

Making a List. . . of Help Numbers!

"This 'telephone' has too many shortcomings to be seriously considered as a means of communication. The device is inherently of no value to us."

-- Western Union internal memo, 1876

"If you were going to die soon and had only one phone call you could make, who would you call and what would you say? And why are you waiting?"

-- Stephen Levine, poet, author,
and spiritual healing counselor

Winter and holidays in Tennessee both have their own blessings – and their own stresses and pressures. Some people try to handle everything themselves. A smart person knows when to ask for help. This column lists some of the most important help numbers to dial in Tennessee.

1. Tennessee 211

211 is an easy-to-remember telephone number to find or give help. You can call 211 in Tennessee to reach local community services and volunteer opportunities.

211 is available from most (but not all) telephones, cell phones, and payphones. If your phone does not connect when you dial 211, you can call 1-800-318-9335.

It's a free call, and it is available 24/7 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week). 211 is provided through local United Way programs and the Tennessee Alliance of Information and Referral Systems.

211 operators help direct callers to the non-profit agencies within each local area of the state. Hundreds of different services are all networked together. Here are a few examples:

- Need to find a suicide prevention hotline? Call 211.
- Do you need help caring for an elderly relative? Call 211.
- Know someone who needs help learning to read? Call 211.
- Need emergency help with a utility bill? Call 211.
- Do you need a support group? Call 211.
- Need transportation to get to your doctor? Call 211.

You can also go on-line and find help at **www.211tn.org**. This Web site is designed to be accessible for people with disabilities.

2. ElderCare Locator: 1-800-677-1116

This free 800 number helps callers find information

and referral assistance services provided by state and area agencies on aging. The ElderCare Locator is available on weekdays, from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Central time.

You can get special purpose telephone numbers for Alzheimer's hotlines, adult day care and respite services, nursing home ombudsman assistance, consumer fraud, in-home care complaints, legal services, elder abuse/protective services, information about Medicare, Medicaid, and Medigap, tax assistance, and transportation.

3. Child Abuse Hotline: 1-877-237-0004

This 24-hour confidential hotline is operated by the Department of Children's Services.

4. Adult Protective Services: 1-888-APS-TENN or 1-888-277-8366

Use this statewide hotline to report abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation of impaired adults, Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

5. IRS Help Line: 1-800-829-1040

This free service is available 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.. You may ask questions to help you prepare your tax return, or ask about a notice you have received. Don't be afraid to call!

6. Free legal help for low-income persons

Tennessee has four regional non-profit law firms that provide area residents with free legal help with civil (non-criminal) legal problems:

Legal Aid Society: 1-800-238-1443 (covers Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland)

Legal Aid of East Tennessee: (865) 637-0484

West Tennessee Legal Services: 1-800-372-8346

Memphis Area Legal Services: (901) 523-8822

The Tennessee Alliance for Legal Services has a very good site available in English and Spanish at **www.tennhelp.com**. It has free information about organizations and agencies across Tennessee that help individuals and families.

by Jim Hawkins, Managing Attorney, Gallatin office, Legal Aid Society

Note: This column is not intended to take the place of legal advice. All cases are different and need individual attention. Consult with a private attorney of your choice to review the facts and law specific to your case.

The Legal Aid Society is a non-profit law firm, not a government agency, and all calls are strictly confidential. If you need more information on this or other common legal problems, please visit our Web site at **www.las.org** or call 1-800-238-1443. December 12, 2007