

Call 211 for something different

You could call it the human services number. Or the life navigation line. Or your link to everything from a dentist referral to resources for keeping your children fed and your finances in the black.

And it has come to California City.

The Community Action Partnership of Kern has launched the phone line to link callers with services from government and nonprofit agencies. It gets its gala grand opening Monday.

Partnership spokeswoman Christine Lollar said the new number is designed to reduce the trouble people go through to connect with the services they need to make their lives better.

"Our mission is to fight for self-sufficiency -- to help people not have to navigate through the human services maze," she said.

The United Way of Kern County, the county of Kern, First 5 Kern and the Kern County Department of Public Health all contributed to fund 211.

"It is such a simple solution that has wide-ranging benefits for communities," said Della Hodson, United Way's director of community impact. "Whatever issue people need help on, all they have to do is remember 211."

People who want to be helpers can also call to be automatically transferred to the Volunteer Center of Kern County.

Nationally, United Way has made 211 lines a priority and has given money toward the effort. Plus, any agencies United Way works with are supposed to share their information with 211.

Lollar offered a good example of how the 211 line could be used.

Around the holidays, many local agencies give food baskets to families struggling to make ends meet.

"People can dial 211 and they'll be able to direct them to agencies that still have food baskets (available)," Lollar said.

Georgianna Armstrong, emergency services manager for the Kern County Office of Emergency Services, a component of the Kern County Fire Department, looks forward to 211 for two reasons: It will free up 911 for true emergencies, and it can serve as a central line in the event of a large-scale disaster.

There are several phases of a disaster, Armstrong noted, and the 211 line would be a number to disseminate key information such as where to safely evacuate in the short-term, or how to get FEMA assistance over the longer haul.

"For the folks who are impacted, there is a longer recovery period," Armstrong said of tragedies.

There's good evidence 211 is a big help in disaster's aftermath.

New York didn't have 211 when the twin towers were attacked on Sept. 11, 2001. Connecticut did. And a lot of people who live in Connecticut work in New York. While a bunch of 800 numbers sprung up in New York to help people, the effort was scattered. But in Connecticut, residents were used to 211 -- and 95 percent of the calls for post-Sept. 11 help went to the central line, Hodson said.

"211 was invaluable in directing calls to the appropriate organizations," Hodson said.

Melinda Hunley, fire emergency communications manager at the Kern County Fire Department, said she favors "anything that gets the load off the dispatchers" because they are understaffed.

While the initial impact of 211 on 911 might be tough to measure, it will definitely make a difference as various agencies tout its benefits and the public catches on, said Capt. Garth Milam of the Disaster Preparedness Division of the Bakersfield Fire Department.

"As time goes by, it will draw more and more of the needless calls out of the 911 system," Milam said.

Right now 211 only works from a landline and on cell phones connected to the Nextel system. Lollar said other cell companies will come online soon.

Lollar said when people don't know what to do, they often call 911 for help.

"Nine-one-one is inundated with these types of calls," Lollar said. "When you're in crisis, that's your world."

211 reasons to dial 211

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1. Find out about adult education classes in your area
2. Donate food to a worthy charity
3. Find a food pantry to obtain emergency groceries
4. Obtain information about financial aid for school
5. Enroll your children in the Head Start program
6. Take an English as Second Language Class
7. Find out about obtaining your GED
8. Find employment assistance for a person with disabilities
9. Report job discrimination
10. Learn about labor laws

11. Find a job
12. Find job training
13. Find a pre-employment drug test site
14. Find out where to take a typing test for employment
15. Learn about vocational rehabilitation
16. Find a job mentor
17. Learn about becoming a senior employee
18. Learn about becoming a youth employee
19. Report a wage dispute
20. Apply for food stamps
21. Find infant food
22. Sign up for Women, Infants and Children benefits
23. Find a prepared meal site
24. Learn about reduced lunch programs
25. Find out about after school meal programs
26. Learn about summer/school meal programs
27. Find out where you can get federal subsidized meals for your day care
28. Obtain special diet emergency groceries
29. Get help filing your taxes
30. Register to vote
31. Get an AIDS/HIV test
32. Get AIDS/HIV treatment
33. Get AIDS/HIV education
34. Find out about abortion clinics
35. Obtain assistive devices
36. Sell assistive devices
37. Donate assistive devices
38. Find a public health clinic

39. Sign up to be a volunteer physician
40. Find out about charity care
41. Get help with understanding your health insurance
42. Get help with your Medicaid problems
43. Find a dental clinic
44. Donate toothbrushes
45. Get doctor/specialist referral information
46. Get dentist referral information
47. Find out more about family planning
48. Obtain a paternity test
49. Locate a fertility clinic
50. Donate trade services
51. Donate money
52. Find a sliding scale clinic
53. Take a food handlers permit class
54. Learn about health-related issues
55. Get an immunization
56. Find in-home care
57. Find adult day care
58. Learn about public health insurance programs
59. File a complaint about Medicaid
60. Find out about covered Medicaid services
61. Find a doctor who takes Medicaid
62. Find out if you are eligible for Medicaid
63. Learn about a Medicaid Spend Down
64. Find out about long-term care resources
65. Apply for Medicare
66. Find mental health advocates

