

## 211 is Listening

Mental health issues aren't always immediately recognizable, and sometimes it takes a trained listener to provide help when needed.

A Red Deer-area woman recently called 211 for help with her finances, and shared that she was on long-term disability and couldn't pay her utility bills. The Information and Referral (I&R) Specialist who answered the call was able to give the woman emotional support for her tough situation and the caller felt comfortable enough to share that she was having suicidal thoughts. While they talked, the I&R Specialist continued assessing the risk of suicide.

The caller shared that she had no immediate plan and didn't intend to commit suicide right away - she mostly had suicidal thoughts at night. The two then talked about what supports are available, like the Canadian Mental Health Association and crisis lines that could help the caller get through her evenings. They created a safety plan, where the caller would dial a crisis line if she ever felt unsafe or needed support with her suicidal thoughts.

Once the I&R Specialist had confirmed a level of safety, the caller's financial troubles were discussed and she was given information on how to connect with Alberta Works.

Before the call wrapped up, the I&R Specialist once again checked in on the caller's suicidal thoughts and encouraged her to call a crisis line or 211 again if she needed extra support.