

# Press Release



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## **Launch of 211 Helpline in San Mateo County Completes 211 Regional Network - Free helpline quickly connects callers with community services –**

SAN MATEO, Calif., February 7, 2011 – More than seven-million residents across the Bay Area now have access to the 211 helpline with the official launch of the service in San Mateo County this month. The 211 San Mateo County Steering Committee and United Way of the Bay Area will host a celebration for the launch on 211 Day (Friday, February 11, or 2-11).

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, volunteer opportunities and more.

San Mateo County is the final county in the Bay Area to receive 211 service, completing the 211 regional network, which now serves 12 counties. Last year, 211 assisted more than 218,000 Bay Area callers, up 6% from 2009. The service is confidential and available 24 hours a day in more than 150 languages.

211 Day festivities include an antique fire truck that will traverse the county adorned with 211 banners. Media are invited to attend the launch celebration, which is not open to the public. Please see the attached media advisory for more information.

“Launching 211 in San Mateo County makes finding help, and giving it, a lot easier,” said Anne Wilson, chief executive officer of United Way of the Bay Area. “The helpline enables residents to quickly navigate the maze of government and nonprofit agencies that provide health and human services in San Mateo County.” She noted that without 211, people often call several agencies before getting through to the correct service, while many give up before finding the help they need.

211 is also an integral component of the county’s disaster-response infrastructure and will alleviate misuse of 911 for non-emergencies. 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.

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“United Way’s 211 is the ultimate tool for providing access to the thousands of services in our county,” said San Mateo County Supervisor Adrienne Tissier, who co-chairs the 211 San Mateo County Steering Committee with Sheriff Greg Munks and San Mateo Central Labor Council Secretary/Treasurer Shelley Kessler. “United Way’s 211 specialists are experts at directing those in need to services, as demonstrated by how well they provide 211 in other counties.”

Residents from around the Bay Area can visit [www.211bayarea.org](http://www.211bayarea.org) to search the region-wide database of services. Information about 211 nationally can be found at [www.211.org](http://www.211.org). United Way partners closely with San Mateo’s Community Information Program (CIP) to update and maintain the 211 San Mateo County database, which is the backbone of the helpline.

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**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**

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](http://www.211BayArea.org).

United Way thanks our generous funders for supporting 211 in San Mateo County and throughout the Bay Area: AT&T Corporation, Stephen D. Bechtel Jr. Foundation, Chevron Corporation, Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, Grove Foundation, Walter and Elise Haas Fund, PG&E, Kaiser Permanente, Northern California, KORET Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Union Bank of California and Wells Fargo.

## 211 Bay Area Fact Sheet

### What is 211?

For every day needs and in times of disaster, 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, quality child care and more. 211 is confidential and available 24 hours a day in more than 150 languages. 211 also serves as a vital link for individuals seeking to volunteer and provide resources to nonprofit organizations.

211 is available in Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Mendocino, Monterey, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano and Sonoma Counties.

### Who operates 211?

United Way of the Bay Area operates 211 in San Mateo and five other Bay Area counties. 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 Bay Area online:** [www.211BayArea.org](http://www.211BayArea.org) (includes searchable database)

### 211 Bay Area Call Volume

Data includes Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano and Sonoma Counties (excludes Mendocino, Monterey, Santa Cruz)

2009: 206,952  
 2010: 218,731  
 % increase: 5.7%

### 211 Bay Area Requests for “Basic Needs “ Assistance

	<b>Clothing &amp; Material Goods</b>	<b>Food</b>	<b>Housing &amp; Utility Assistance</b>	<b>Income &amp; Employment Services</b>	<b>Transportation</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>January – December 2009</b>	<b>3,031</b>	<b>15,791</b>	<b>73,429</b>	<b>19,895</b>	<b>2,788</b>	<b>114,536</b>
<b>January – December 2010</b>	<b>3,292</b>	<b>18,492</b>	<b>82,176</b>	<b>20,722</b>	<b>2,824</b>	<b>127,506</b>
<b>% increase</b>	<b>8.61%</b>	<b>17.10%</b>	<b>11.91%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>1.29%</b>	<b>10.9%</b>

### 211’s role in disaster response and recovery

**2007 Southern California Wildfires:** The importance of 211 during disaster was underscored during the October 2007 wildfires in Southern California, where 211 San Diego call volume peaked at 30,000 calls a day – up from 800 daily – as residents sought information about evacuation sites, road closures, shelters, medical assistance, pet and large-animal care, and more.

**In the Bay Area:** When a major disaster strikes the Bay Area, 211 will provide residents with critical information about evacuation routes, food and shelter, as well as support with finding new jobs and permanent housing during long-term recovery.

**History of 211**

**In the U.S.:** 211 started in Atlanta in 1997. As of August 2010, 211 serves over 246 million Americans (82% of the entire population) covering all or part of 47 states (including 34 states with 90%+ coverage) plus Washington DC and Puerto Rico. The remaining states are all in various stages of planning and implementation.

**In California:** California's first 211 service launched on February 11, 2005 in Ventura County. 211 is now available in 27 of 58 counties.

**In the Bay Area:** 211 first launched in San Francisco in February 2006. The service expanded to serve most of the region in February 2008.

**What's the difference between 211, 311, 911, etc.?**

- 211: Community services
- 311: Non-emergency government services
- 411: Directory assistance
- 511: Traffic and transit
- 611: AT&T repair service
- 711: California relay for hearing impaired
- 811: Call before you dig for locating underground utility lines
- 911: Life-threatening emergency services