INTRODUCTION

The 211 project was created to help anyone in need with the best local resources and services. To get help, anyone can call, text or chat with local 211 to speak with a community resource specialist in the area to get resources including food, shelter, employment opportunities, health care, veterans and so on.

After years of practice and research, we have found out that there are difficulties to be resolved. For example, it is hard to distinguish for some people when they should call 211 and when they should call 911. Moreover, maintaining 211 projects requires hiring specialists to record and update information properly.

Our project is trying to create a prototype to enable users to search information conveniently. Therefore, the goal is to create prototype of a responsive web-based application to support the accountability of the information posted on the 211 directories by encouraging users’ feedback on the accuracy of the data presented.

User Publics

- Caseworkers
- Public + Civil Service Employees (police officers, etc)
- Caregivers/Local non profits who provide services (shelters, food pantries, etc)

Service providers are human services agencies with ability and willingness to provide support for the community, mostly non-profit. Service providers for 2-1-1 should provide up-to-date data to 2-1-1 databases and ensure accurate information to provide assistance.

- Service providers need flexible forms to update/insert/delete their information website without too many steps and checks involved. The service they provide needs to be fitted into some categories. The service providers need to report the language assistance they are capable of providing when registering as a service provider.

- Participants/End-clients: Participants are families or individuals who are under a situation of economic, social, or mental crisis. In services like 2-1-1 Greater Atlanta, GA, the service is focused on the individuals in financial crises that prevent them from maintaining their families. Additionally, in PATH Crisis Bloomington, IL, they state their services for people age 60 and older, for adults 18-59 with disabilities residing in McLean and Livingston Counties, and the homeless (PATH Crisis, 2016).

METHOD

- Evaluate the layout design of the current website, test and search by the website from a user perspective and making our user stories to find out what design helps our users the most.
- Enable a convenient form for the service providers to update the out of date or inaccurate information in order to increase accountability of the information presented on the website.
- Design a user-friendly layout and categories as well as a searching bar.

RESULTS

- Increase the access to social assistance agencies by expanding the available options to browse into the 211 directory.
- Inform the design of a new online platform by evaluating together with Cunningham Township Supervisor’s Office a prototype of a web-based app

Support the accountability of the information posted on the 211 directories by encouraging users’ feedback on the accuracy of the data presented.

- Enhance the web user interface design of existing service directories by decreasing the number of steps required to find the desired social assistance agency.

Foster interest in using the 211 directories based on the knowledge and ease of use of the new online platform.

DISCUSSION

One key point could be potentially useful for other topics in social work research could be understanding the users then designing the user interfaces. For this project, I spent the first two week doing research about who are the potential users and how the 211 project helps local areas. Therefore, when we started the development of the prototype, I had clearer ideas about what was expected. I think, for other relevant social service research areas, if there will be a web-based application to be developed, it would be a good idea to start from understanding the user and make user stories to better understand and predict user behaviors.

CONCLUSIONS

By developing this application, we will be able to develop a 211 website that could better help people with community resources. We will develop a more considerate website for people with mental issues, disabilities, difficulties to use the internet with accountable information.

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