



PA 211 DATABASE INCLUSION POLICY

Purpose:

The purpose of the PA 211 Inclusion/Exclusion Policy (the Policy) is to provide guidelines regarding the types of organizations and services that are eligible for inclusion in the PA 211 database of community resources and to ensure consistency across the PA 211 network. In accordance with the [Standards of Inform USA](#) (formerly AIRS), the Policy is to be uniformly and fairly applied. It is published for the benefit of PA 211 staff and the public so that all users are aware of the of the scope and limitations of the database (Inform USA, 2020).

Eligible for Inclusion:

To be eligible for inclusion, an organization must:

- Provide health and human services to the residents of Pennsylvania or a specific region thereof, **OR**
- Perform a related role (funding, planning, coordinating, or monitoring) in the human services network, **AND** fall into one of the following categories:
 - Designated as or affiliated with a nonprofit entity per IRS 501(c)(3) and related regulations
 - Government offices or programs that provide health and human services
 - Commercial/For-profit companies that:
 - Provide a service not available in the nonprofit sector when such a service is determined essential by 211 (*e.g.* emergency alert equipment, driver's intervention programs) and/or
 - Provide services for free or offer a sliding fee scale, subsidies, or accept Medicare/Medicaid) so that their services are accessible to individuals with low income
 - Toll-free hotlines that offer direct assistance or provide specialized information about and referral to health and human services organizations
 - Faith-based organizations if eligibility for service is not restricted to members of that faith
 - Educational institutions such as school districts, intermediate units, trade schools, community colleges, and special service components of schools or school districts
 - Unincorporated groups such as support or self-help groups
 - Hospitals (for-profit as well as nonprofit) whose services are available to the community at large
 - Advocacy and issue-oriented action groups may be listed if the database is balanced and presents resources for all sides of an issue.
 - Social, special interest, or service clubs/societies that offer services to the community at large

Other factors may also be considered when evaluating organizations for inclusion, including but not limited to the degree of demand/need for the services offered in each community.

The Policy does not prohibit the inclusion of any programs that target services based on age, gender, health, disability, or other characteristics designed to meet the special needs of targeted populations. However, the programs must be open to all people in those targeted populations.

Agencies with no physical location may be included if they provide service or unbiased professional advice via a website or other virtual means. In most cases, for a virtual/web-only based service to be eligible for consideration, the following criteria must be met:

- It is mandatory to have an identified contact to communicate with 211 to provide validation of and updates to the listing in the PA 211 database
- Demonstrated provision of service for at least twelve (12) months
- Evidence of a mailing address (this can be kept confidential from the public)

Some records may be prioritized to appear at the top of search results for Resource Navigators and the public on pa211.org if it meets one or more of the following conditions and has been updated within the last 18 months:

- This program serves as an entry point for all services like this in the community
- This program is the largest and/or best funded in the community and does not fall at the top of the search results naturally
- This program is time-sensitive and needs to reach people as quickly as possible
- This program is statewide or nationwide and due to radius searching rarely shows up near the top of search results

Ineligible for Inclusion:

Organizations that are not eligible for inclusion in the PA 211 database include but are not limited to:

- Organizations that discriminate based on race, color, religion, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, age, or any other category protected by law
- Organizations that offer services only for their own members (*e.g.*, counseling or food available only to a church's parishioners or members of a particular faith/denomination)
- Organizations that misrepresent themselves or their services in any way
- Auxiliary organizations unless they offer specific services to a group deemed necessary by 211
- School districts outside Pennsylvania
- Parent Teacher Organizations/Parent Teacher Associations
- Exclusively Financial / Banking services
- Newsletters, magazines, speakers' bureaus, or other services used only to promote the organization and its services
- *Exclusively* Devotional / Religious services

- Social or special interest clubs or societies for adults that do not offer services for non-members
- Individual practitioners or practices/groups of consulting practitioners unless they:
 - Provide a service not available in the nonprofit sector when such a service is determined essential by 211 (*e.g.* emergency alert equipment, driver's intervention programs) and/or
 - Provide services for free or offer a sliding fee scale or accept subsidies and/or Medicare/Medicaid so that their services are accessible to individuals with low income

Exclusion and Removal:

PA 211 reserves the right to decline to list organizations and services that do not meet the criteria for inclusion outlined in the Policy.

Furthermore, PA 211 may remove an organization or service previously approved for inclusion from the database if they no longer fall within the scope of the Policy, or for an organization's failure to update/validate the listing upon Final Notice.

DISCLAIMERS

PA 211 may exclude or remove organizations from its resource database for any reason, including but not limited to fraud, misrepresentation, or discrimination.

PA 211 reserves the right to refuse or discontinue listings for organizations that have had serious complaints lodged against them by any regulatory body, the general public, or with PA 211.

- At the point a serious complaint about an agency is brought to the attention of PA 211, the agency and its programs will be made inactive from the PA 211 database while a review of the complaint is undertaken.

Inclusion in the database does not constitute an endorsement, and omission does not indicate disapproval. PA 211 neither guarantees nor makes any representation as to the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in its resource database.

With respect to the accuracy and completeness of the contents of the database, PA 211 makes no representation and specifically disclaims any implied responsibility for the accuracy of the information provided and shall in no event be held liable for any loss or damage.

Resource inclusion may be delayed due to limits of available staffing or other resources.

PA 211 reserves the right to edit information to meet format, guideline, style, and space requirements.

PA 211 does not require, receive, or accept payment from any organization to be listed in its database.

A representative of an agency, organization, or program deemed ineligible for inclusion may submit a written request to PA 211 for reconsideration.

Please note that by submitting your agency's information, you are agreeing that PA 211 may use your agency information for referral and publication purposes.

ADOPTION AND REVIEW OF THE PA 211 DATABASE INCLUSION POLICY

To ensure that the PA 211 database of community resources continues to meet the changing needs of the community, the Inclusion Policy will be reviewed annually as part of the PA 211 annual evaluation and planning process. It will be updated as needed; revisions in the interim between annual reviews will be documented as such.

Initial Approval and Adoption: September 2020

Reviewed and Approved:

- June 2022 (the Policy review clause initially prescribed only bi-annual review)
- July 25, 2024 by the PA 211 Board of Directors
- April 2, 2025 by the PA 211 team and Regional Directors (adding resource prioritization criteria)