



Consortium Counselors Visit 211 LA County Headquarters

Adult education students may face barriers including adverse socio-economic disadvantages and sometimes threatening situations, and they may communicate them to adult school or college staff members. Often, these staff members will compile their own directory of social services and attempt to refer students directly. Over time, agencies' numbers and locations change or no longer exist. 211 LA County, works to resolve these issues and better connect individuals to needed services.

Following up on their presentation at our Spring Conference, 211 LA County invited consortium members to meet staff and tour their office located in El Monte. In June, members from our partner schools, comprising our Counseling Student Support Work Group, met with Alana Hitchcock, Public Affairs and Community Relations Director, for an in-depth presentation on the services and operation of 211 LA County. They also trained to be "guiding referrers" to assist students calling 211.

211 was founded in 1981, in response to a survey commissioned by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services they indicated the need for a central call-in response center for individuals in need of social services. Similar to the 911 emergency service and funded by Los Angeles County and First 5 LA, 211 LA County maintains the County's official social service database. Services providers in the major areas of children and family, youth, re-entry, veterans, etc. are reviewed and updated annually. A caveat for inclusion is that they all offer services on free or sliding scale. Needs ranging from homeless support, domestic violence, to code enforcement are identified. Nearly 100 staffers support the operation. The majority are specially trained phone advisors, providing guided support to connect callers with appropriate resources. Since its inception, 211 has expanded to serve most counties in California and has become a model for the nation.

We are certain our connection will vastly improve our students' connection to supportive resources and overcome their barriers to success! Students (or anyone) in need of support can just dial "211" to get connected 24 hours a day. All services can also be viewed on the internet (also optimized for mobile access) at www.211la.org.