

# Angels Among Us

Reaching out for help is difficult. Finding the organizations that *can* help shouldn't be. 211info gathers the most relevant health and social services information from across Oregon and southwest Washington and delivers guidance free of charge over the phone, web, email and text.

To better serve the growing needs of our local families, 211info has launched 211 Family Info, a service focused on early childhood concerns for residents of Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas and Polk counties.

More than just information and referral, 211 Family Info builds relationships and works with parents and caregivers of children from birth to age 8 to find solutions. From the father of three who has questions about sibling rivalry to the mother looking for strategies to reduce tantrums, 211 Family Info provides a compassionate ear, reassuring guidance and vital information for those seeking assistance.

To connect with a 211 Family Info specialist, simply dial 2-1-1, send an email to [children@211info.org](mailto:children@211info.org) or text the term "children" to 898211. The staff includes Master's level professionals with experience in early childhood education and development, parenting support and infant mental health.

This service is FREE for residents of Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas and Polk counties!

Here Ashley, a 211 Family Info specialist, describes how the service supports parents and young children in our community:

**Question:** *Can you tell us about your background in working with children and families?*

**Ashley:** I have been working with young children and their families for about 15 years. In that time I have taught preschool, early childhood special education and parenting classes. I have a Master's degree in early childhood special education and for the past five years I have been a behavior specialist working with the parents and teachers of children with challenging behaviors. I also teach university courses about children birth through 8 years old, and as the mom of two boys, I have been able to see for myself how fun and sometimes challenging it is to raise kids.

**Q:** *Parents can get overwhelmed with parenting tips and advice, both online and in their community. What is unique about 211 Family Info?*

**A:** As a mom, one of the things I have found most challenging is that there is so much information out there. When I had my first child it seemed like every book, magazine and blog I looked at was telling me about the "right" way to parent and implying that I was doing



Ashley is one of the Family Info specialists offering free advice to parents on the 211 Family Info Line. She holds a Master's degree in early childhood special education, has worked as a teacher and behavior specialist, and is the mother of two boys.

something wrong if their way wasn't working for me. To make matters worse, everyone's ideas were conflicting. Contacting 211 Family Info is a way to talk about your situation with someone who understands that there is no right way to parent, someone who is guaranteed to be non-judgmental. Also, the 211 Family Info specialists use an extremely extensive database of community resources, so when families need ongoing support or additional resources we can help them find it.

**Q:** *What are some of the parenting topics and information you discuss with callers?*

**A:** We get such a variety of calls it's hard to say what a "typical call" is like. I get calls from parents, grandparents, teachers and neighbors who have a question or want to talk about young children. I get calls from teachers, nurses and home visitors trying to help families find activities, education or social services. Many parents call asking if what their child is doing is "normal" or how to go get screenings and assessments. We are open to talking about absolutely anything related to raising or working with children from birth to age 8, and if we can't help you, we will use our database to try to find someone who can.

**Q:** *The general 211 number is provided for 211 Family Info. How do callers get connected directly with you?*

**A:** If a caller wants to talk to us by phone, they dial 2-1-1 and when they hear the menu of options, they can press 5 to speak with a 211 Family Info specialist. Also, everyone who works at 211info knows about our program, so all of our call takers know they can transfer a call to me if it is about families of young children.

**Q:** *Any last words to parents and families?*

**A:** I just want to emphasize that absolutely anyone who is looking for support, resources or advice about young children is welcome to call, text or email. We are free, anonymous and we know our stuff!



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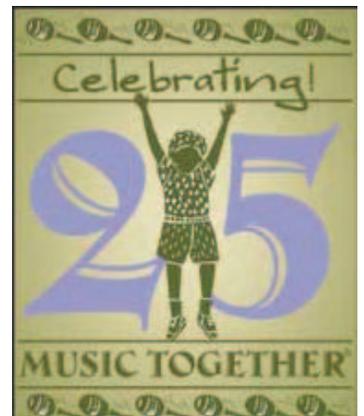
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Questions? Email [abuell@rrising.com](mailto:abuell@rrising.com) or call Austin at (503)551-7565



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