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211 offers referrals for aid starting today

BY SEAN F. DRISCOLL
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YORKTOWN - Starting today, callers in much of Grant County will have access to a new service providing information on local health and human services providers.

After months of discussion and planning, the 211 service, which covers Grant, Blackford, Jay, Madison, Delaware, Randolph and Henry counties, will be available when the Yorktown-based calling center opens at 2:11 p.m. today.

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LifeStream Services Inc. is contracted to provide 211 services for the East Central Indiana area.

"In years to come, everyone will be as familiar with 211 as they are with 911. I know of many needs out there that are unmet simply because people do not know where to turn for help," said Kenneth D. Adkins, president/chief executive officer of LifeStream. "This is the answer, and I am excited

to be a part of this truly historic time for East Central Indiana."

THE DETAILS

LifeStream Services Inc. will open its 211 center at 2:11 p.m. today; the center will offer referrals on health and human service issues including emergency food, counseling, employment, health care, housing and legal care.

For more information on Indiana 211, call 211 or visit www.IN211.org.

Any callers who experience problems reaching the center should report those issues to LifeStream at 1-800-589-1121.

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Although much of Grant County will be covered under the service, callers in Fairmount and Swayzee won't initially be covered because telecommunications systems need to be installed in those towns, said Lucinda Nord, executive director of the Indiana 211 Partnership.

Each county covered under the service was asked to contribute to its annual costs. The service came to Grant County thanks to a \$12,000 grant from the Community Foundation, said Center Township Trustee Bryce Coryea, who served on the 211 advisory committee.

"I think it's going to be invaluable to people," Coryea said. "A lot of people, they just don't know where to go if they need some kind of assistance."

LifeStream 211 is part of the Indiana 211 Partnership, a growing statewide network to provide help with health and human services needs.

The 211 network was first launched by United Way in metropolitan Atlanta in 1997, and since that time it has grown to include 39 states and the District of Columbia. About 53 percent of the U.S. population is currently covered through the 211 system.

In Indiana, 70 percent of Hoosiers have access to the system with the launch of the new LifeStream 211 regional center, according to Lucinda Nord, executive director of the Indiana 211 Partnership.

The Indiana 211 Partnership fully endorsed LifeStream as a regional center in January.

The LifeStream 211 center has been in the works for sometime, according to Jim Allbaugh, director of client services for the agency. He noted that LifeStream has been in the information and referral business for many years and has offered, at no cost, that type of service for most of its 31 years of existence. The 211 center was a natural expansion of that service, he said.

"We were pleased to be able to meet the rigorous standards for endorsement, and we are looking forward to assisting individuals and working with community agencies and organizations in helping those individuals," Allbaugh said.

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