



NW-AIRS News

Dear NWAIRS Members:

As the holidays approach, calls to I&R programs inevitably increase and there is a corresponding spike in the intensity of needs experienced by individuals and families during these times. As the temperature falls, calls for energy, food and shelter assistance steadily rise. And in this season of celebrations and joy, callers still reach out for assistance with financial crises, Medicare open enrollments, caregiving issues and family emergencies. Our Northwest programs and dedicated I&R specialists are always there on the end of the line for callers and the communities we serve. On behalf of the NWAIRS Board of Directors, I want to thank you for the valuable (and endless) work you do and wish you moments of relaxation and joy over the holidays.

The holidays can be extra stressful for frontline workers. In this issue, there is an article devoted to managing stress, and tips on working with difficult callers. In addition to reports from 211 and aging programs around the region, we spotlight Oregon's H1N1 hotline and the upcoming 2010 Census. I hope you enjoy these stories and we welcome suggestions for future newsletters as well as submissions from your area.

Please save the date for the next NWAIRS conference, "Building Bridges: Spanning the Diversity of I&R", which will take place October 6-8, 2010 at the Lloyd Center Doubletree Hotel in Portland, Oregon. We're planning a broad array of workshops and speakers on 211, aging and disability, diversity and technology topics. As always, there will be plenty of opportunities to network and learn from old colleagues and new friends.

Wishing everyone Happy Holidays and a peaceful New Year.

Julie Johnson,
President, NWAIRS

NW-AIRS strives to:

- Promote excellence in the field of information and referral.
- Provide a vehicle for peer support, regular communication, and training.
- Support cooperation between information and referral providers.

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Pass this newsletter along to other contacts in your agency, or anyone else who may be interested in reading about NWAIRS!

IDAHO AFFILIATES

I&R staff in the Aging Network are looking forward to the realization of a goal identified as long ago as 2001— all six Area Agency on Aging offices around the state utilizing the same software. Although the software of choice by Idaho Commission on Aging is yet to be named, efforts through Idaho's Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) grant will make this goal a

reality in the coming months. Of great concern to I&R staff is accuracy and timeliness involved in converting data from one database to another. Knowing that other I&R programs in the northwest have suffered through these times, sharing of lessons learned from your experiences would be greatly appreciated. E-mail lessons learned to Idaho's board member of NWAIRS at pbouchard@aaani.org.

WASHINGTON AFFILIATES

- The Washington State Department of Health partnered with 211 to help Washington residents prepare for H1N1/Swine Flu with prevention and care information plus vaccination site locations (as the vaccine became available in the state). Frequently updated H1N1 recorded messaging is available 24/7.
- King County 211's Kathleen Southwick testified in Washington DC for House Ways and Means Sub-Committee on impacts of the economy on low-income citizens.
- Boeing's Employee Community Fund (ECF) awarded a Disaster Response grant to WIN211 to assist with seasonal storms and flooding. WIN211 and regional 211 staff also worked with the Dept of Financial Institutions with Foreclosure Prevention seminars around the state.
- Greater Columbia 211, a program of Yakima's People for People, successfully met certification requirements for AIRS accreditation. They join peer accredited regions King County 211, North Sound 211 and Southwest 211.
- Eastern Washington 211 has contracted with Spokane County to assist with Rapid Re-Housing (federal stimulus funding) Program. North Sound 211 is working similarly with Snohomish County's Rapid Re-Housing efforts.
- Washington State's Basic Food Program has contracted with three 211 regions (Peninsulas, South Sound and Greater Columbia) to help with outreach and prepare 211 callers for a successful application.
- With a focus on reaching vulnerable populations and cancer prevention, King County 211 will integrate proactive screening for cancer risk and referrals to cancer prevention and control resources into their daily activities. This pilot study will help determine 211 callers' cancer prevention needs and identify how to best link callers with cancer-related resources. The project is a result of a partnership with the Alliance for Reducing Cancer, Northwest and the Health Promotion Research Center at the University of WA's Department of Health Services.

