



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 568-2240

Department Name: CEO
Department No.: 012
For Agenda Of: December 3, 2013
Placement: Departmental
Estimated Time: 20 minutes
Continued Item: No
If Yes, date from:
Vote Required: 3/5

TO: Board of Supervisors
FROM: Department Terri Nisich, Interim County Executive Officer
Director(s)
Contact Info: Terri Nisich, Interim County Executive Officer - ext. 3400
SUBJECT: 211 Helpline Service in Santa Barbara County

County Counsel Concurrence

As to form: Yes

Auditor-Controller Concurrence

As to form: N/A

Other Concurrence: Risk Management

As to form: N/A

Recommended Actions:

That the Board of Supervisors:

- A. Receive report regarding the current status of the 211 Helpline Service in Santa Barbara County and;
- B. Provide direction to staff regarding the following options regarding 211 Helpline services including but not limited to;
 1. Direct staff to return to the Board of Supervisors on December 10, 2013 with a draft agreement for database clean up services with *Interface* in the amount of \$30,000 and continue outreach and pursuit of funding partnerships; or;
 2. Direct staff to suspend efforts regarding 211 Helpline Services and return to the Board of Supervisors on January 14, 2013 with plan to disband efforts and plan to return monies to funding agencies and;
- C. Determine that these activities are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act review per CEQA Guideline Section 15061 (b) (3).

Summary Text:

This item is on the agenda in order to provide a summary of the activities regarding the 211 Helpline Services and to seek direction from the Board of Supervisors regarding next steps pertaining to 211 within Santa Barbara County.

Background:***History***

Authority for the operation of 211 information and referral services using the three-digit dialing code was first enacted by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 2000. The FCC found that there was a demonstration of sufficient public benefit to justify the use of scarce resources and assigned 211 to be used for access to community information and referral services. The Commission charged each state with the task of implementing the 211 program. The FCC's regulatory framework was based upon the set of national program and operational standards put forward by the United Way of America and the Alliance of Information and Referral Services, the two major national leaders in the 211 movement.

California Public Utilities Commission

In California, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) is responsible for the operation, oversight, regulation and authority for 211. The services are typically carried out by local organizations approved by the CPUC to use the 211 dialing code to serve specific counties. Information and referral centers seeking to utilize the 211 dial code apply to the CPUC for rights to use the service. The CPUC ruling on the matter states, "The use of the 211 dialing code has the potential to provide California with easy access to information concerning child care services, housing assistance, physical and mental health resources, aging and hospice services, educational and other programs. Such information is not currently available through the 911 emergency code or the 311 non-emergency code." Currently, 93 percent of the state's population has access to 211. Nationally, 211 covers 82 percent of the US population.

211 Santa Barbara County

211 was enacted in Santa Barbara County in 2005. Until June of 2013, the Family Service Agency (FSA) served as the local host agency for 211 Helpline services to the community. At pique over 16,000 calls annually were received in Santa Barbara County with FSA posting a 93% citizen satisfaction rating. The service provides multilingual (150 languages) access to health and human services 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at no cost to the caller. The 211 Helpline is available to every resident of Santa Barbara County allowing access to over 2,000 health and human services and disaster relief and public information countywide. The current revenue available to support is \$142,000. Funding is provided via the following sources:

Revenue

SB County Human Services	31,900
City of Santa Barbara Human Services	20,000
SB County Alcohol & Drug Program	13,400
Info Line of San Diego County	10,000
United Way of Santa Barbara	4,600
First 5 of SB County	30,000
Calfresh Grant (SB County Social Services)	10,800
City of Lompoc	2,000
SB County Social Services Funding	20,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$142,700*

