



For Immediate Release

Another Historic Year for 211 San Joaquin Call Center

211 San Joaquin announces largest call volume to date in its release of the 2021 Annual Summary Report as the Call Center continued to be the central connector to health and human services for the County of San Joaquin amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Date: March 28, 2022

Location: Family Resource & Referral Center 3127 Transworld Dr. Stockton CA 95206

211 San Joaquin (211SJ) released its 2021 Annual Summary Report on its website 211sj.org last week-highlighting the record-breaking call volume for any year since 211SJ began its operations in 2015. Powered by local nonprofit, Family Resource & Referral Center, 211SJ is a free and confidential phone line for the sole purpose of improving access to health, human, and disaster response services. 211SJ is accredited by the Alliance of Information and Referral Systems (AIRS), meeting the standards for professional information and referral programs and services available.

211 Information and Referral Call Specialists are available 24/7/365 and they answered 161,308 calls, texts, and email requests for help and resources in 2021. This was a 118% increase over 2020's reported calls with top needs of County residents including COVID-19 vaccination & testing information, and homelessness prevention & housing resources. February 2021 saw its highest call volume in 211 San Joaquin's history (also as the COVID-19 vaccine became available to the public) with 60,115 residents seeking information and resources. February's call volume almost surpassed all of 2020's entire call volume for the year (2020 call volume 61,789).

As the opportunity for residents to access the vaccine became available, the 211 Call Specialists received an influx of calls from San Joaquin residents aged 65 and over. 60,785 seniors called 211 San Joaquin in 2021, many who needed assistance in scheduling appointments for their COVID-19 vaccinations. "Seniors were a vulnerable population during the pandemic," said Tiffany Phovixay, Chief Operations Officer of Family Resource & Referral Center. "Many seniors did not know how to register for their appointments online. Seniors often did not have a valid email address of their own, which was a requirement of scheduling their appointments, so our Call Specialists would help them by using their own personal email accounts to assist our seniors in scheduling their appointments. I'm proud of how our team responded to this need-providing all resources and help, despite unforeseen challenges."

The Annual Report highlights the top COVID-19 resources sought with over 94,484 referrals made to these resources alone. With resources being constantly updated, 211SJ was able to provide specific local information and referrals to each individual caller-helping ease the frustration of having to call several different numbers to get connected to the right resource. FRRC Board Member, and former City of Stockton Mayor, Ann Johnston adds, "I told my neighbors who needed help in getting connected to a vaccine appointment to call 211, and they shared that they were so thankful for this service. It really helped them to find the most current information about available appointments-I'm sure 211 saved lives!" Through a collaboration with San Joaquin County Public Health Service, 211SJ worked to get homebound residents connected to vaccine, helping address health inequities through 211's technological competencies.

With an average of 7,000 calls received per month last year in the Call Center, 211SJ also saw an uptick in San Joaquin County residents seeking housing and homelessness prevention resources. After COVID-19 resources, housing and rent payment assistance programs were the top need of 211SJ Callers with over 7,000 referrals made to Affordable Housing programs and over 3,000 referrals made to Emergency Rental Assistance Programs-helping reduce mass evictions during the health crisis (see 2021 Annual report for a listing of top 20 referrals for each resource). The 2021 Annual Report also includes impact stories of real 211SJ Callers who were able to get referred to multiple resources, not just the initial resource the caller was seeking. Many callers were referred to resources to assist with basic needs for their families.

“211 will be celebrating its 7th Anniversary of service in San Joaquin this year,” said CEO, Kay Ruhstaller. “Although none of us could have predicted what was to unfold in the last two years, the pandemic highlights what 211 was designed for—connecting families and individuals to health and human services in times of need. As families continue to recover from the social-emotional and financial impacts of COVID-19, it is our connection to real systems of support that will allow us to heal.” Last month, San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors acknowledged “the tremendous service the 211 helpline provides in connecting callers to much needed resources” in a special proclamation presented to 211 Call Specialists in honor of National 211 Day, February 11th 2022.

With evolving community needs, 211SJ formed a new partnership in 2021 with Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) to support callers with access to emergency preparedness customer support during Public Safety Power Shutoffs. PG&E customers will now be able to call or text 211 to receive information about existing programs in their community during a shut-off such as transportation and shelter needs, food resources, and bill assistance programs. 211SJ’s texting service, with over 6,768 subscribers, sent 65,191 outgoing mobile push notifications to residents providing information about oral dental services through the SJ TEETH program for children 0-18, information about stopping nicotine use for teens and adults, and information on how to access resources for parents concerned with their child’s development through the Help Me Grow Call Center.

For the full 211 San Joaquin Call Center Annual Summary Report visit www.211sj.org.

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About Family Resource & Referral Center: Serving the community for over 40 years, Family Resource & Referral Center is founded on the belief that children and families are vital to the richness and quality of life within San Joaquin County. The Center's staff is committed to the compassionate support of children and families in need of social support and training services. The staff believes that direct, personal action will make a difference in family life and is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life within our community.

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