OREGON AFFILIATES

City of Portland/Multnomah County Information and Referral Program

Call volume has remained pretty steady for the City of Portland/Multnomah County Information and Referral Program, which represents both the local city and county government entities in its handling of approximately 15,000 inquiries each month, though the types of calls have changed in some significant ways. This past summer the Portland Police bureau eliminated its information line which shifted some of that call burden to the City/County program. As a result, staff has gone through some education on how to best handle police related inquiries including everything from figuring out how to get police incident updates and report information to how to dispose of guns, ammunition and prescription drugs. With the onset of the flu season and the concerns around the H1N1 strain of flu this year, the program has received and successfully handled many related inquiries as a result of its strong partnerships with 211info, the County and the State Health Department.

211info

This year's primary focus has been to try and keep up with the great demand for our service and to continue our work on making 211 available statewide. With the downturn in the economy, our call volume has been up by 30% from the previous year. It's been a challenge that has required some creative approaches including recruiting student interns and volunteers to support both our Call Center and Resource Department.

Our effort to expand 211 services is not new but is now a major focus of 211info since the closure of OR211 this year. We've made some important inroads but still have much work ahead of us. This year we were successful at creating wonderful partnerships in both Central Oregon and Yamhill counties that gave us the needed support to turn on 211 for those communities. The United Way of Deschutes County, the Partnership to End Poverty, the Family Resource Center and other community agencies saw the importance of having 211 in Deschutes, Jefferson and Crook counties. 211info and the United Way signed a contract in January, 2009. 211info answers the calls while

data is being managed locally by the Family Resource Center in Bend. Yamhill County came next through a partnership with the United Way of the Mid-Willamette Valley and the Yamhill Commission on Children and Families. Their support made it possible to launch 211 in the summer of 2009. Again, calls are answered by 211info while the Community Action Agency in Washington County, one of our original partners, is managing the database for Yamhill County.

We're excited and energized by these developments and look forward to new communities coming on board in 2010. The need is certainly now greater than ever before.

Oregon ADRCs

The Oregon State Unit on Aging and several Oregon Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs) are collaborating on developing a statewide structure that will provide comprehensive information, assistance and counseling to seniors, people with disabilities, their families, friends and caregivers.

Introduced at the federal level in 2003, the ADRC initiative supports State efforts to develop "one stop shop" programs at the community level that help people make informed decisions about the wide range of in-home, community-based and institutional services and programs available to them. ADRCs serve as integrated points of entry into the long term care service system, and are designed to address the frustrations many consumers and their families experience when they need to obtain information and access to supports and services.

In the past year, three major grants have been awarded that will make this single point of access possible. Each grant has a different focus, but they all have one central mission: to present consumers with a "no-wrong door" approach to finding needed information. The AAA's directly involved in these grants include Lane Senior & Disability Services; Oregon Cascade West Senior & Disability Services (Linn, Benton and Lincoln Counties); Northwest Senior & Disability Services (Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Tillamook and Clatsop Counties), Washington County, and Multnomah County.

Have a story idea for the next NW-AIRS newsletter? Know of a program or staff person you'd like to see in the spotlight? Contact Sarah Marshall at smarshall@crisisclinic.org. Your participation is much appreciated!

NWAIRS 2010 CONFERENCE PLANNING

NWAIRS' next regional conference will be in **Portland, Oregon, October 6–8, 2010**. As part of our planning preparations, we are seeking ideas from you for workshops and speakers. Among others, there will be workshops focused on senior information and assistance, aging and disability services, 211 call centers and diversity topics. To help us plan, please take a minute to consider the following questions:

1. When you think about the training needs of your program, are there specific workshops that would be of particular benefit to you or your I&R staff?
2. If you've encountered and can recommend any presenters or workshop facilitators who might appeal to our membership, please pass their names along.
3. Which topics would you like addressed in a presentation or keynote address?
 - Time management for I&A Specialist
 - Secondary Trauma and Stress Management



- Outreach and Service to Diverse Populations
- Aging and Disability Resource Centers—Options Counseling
- Call Center Management and Staff Supervision
- Taxonomy and Data Management Techniques
- Community Outreach and Collaboration
 - Using Social Media and Technology Tools
 - Nursing Home Diversion/Community Living Programs
- Veterans Services
- Health Information
- Serving Rural Communities
- 311, 411 and other 11's
- Certification Examination Preparations
- Best Practices

Please submit your feedback to Wanda Smith at wsmith@pfp.org; we hope to see you next year in Portland!