*47% of Total Funding
provided by County of
Santa Barbara sources.*

**Not all revenue ongoing – applications for funding annually required.*

This budget was determined to be inadequate by FSA and in order to keep the program viable for several years, FSA accessed reserves to address an annual \$40,000 operating deficit. Ultimately in early 2013, following numerous attempts to address the deficit and garner additional community funding support, the FSA Board voted to suspend their role as the local host of 211. Given the growing community concern regarding the potential elimination of 211 services in Santa Barbara County, in March of 2013 Supervisor Carbajal, Supervisor Adam and Assemblymember Das Williams hosted a community wide stakeholder forum to ascertain the community's perspective on the service and needs. Overwhelmingly, great support was expressed for the need for and the continuation of the 211 Helpline call center service. At that time, significant frustration was also expressed over the quality of the overall database and timeliness and reliability of information contained within the database. While this is not a County mandated program nor the direct responsibility of the County, yet recognize as a community wide resource, given the support expressed by the community, the County Executive Office continued to work with multiple stakeholders to sustain 211 services until a determination could be reached regarding disposition of services and corrections to the database. Given FSA would no longer serve as host, yet funding from stakeholders remained in place, a bridge transfer agreement between 211 and *Interface* (the provider of Ventura County 211 call center services) was established to provide a seamless transition and continuation of 211 services for an interim period. *Interface* is continuing to host the 211 call only center. It has been difficult to attract a lead agency/local community host given that the overall funding picture for the 211 service remains uncertain.

The County Executive Office in conjunction with *Interface* and prior involvement of FSA has prepared an operating budget for the 211 program. This budget would provide a lead agency funding to run the total 211 program to include linkages to the local community, special program services, outreach advertising, database upgrades, reporting, monitoring, and call center. Comprehensively, these needs were not previously funded. The proposed budget does not include the one-time database clean-up cost of \$30,000. The total recommended ongoing operating budget for the 211 program is:

Program Expenses

TOTAL PERSONNEL	\$77,000
AIRS & 211 CA dues	3,000
Program Supplies	2,000
Telephone – Five 9	12,700
iCarol database updates	4,100
Mileage	500
advertising	3,000
Interface Call Center**	82,400
Database updates	5,000
TOTAL PROGRAM EXPENSES	\$ 189,700

Therefore given ongoing known revenue and projected expenses the structural deficit is \$47,000. This amount is needed on an ongoing basis to provide a basic level of operation to the 211 program via a local agency.

Based on a survey of multiple California Counties and information provided to the County from *211 California*, 211 Helpline services are funded via a variety of partnerships and methods. However a prevalent model is cost sharing among counties, cities and non-profits. Given this information on two

211 Helpline Service in Santa Barbara County

December 3, 2013

occasions, July 12, 2013 and October 4, 2013 County Executive Office staff and members of the First and Fourth District Offices, as a follow up to the stakeholder forum many attended, approached the Mayors of the Santa Barbara County cities, at their regularly scheduled joint meeting, to provide additional statistical (call data per city) information on 211 and request a cost sharing partnership to sustain the 211 service. The funding partnership scenario presented was predicated on all cities and the County providing a reasonable share of funding based on per capita calls, county-wide, as tracked for the period January 2013 to September 2013. In addition it was assumed that all entities currently funding 211 would continue their funding levels and the County would increase its funding contribution from 47% to 50%. The chart below depicts the call data for the County unincorporated area and cities along with the current program contribution and suggested per capita level of participation in the program.

Caller location 1/1/2013 through 9/30/13:

Current						
Regional Call Data	Calls Jan - Mar	Calls Apr - Sep	Total Calls	% of total calls	Current Funding Contribution	% Current Total Funding
Buellton	11	11	22	1%	\$0	
Carpinteria	70	50	120	2%	\$0	
Goleta	101	92	193	3%	\$0	
Guadalupe	23	28	51	2%	\$0	
Lompoc	329	348	677	11%	\$2,000	1%
Santa Barbara	777	2358	3135	53%	\$20,000	14%
Santa Maria	695	739	1434	24%	\$0	
Solvang	16	12	28	2%	\$0	
SB County	136	39	175	3%	\$65,000	46%
Other		90	90	2%	\$55,000	39%
Total	2158	3767	5925	103%	\$142,000	100%

