



# The Computerworld Honors Program

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## Final Copy of Case Study

**YEAR:**  
*2012*

**STATUS:**  
*Laureate*

**Organization:**  
211 San Diego

**Organization URL:**  
<http://www.211sandiego.org/>

**Project Name:**  
2-1-1 San Diego Military and Veterans Program

**What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address? What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?**

People who serve or have served in the military often face different health issues than civilians and thus often need more specific healthcare for health problems associated with severe injuries and exposure to environmental hazards; many are at risk for mental health problems, including anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and substance abuse, affecting their family members and loved ones, too. Between 2005 and 2008, 2,678 veterans committed suicide in California, at a rate more than double that of state residents with no military service. There is a region-wide need for a confidential, easy-to-reach single access point of information and resources especially for this population. With 80% of military families living off-base, they need somewhere to turn in their time of need. In August 2004, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) officially designated 211SD as the 2-1-1 provider for San Diego County. Serving the entire population of San Diego County, 211SD connects people with community, health and disaster services through a free, 24/7 stigma-free phone service and searchable online database. Because San Diego County has the greatest installation of military and the highest concentration of veterans, 211SD built a Military and Veteran Program to serve as a single access point of help for military service members, veterans and their families in San Diego County. In addition, with many veterans needing financial assistance for multiple needs, having supplemental income specifically for food can alleviate a significant burden that many bear. Every military/veteran that connects to this peer-to-peer support line is screened to determine if they are likely eligible for CalFresh/SNAP. 211SD's telephony system allows for tracking of calls and

quality of service. 211SD's VisionLink database allows for easy input of call information and client demographics.

**Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.**

211SD is utilizing automatic call distribution (ACD) software that allows for callers to identify themselves as military service members or veterans prior to speaking to an agent. This project is funded in part by the County of San Diego HHSA Mental Health Services under the Mental Health Services Act. Their calls are then directed to an agent who is also a veteran for a peer-to-peer call. (Appendix 1.) Because these calls carry a stronger sense of urgency and often require greater courage for the caller to make the decision to call 2-1-1, if a military/veteran call is not automatically answered by the agent, it is re-routed to one of the general 211 agents with a high priority, allowing it to be answered more immediately than other calls. (Appendix 2.) This project is funded in-part by the County of San Diego HHSA Mental Health Services under the Mental Health Services Act. Having a peer-to-peer conversation with another veteran who has been exposed to similar circumstances and lifestyles allows for a meaningful connection due to the uniqueness of military/veteran personal situations. In addition, military/veteran clients can access these veteran agents via an online chat system, which is also networked to the ACD software to ensure that callers have multiple ways of accessing 211SD, especially since chat is emerging as one of the preferred methods of communication among younger adults. It is also a method by which one can address needs that are easier to type about than to converse about. In addition, when clients are screened for CalFresh/SNAP and determined to be likely eligible, they are given the option to set an appointment with 211SD's Benefits and Enrollment Department and allowed to submit online applications with telephonic signatures.

**Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.**

Since January 2011, the specialized military and veterans ACD line has answered more than 3,200 calls from military and veterans, as well as their loved ones. In addition, approximately 1,000 clients per month with someone in their household who serves or has served in the military have called 2-1-1 for help. Since 2011, the 2-1-1 Call Center and the specialized military and veterans ACD line (Appendix 3) referred clients to the Benefits and Enrollment Department for assistance with CalFresh/SNAP application completion, while hundreds of military and veteran households were referred by the general 2-1-1 line. Since its launch, the Benefits & Enrollment Department has completed more than 4,300 applications (military and civilians) for CalFresh/SNAP with an average of 50% of these applications resulting in CalFresh/SNAP enrollment. Data gathered by following up on applications submitted shows that approximately 51% of clients who are assisted by the Benefits and Enrollment Department are enrolled to receive CalFresh/SNAP benefits. Therefore, it can be approximated that 2-1-1 San Diego's Benefits and Enrollment Specialists are responsible for clients receiving CalFresh/SNAP benefits at the estimated monthly benefit amount of over \$500,000. For every application completed by Benefits and Enrollment Specialists, there is the possibility of making a direct impact in someone's life and in the local economy. As stated in the "Lost Dollars, Empty Plates" analysis released by California Food Policy Advocates in November 2010, "every dollar in CalFresh/SNAP benefits generates \$1.79 in economic activity." This equates to over \$6.6 million in benefits and \$11.9 million in economic stimulus each year.

**Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.**

When a homeless veteran who had served in the Gulf War called 2-1-1, he was living at the Salvation Army and was looking for employment referrals. 2-1-1 referred the client to a program that provides work readiness training and job placement services, as well as supportive housing for homeless veterans. On a recent follow-up call with the client, he shared that the program is working out great for him; he has developed skills needed to find employment and has been able to have shelter since the referral was made. Another client called because her husband was getting unexpectedly administratively discharged, and they had no way to pay their rent because he did not have any checks coming in and they were not able to get a loan from the military base because he was no longer active military. Our agent who is also a veteran found a resource for them located in another state that provides nationwide assistance. Their rent and groceries are covered for the time being by the resource to which she was referred until they can find another source of income.