral systems databases and that will be integrated with local resources databases maintained by approved 211 service providers;
- Developing a statewide resources database for the 211 system;
- Maintaining public information available from state agencies, departments, and programs that provide health and human services for access by 211 service providers;
- Providing grants to approved 211 service providers for the design, development, and implementation of 211 for its 211 service area, which is defined as an area of the state identified by WIN 211 as an area in which an approved 211 service provider will provide 211 services;
- Providing grants to approved 211 service providers to enable them to provide 211 service on an ongoing basis; and
- Providing grants to approved 211 service providers to enable the provision of 211 services on a 24-hour-per-day seven-day-a-week basis.

WIN 211 is required to annually report to the Legislature and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) beginning July 1, 2004.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available for original bill and proposed substitute.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2003.

Testimony For: (In support) (Original substitute) Creating 211 as the official state dialing code for public access to information and referral for health and human services and disaster-related information will build on and enhance existing information and referral services in the state, help fill information gaps, and allow for a more efficient use of resources. In addition, by establishing one statewide number, calls can be directly referred to the appropriate service providers. 211 will augment current 911 service, especially in the event of natural disasters or bioterrorism. This is part of a national movement, which has been projected to provide savings in other states. Much of the funding for 211, to date, has been provided by United Way. WIN 211 consists of 20 to 30 local information and referral member organizations. WIN 211 does not charge membership fees. Local phone companies should be able to reprogram the phone lines at no cost. The 211 system will stimulate the development of new information and referral services in the state.

(With changes) (Original substitute) The term "chapter" should be replaced with "act" in sections 6 and 7.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Pettigrew, prime sponsor; Jeri Shumate, WIN 211; Kathleen Southwick, Crisis Clinic; and Tom Harville, citizen.

(With changes) Ed Hidano, Department of Social and Health Services.