Proposed			
Regional Call Data	Suggested Funding %	Suggested Funding Amount	Distribution of 50% of cost of program to cities based on call data
Buellton	2%	\$1,347.00	
Carpinteria	3%	\$2,020.50	
Goleta	3%	\$2,020.50	
Guadalupe	2%	\$1,347.00	
Lompoc	11%	\$7,408.50	
Santa Barbara	53%	\$35,695.50	
Santa Maria	24%	\$16,164.00	
Solvang	2%	\$1,347.00	
SB County	50%	\$67,350.00	County increase contribution for total program
Other	100%		Notes: Revenue needed
Total	100	\$189,700.00	Total needs with assumed outside funding
		\$55,000.00	outside funding
		\$134,700.00	Total need: County 50% combined; other spread across all cities per call data %.
		\$30,000	Database funding joint grant request by all. (One time)

This strategy was not embraced. Rather, the cities were concerned that a database clean-up was needed, call volume needed to increase and a new host for the program be determined before further consideration of funding. This presents a dilemma in that additional funding is needed to address the cities concerns.

Current Status of Operations

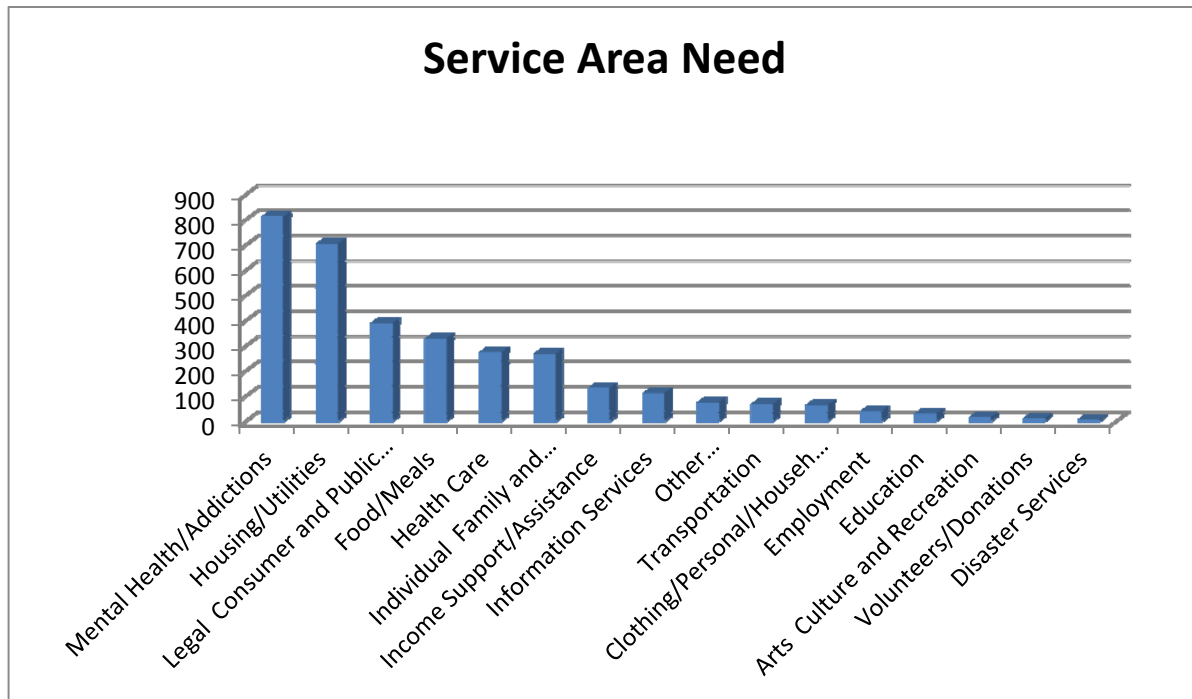
Currently *Interface* continues to provide for interim 211 Helpline call center services. Furthermore, they have expressed their willingness to continue to provide services on an interim basis within the existing \$142,000 funding availability until a long term solution can be devised. While they have expressed a willingness to continue to support 211 services they have also indicated that they are not best suited to serve as the Santa Barbara County lead agency or local community host for the longer 211 program effort in the long term. Subsequently, the County has had multiple conversations with several community nonprofits and has yet to secure a host.