67. Find a mental health crisis line
68. Obtain low-cost counseling
69. Find marital counseling
70. Take a marriage prep course
71. Take a marriage refresher course
72. Take a parenting class
73. Find a court-ordered parenting class
74. Find optical help
75. Donate eyeglasses
76. Find respite care
77. Get help with prescriptions
78. Learn about pharmaceutical company prescription programs
79. Find a sexually transmitted disease clinic
80. Get a medical screening
81. Get a free mammogram
82. Find a senior health program
83. Find a speech/audiology clinic
84. Obtain substance abuse inpatient information
85. Find a detox program
86. Obtain substance abuse outpatient information
87. Find emergency shelter
88. Donate to an emergency shelter
89. Find a group home
90. Obtain homemaker services
91. Find out about rehab loans
92. Find home repair help
93. Find a lower-cost apartment
94. Sign up for subsidized housing
95. Take a home ownership class

96. Get a first-time homebuyers loan
97. Get help with your mortgage
98. Get help with rent
99. Get help with a deposit
100. Get moving assistance
101. Find senior housing
102. Find disabled/accessibile housing
103. Get help with gas bill
104. Get help with electric bill
105. Get help with water bill
106. Get help with phone bill
107. Get yard care help
108. Find help with snow removal
109. Report lack of snow removal
110. Report a messy yard
111. Weatherize your home
112. Report child support/alimony neglect
113. Apply for public assistance
114. Apply for Social Security
115. Apply for Social Security disability
116. Apply for unemployment
117. Apply for victim reparations
118. Get quick cash for donating plasma
119. Legal help with divorce
120. Legal help with custody
121. Landlord/tenant legal assistance
122. Find out tenant rights
123. Find the landlord Apartments Association

124. Report a criminal incident
125. Find a local courthouse
126. Report child abuse
127. Report elder abuse
128. Find an abuse/assault support group
129. Find an adoption class or support group
130. Find a bereavement support group
131. Find a caregiver support group
132. Find a divorce/single parents support group
133. Find a parenting teenagers support group
134. Find a parenting toddlers class or social group
135. Find a parenting twins class or social group
136. Find a sexual minorities support group
137. Find an Alcoholics Anonymous group
138. Find a Narcotics Anonymous group
139. Start a new support group
140. Find a national health-related support group
141. Find free car seats
142. Find disabled transportation
143. Obtain a gas voucher
144. Obtain a free bus pass
145. Find a free medical flight to another area for treatment
146. Find senior transportation
147. Become a foster parent
148. Find an advocate or a social worker
149. Find help taking care of an animal
150. Get burial aid
151. Find low-cost child care
152. Start a new child care program

153. Check out a child care program
154. Donate clothing
155. Find interview-suitable clothing
156. Find warm clothes/scarfs/gloves
157. Report a business to consumer protection
158. Check out a business with consumer protection or the BBB
159. Donate a car to a worthy charity
160. Donate blankets
161. Find diapers
162. Donate furniture
163. Obtain furniture
164. Donate a cell phone for domestic violence victims
165. Find your victim advocate
166. Find a domestic violence shelter
167. Find domestic violence counseling
168. Learn about a protective order
169. Learn about a restraining order
170. Obtain maternity clothes
171. Donate a turkey
172. Find perpetrator counseling
173. Find a refurbished hearing aide
174. Report graffiti
175. Gang tattoo removal
176. Find holiday help
177. Donate holiday help
178. Find a recreation program
179. Find a summer youth camp
180. Find a youth mentor

181. Find an adult mentor
182. Be youth mentor, coach a sports team
183. Be an adult mentor
184. Buy a directory of services
185. Find an information and referral program in another locale
186. Volunteer to shelter animals
187. Volunteer for the arts
188. Orchestrate a community clean-up
189. Complete court-ordered community service hours
190. Volunteer for the environment
191. Donate a piano
192. Tutor a child
193. Teach English as a Second Language
194. Find an Eagle Scout project
195. Help a nonprofit stuff envelopes or with office work
196. Mentor a refugee family
197. Deliver food to homebound individuals
198. Volunteer at a children's hospital
199. Make toys for international relief groups
200. Sort international relief donations
201. Find a free pregnancy test
202. Assist a senior citizen with household chores
203. Shovel snow for a frail person
204. Find a neighborhood volunteer project
205. Find youth volunteer opportunities
206. Find out how to cook turkey or other cooking tips
207. License your business
208. Find state government services
209. Find local or county government services

210. Find or donate back-to-school supplies

211. Advocate for federal funding for 211

Source: Community Action Partnership of Kern
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