CUSTOMER SERVICE IN THE PHONE ROOM

- 1** Professionalism
 - Use "thank you" and "please"
 - Control background noise
 - Don't use jargon, acronyms, bureaucratic-speak
- 2** Speedy Responses – but Think before you Act!
 - Give caller follow-up time expectation
 - Don't use idle chatter
 - Take no more than 24 hours to return a call
- 3** Accurate Information
 - Understand the "why" behind the rules; you want to avoid "because that's the rule"
 - Use easy to understand info and examples
 - Don't blame others
- 4** Genuine Concern
 - Use empathy
 - Don't judge caller's feelings
- 5** Reliable Follow-through
 - Take responsibility to carry out promised action

HOLIDAY STRESS



Ever found yourself bombarded with things to do and not enough time to do them? This happens every day of our lives and especially at the holiday season. As parents, we feel like we want to be able to give our children, family and friends everything at the holidays but we

cannot always take on the financial burden that comes along with the season of giving. Between the gift giving, holiday season and the endless items on our "to do" list, our stress levels increase, but we still want to have a wonderful holiday season.

To help reduce the stress, you can tap into your social support network, which is a group of friends, family or peers. You can develop this group when you are not under stress so they are available to you when you are stressed. The positive effects of this network include: a sense of belonging, increased sense of self-worth and a feeling of security. To help nurture the relationships you have in this social support network you need to stay in touch with the people, be proactive, know when to say "no" and when to say "yes," don't compete, be a good listener, challenge yourself, don't overdo it, and appreciate your friends and family. If you are in need of a social support network and don't know where to find them, visit a park, volunteer, ask a friend, or go back to school.

To help identify your stress triggers you need to remember that your genes, personality and life experiences all influence the way you respond to stress in your life. To help identify what is causing your stress, keep a "stress journal" or make a list of all the demands on your time and energy for one week.

When you start to feel stress taking over and you don't know what to do, try these ideas to help you cope with the stress of the holiday season:

- Stay out of holiday debt
- Make a shopping list and check it twice
- Avoid a relative melt down
- Go easy on the alcohol
- Keep moving
- Eat well and be merry
- Don't get too ambitious

Remember that the holidays are a time with family and friends; take a moment to appreciate the simple things, stay flexible, and if travelling give yourself plenty of time to get there and remember that your expectations may need to be lowered for you to enjoy the holiday season.

For more information, visit:

- www.mayoclinic.com/health/coping-with-stress/SR00030
- <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/social-support/SR00033>
- www.ahealthyme.com

SPONSORSHIPS SOUGHT

Seeking sponsors for the NWAIRS 2010 conference to help support scholarships and speaker costs. If you know of organizations interested in receiving information about a variety of sponsorship opportunities and benefits, contact Julie Johnson at (360) 676-6749.

211info – HELPING MANAGE THE H1N1 CRISIS



Portland, OR Anyone working in the field of I&R these days understands the important role we play in emergency situations. We've shown this over and over again in recent years. At the present time H1N1 is considered a public health

emergency and 211info is the designated agency in Oregon answering our state's Influenza Hotline. This project has been an opportunity for us to be seen as a viable partner with emergency preparedness agencies demonstrating our ability to act quickly and effectively in times of disaster.

How did we become the contracted agency answering the statewide flu hotline?