As referenced above 211 Santa Barbara County at pique received 16,000 calls per year with a 93% satisfaction rating. Presently, given current call volume over the first nine months of the calendar year, it is projected that approximately 8,000 calls will be received in the 2013 calendar year. Satisfaction ratings continue in the 90% range. The drastic drop in call volume is attributed to the lack of advertising of 211 and a community wide perception that the service no longer exists. During this interim period funding has not been directed specifically to the local 211 Santa Barbara County advertising yet 211 California advertising has continued. Advertising prior to reconciling database inadequacies was strongly discouraged by *Interface* and other working directly with the program. As a point of comparison, robust 211 call center programs such as County of Ventura experience a 99% satisfaction rating and handled over 21,000 callers annually.

Usage

The 211 Helpline is traditionally used a one stop point of access to all community health and human services. It is also available to provide for emergency call center services in the event of a disaster. This could potentially include providing immediate information on response, relief and recovery efforts such as road closures, evacuation efforts, shelters, animal housing and volunteer agencies. If needed 211 helpline services could be activated via the public information function of the Emergency Operations Center. This chart reflects the type and volume of calls received in Santa Barbara County from April 1, 2013 through September 30, 2013.

Caller Needs in Broad Categories** (4/1/13 - 9/30/13)	
Needs	Count of Needs
Mental Health/Addictions	813
Housing/Utilities	705
Legal Consumer and Public Safety Services	390
Food/Meals	328
Health Care	274
Individual Family and Community Support	268
Income Support/Assistance	132
Information Services	111
Other Government/Economic Services	75
Transportation	69
Clothing/Personal/Household Needs	64
Employment	40
Education	30
Arts Culture and Recreation	16
Volunteers/Donations	12
Disaster Services	6
Total Needs	3333
**Many calls have multiple needs	



As noted, the helpline and database may serve as a public resource for immediate information on response, relief and recovery efforts such as road closures, evacuation efforts, shelters animal housing and volunteer agencies. Given the internet technology used for 211 this has a record of high performance in emergency situations such as the San Diego Firestorms, and Hurricane Sandy. As a note, 211 was the only communications system operating during Hurricane Sandy and was the focal point of the State of New Jersey Public Information & Recovery efforts.

Database Status

In April 2013, FSA successfully completed a systems conversion from the Webinform database to an online resource directory on the database platform iCarol. Twenty-two other counties in the state have completed this transition which provides statewide support, consistency and data sharing. Five other counties are now converting. However, due to funding constraints, the local database clean-up for Santa Barbara County is significantly overdue. iCarol has refined a process for automated updates which now strengthens the opportunity for an efficient update process if conducted in the near future. The cost for a comprehensive database clean-up is \$30,000 and will take approximately 4-6 months to complete. FSA has continued to provide web presence for online 211service in order to have information available to the community. This web content database and call center database are integrated. Once a new local host is determined the portal for the web based access will shift from FSA to the new agency.

Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:

The fiscal and facility impacts pertain specifically to the option ultimately determined by the Board of Supervisors.

Option B1 - Staff will return to the Board with a request of \$30,000 from Contingency and continue to provide staff time to support the effort to secure funding and local host.

Option B2 – Staff will work with current funders to discontinue 211 programs and provide communication to the community at large that 211 helpline services will cease. Staff time associated with this effort is minimal.

Attachment:

211 Matrix – updated 04/09/13

cc: