



Press release

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Calls to 211 Helpline Increased Steadily in 2010

Calls for Basic Needs Up 12% Over Last Year

SAN FRANCISCO, March 8, 2011 – The 211 Bay Area providers released call data that shows the region's community information lines assisted more than 218,000 callers in 2010, up 6% from 2009. At the same time, requests for help with "basic needs" – such as food, shelter, and clothing – jumped 12%, lead by a 19% surge in requests for food assistance.

211 is an easy-to-remember, toll-free phone number that connects Bay Area residents with local community services, such as food, shelter, counseling, employment assistance, child care and more. Trained, caring specialists answer calls and conduct a thorough assessment to ensure an accurate referral.

The total number of "Basic Needs" requests made to 211 Bay Area in 2010 was 127,506, up 12% over 2009. Basic needs requests included:

- Food assistance: 18,713, up 19%
- Housing and utilities: 82,688, up 13%
- Clothing & material goods: 3,315, up 9%
- Income & employment services: 20,881, up 5%
- Transportation: 2,871, up 3%

The list above includes data from 211 in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, and Sonoma Counties. County-specific data is available upon request. Please note that some callers received assistance for more than one need or issue.

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"Here in Alameda County we are handling over 8,800 calls a month! It is not surprising that as the local economic climate continues to get worse, the needs of our residents continue to increase. Our 211 feedback line contains testimonials from callers who appreciate the ease and comprehensive nature of the 211 communication system," said Barbara Bernstein, executive director of Eden I&R. Eden I&R operates 211 Alameda County, which experienced the largest call volume increase among 211 Bay Area providers, up 18% in 2010.

"Our 211 call center has experienced a steady increase in calls for help, as 211 continues to serve as an essential guide for Bay Area residents during these tough times," said Anne Wilson, CEO of United Way of the Bay Area, which operates 211 service in Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo and Solano Counties. "Our 211 specialists are answering more calls from people who are asking for help for the first time in their lives, and are not sure where to start. We're happy to reassure them that our 211 team is here to listen, direct them to community resources that can help, and then follow up over time to ensure they are successfully connecting with the services they need."

John Bateson, Executive Director of Contra Costa Crisis Center, which operates 211 in Contra Costa County, said, "In tough economic times, when layoffs and foreclosures are making it harder for people to get by, having a simple, easy-to-remember number to call for help and information can make all the difference. 211 is that number, and more people are discovering it."

Carole Leigh Hutton, CEO of United Way Silicon Valley, which operates 211 Santa Clara County, said, "The importance of 211 has been highlighted by the tough economy, but its true value is that it's here through all kinds of times, and for all kinds of needs."

Note for TV: B-roll video footage of the 211 call center is available in English, Spanish and Cantonese upon request. Media are also encouraged to visit 211 Bay Area call centers, located in downtown San Francisco, Hayward and Walnut Creek.

About 211 Bay Area

211 is an easy-to-remember, toll-free phone number that connects callers with local community services, such as food, shelter, counseling, employment assistance, quality child care and more. During a disaster, 211 provides critical information about evacuation routes, food and shelter, as well as support with finding new jobs and permanent housing during long-term recovery. 211 is confidential and available 24 hours a day in more than 150 languages. The 211 Bay Area Regional Partnership is operated by Contra Costa Crisis Center, Eden I&R, United Way of the Bay Area, United Way of Monterey, United Way Silicon Valley, and United Way of the Wine Country. 211 is available in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Mendocino, Monterey, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano and Sonoma Counties. For more information, visit www.211BayArea.org.

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