- Sometimes it's about being in the right place at the right time. We already have an existing contract with our state Public Health Division to answer Oregon SafeNet, our state's maternal and child health line. Oregon SafeNet has a long history of providing seasonal flu information to the public and we have a proven track record of excellent service.
- We pushed the responsible parties to make a decision knowing that it takes time to organize such a massive project.
- We were flexible with regard to the number. Although we would have preferred using either 2-1-1 or 1-800-SAFENET (both easy numbers that are known to the public), we agreed to go with the state's Public Health Emergency Hotline – 1-800-978-3040.

Once we had a contract, what steps did we take to create the service?

- Established a separate Call Center.
- Promoted someone in-house to supervise the new Call Center and be responsible for all aspects of the phone and computer system.
- Purchased equipment (computers, phones, etc)
- Hired staff, including two who are bilingual.
- Created training manuals and procedures.
- Created a separate database for H1N1 and seasonal flu clinics and general information.
- Added new fields and needs for reporting purposes.
- Set up a system to report each day on call volume, demographics, needs, etc.
- Set a time to meet regularly.

Where are we now?

The service continues to evolve and change. As of November, we are taking close to 500 calls per day without a great deal of promotion of the line. We are being asked to prepare for up to 1500 calls per day with extended hours of operation. We are providing general flu information and referrals to clinics for both H1N1 and seasonal flu. We are now also working with a separate nurse triage line for people calling who are ill and need advice. The line will provide additional support to people in the Portland metro area who are ill, low income and have no insurance. We have another separate line to transfer calls from providers and labs. And, we continue to ready ourselves for whatever comes next!

THE BEST RESOURCE? A POSITIVE ATTITUDE



- Creates goodwill with caller
- Reduces potential for irritating caller
- Lessens stress on you
- Helps you enjoy your job more
- Creates a more productive environment

Word choices make a dramatic difference!

Turn negatives into positives:

- "She will be in about 10" vs. "She's not in yet"
- "Let me find someone to assist" vs. "That's not my job"

Tips for maintaining a positive attitude:

1. Link being positive with consequences:
 - decrease in number of complaints
 - less stress
 - increase in power
 - enhanced safety
2. Choose role models who are positive.
3. Focus on the caller's needs, not your own
4. Realize feelings are a choice

WORKING WITH ANGRY CALLERS



Becoming adept at handling angry customers will help you feel more confident in your own abilities.

1. **Listen carefully.**
 - Focus your attention on the caller.
 - Deal with feelings first.
 - Allow for some venting but not too much.
 - Use Deflection techniques – “I understand but...”
 - Piece together the story to achieve understanding.
 - Empathize with what the customer is feeling, let them know you understand.
2. **Pause before responding.**
 - Respond with empathy.
 - Realize callers often have a right to be angry.
 - Focus your thinking on empathizing with customers by understanding the possible reasons why they might be angry.
 - Consider what it is they are looking for from us and adapt the way we respond to them and take back control of the situation.
3. **Ask questions.**
 - Attempt to get specifics about the complaint/issue.
 - Ask questions that require more than a “yes” or “no” answer; help guide the caller towards using a more normal speaking voice. The more a person speaks, the more difficult it is for them to maintain an angry tone.
 - Never force a person to give you a dumb answer – give them an out.
4. **Avoid Blame or just saying “I’m sorry.”**
 - This phrase admits guilt and may encourage further aggression by the caller.
 - You can apologize for the caller’s inconvenience, you can express regret that the customer is dissatisfied, but avoid just saying “I’m sorry.”
 - Acknowledge responsibility but avoid blame.
5. **Summarize the caller’s problem in your own words.**
 - This helps ensure you understand the caller’s intended message.
 - Ask the customer what they see as a successful outcome to their situation.
6. **Offer alternatives to fix the problem.**
 - Be clear in communication and use straightforward explanations.
 - Be flexible whenever possible, try to see situation from their point of view.
 - Use solution-focused language such as “I can” and provide customer with timelines so they know what to expect.
 - Offer only “good” options – never force a person to give a dumb answer.
7. **Let the customer decide which alternative to use when possible.**
 - Leave the customer with an understanding of what you are going to do and a timeline.
8. **Follow through on anything you agree to do.**
 - Give customer updates including a timeline.



