

211 Santa Clara County 2010 Annual Highlights

In its fourth year of operation, 211 Santa Clara County continued to be a valuable community resource, connecting callers to thousands of local services like food, housing, employment services, and child care. Last year more than 25,000 calls were made to 211, United Way Silicon Valley's information and referral service, which is free, confidential, and multi-lingual. The following are a few highlights from our work. Please contact us if you would like more information.



Top Reasons People Contact 211 Santa Clara County

- Housing and utilities
- Criminal justice and legal services
- Food
- Individual and family life
- Health care



211 Aims to Prevent Hunger

211 launched a new outreach program that will help to prevent hunger locally by making sure callers who ask about food and other basic needs are informed about the federal food stamp program, now named CalFresh. Because millions of CalFresh dollars go unused every year, 211 is helping callers learn more about the program.

This outreach is crucial because one in four county residents is at risk for hunger. Unfortunately, only half of those eligible for CalFresh participate in the food program. That means too many local families and individuals aren't getting enough to eat. It also represents a loss of nearly \$124 million in food assistance benefits to the community, which would generate nearly \$228 million in local economic activity.

Thanks to an enhanced partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank and the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, **trained 211 call specialists explain how the food assistance program works** to callers who may be eligible. Those interested in applying for CalFresh are referred to Second Harvest Food Bank, where they can begin the process.



211 Connects to Critical Resources

211 is not just a call line, it's a lifeline. 211 connects callers to services that can help with everyday needs like child care and exercise classes, as well as in times of crisis. Whether the emergency is an eviction notice or an earthquake, 211 is there 24/7, in more than 170 languages. Callers talk to a live call specialist who can provide information and referrals.

Housing and food continue to top the list of why people call 211, which reflects the need in our community. One in four county residents is not self-sufficient, meaning they can't meet their basic needs without assistance.

211 not only links people to safety-net services, it also helps to improve financial stability by connecting callers to services like employment training and free tax assistance. Last year, nearly 500 people turned to 211 to locate Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) sites, which are for people with low incomes who qualify for free tax preparation services and certain income tax credits. In 2010, VITA sites helped to bring \$5.7 million in tax refunds into the community.

Community Survey Results

In 2010, United Way Silicon Valley conducted its first 211 survey in Santa Clara County as part of 211's strategic planning process. Local 211 users and community-based organizations (CBO) were surveyed. Some highlights include:

- 62 out of 65 CBO respondents said the 211 brochures meet their multi-language needs
- 50% of users heard about 211 from a CBO
- 65% of users did not know 211 offers up-to-date disaster information

Based on survey results and community input, 211's focus over the next three years will be on improving resources in the database and expanding communication about 211's role in a disaster. We thank the community for its input.

Advocating for 211

United Way Silicon Valley continued to advocate for federal legislation (H.R.211 and S.211) that would have provided sustainable funding to expand and strengthen 211 across the country. Despite widespread support, the legislation was stalled by partisan politics and deficit concerns. At the state level, United Ways of California is working to bring 211 to all California residents, particularly during a disaster.

Support 211

- Call 211 or visit www.211scc.org
- Tell a friend, coworker, or family member about 211
- Give to United Way Silicon Valley's Community Action Fund at www.uwsv.org
- Volunteer to raise awareness about 211
- Advocate for policies that will expand and strengthen 211



Injured Worker Gets Help

A 38-year-old caller was injured on the job and his disability payments had stopped. He needed immediate help with food, utility, and rent expenses for his family. He was reapplying for disability payments, but had already exhausted his savings. Our 211 call specialist pre-screened him for food stamps/ CalFresh and referred him to Second Harvest Food Bank to begin the application process. He also received referrals to the Palo Alto Food Closet, Community Services Agency of Mountain View and Los Altos, and EHC Lifebuilders. This is just one example of the way 211 is improving local lives.

Join the Celebration!

211 Santa Clara County reaches a milestone in 2012 with its five-year anniversary. Join us in celebrating this critical community resource. There are a number of ways to get involved, including sponsorships and volunteer opportunities. Contact us to learn more.