CONFERENCE SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE!

Visit www.nwairs.org for details

STATE TRAINING GRANTS AVAILABLE!

Visit www.nwairs.org for details



UNITED STATES CENSUS 2010



The 2010 Census is just around the corner; what do your callers need to know? With only 10 questions, the 2010 Census questionnaire takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. Households are asked to provide key demographic information, including whether a housing unit is rented or owned; the address of the residence; and the names, genders, ages and races of others living in the household.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT

The census is a count of everyone residing in the United States.

WHO

All U.S. residents must be counted—both citizens and non citizens.

WHEN

You will receive your questionnaire in March 2010 either by U.S. mail or hand delivery. Some people in remote areas will be counted in person.

WHY

The U.S. Constitution requires a national census once every 10 years to count the population and determine the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives.

HOW

Households should complete and mail back their questionnaires upon receipt. Households that do not respond may receive a replacement questionnaire in early April. Census takers will visit households that do not return questionnaires to take a count in person.

Q: Who should fill out the census questionnaire?

A: The individual in whose name the housing unit is owned or rented should complete the questionnaire on behalf of every person living in the residence, including relatives and non-relatives.

Q: How will the 2010 Census differ from previous censuses?

A: In 2010, every residence will receive a short questionnaire of just 10 questions. More detailed socioeconomic information previously collected through decennial census will be asked of a small percentage of the population through the annual American Community Survey. To learn more about the American Community Survey, visit www.census.gov.

Q: How are census data used?

A: Census data determine the number of seats each state will have in the U.S. House of Representatives. Census data also can help determine the allocation of federal funds for community services, such as school lunch programs and senior citizen centers, and new construction, such as highways and hospitals.

Q: What kind of assistance is available to help people complete the questionnaire?

A: 2010 Census questionnaire language assistance guides are available in a variety of languages. Questionnaire Assistance Centers (QAC) will also assist those unable to read or understand the questionnaire. Large-print questionnaires are available to the visually impaired upon request, and a Teletext Device for the Deaf (TDD) program will help the hearing impaired. Contact your Regional Census Center for more details about the types of assistance available and for QAC locations.

Q: How does the Census Bureau count people without a permanent residence?

A: Census Bureau workers undertake extensive operations to take in-person counts of people living in group quarters, such as college dormitories, military barracks, nursing homes and shelters, as well as those who have been displaced by natural disaster.

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Asian Counseling & Referral Services, Seattle, WA
Chinese Information and Service Center, Seattle, WA

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Clackamas County Social Services, Oregon City, OR
Community Action Organization, Hillsboro, OR
Community Action Partnership Association of Idaho, Boise, ID
Community Cupboard, Leavenworth, WA
Crisis Clinic, Seattle, WA
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Department of Human Services, Salem, OR
District XI Human Resource Council, Missoula, MT
Evergreen Healthcare, Kirkland, WA
Fort Lewis Army Community Service, Fort Lewis, WA
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HIV Alliance, Eugene, OR
Homer Independent Living Center, Homer, AK
Idaho Dept of Health & Welfare, Boise, ID
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Jewish Family Service, Seattle, WA
Klickitat Co Senior Services, Goldendale, WA
Missoula Aging Service, Missoula, MT
Multnomah Co Aging & Disability Services, Portland, OR
Municipality of Anchorage; Department of Health and Human Services, Anchorage, AK
Neighborhood House, Seattle, WA
Northwest Senior & Disability Services, Salem, OR
NWRC - NW Regional Council - AAA, Bellingham, WA
Office of Aging & Long Term Care, Kennewick, WA
Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Olympia, WA
Olympic Area Agency on Aging, Sequim, WA
Opportunity Council, Barrow, AK
Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments, Albany, OR
Parent Trust for Washington Children, Seattle, WA
Peninsulas' 211, Bremerton, WA
People For People, Yakima, WA
Pierce Co Aging & Long Term Care, Tacoma, WA
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Volunteers of America Western Washington, Everett, WA
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