

**SOLANO COUNTY 311 CALL CENTER  
2008-2009 Grand Jury**

**REASONS FOR INVESTIGATION**

The 2008-2009 Solano County Grand Jury elected to investigate the newly-installed 311 Call Center.

**GRAND JURY ACTIONS**

- Interviewed Information Technology Department Head
- Interviewed Senior Management Analyst
- Toured 311 Call Center and Monitored Incoming Calls
- Reviewed Presentations to the Board of Supervisors
- Reviewed Affiliated Computer Services Amended Contract

**BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY**

On February 5, 2008, the Solano County Board of Supervisors approved a proposal for the 311 Call Center. On September 2, 2008, the Solano County 311 Call Center was activated. The approval included amending the Affiliated Computer Services (ACS) contract to include the 311 Call Center, a non-emergency, government-services operation call center. The ACS contract will be in effect through August 31, 2011.

Costs incurred to setup and operate the 311 Call Center include:

Amended ACS contract in the amount of \$3,936,042 (shown by year)

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Fixed Fee	\$ 628,944	\$ 647,808	\$ 667,248	\$1,944,000
Per Minute Fee				
\$1/min (Estimated)	664,014	664,014	664,014	1,992,042
Total	\$1,292,958	\$1,311,822	\$1,331,262	\$3,936,042

\$750,000 for build-out of space to house the 311 Call Center\*\*

\$800,000 for needed hardware and software\*\*

\*\*Item costs to be recovered by fees charged to user departments. At the time of this report, the charges to the departments had not been implemented.

During interviews, this Grand Jury learned that marketing/advertising for the new 311 Call Center was a low priority. For example, the County issued newspaper releases that were short and could be very easily missed by the reader.

The main reason for the 311 Call Center is to improve customer service provided by County Departments to Solano County residents. The Call Center staff has a computer system with a business intelligence component making information from any department readily available.

The Call Center is located on the Third Floor of the Solano County Government Building. The space is approximately 3,500 square feet. Of this space, less than half was being used at the time of the Grand Jury tour. The Senior Management Analyst advised the Grand Jury that the unused space was for anticipated expansion of the service.

Calls monitored by the Grand Jury during their visit were handled in an efficient and professional manner. They were promptly answered well within the 30-second response time guaranteed by the ACS Company.

The number of calls received in September 2008 was far below the monthly estimate. By mid-October 2008, calls received were equal to the total number received in September. Incoming calls are billed to the County at the rate of \$1.00 per minute. This is in addition to the fixed monthly rate. Although the per-minute charge is included in the ACS contract, the amount will vary from month to month. There currently is no limit on the number of the incoming calls that are billable.

The 311 Call Center is available seven days a week from 6:00 am to 10:00 pm. There is no charge to the caller to use the 311 Call Center. If 311 is dialed outside of Solano County the call will go to that county provided that county has the 311 service. If a caller dials a participating County department directly (instead of 311), the call is automatically switched to the 311 Call Center and toll charges may apply. Not all departments are participating in the program. Concerns include confidentiality of information and actual effectiveness of the service. At the time of the interviews, six County departments were using the 311 Call Center: Registrar of Voters, General Services, Sheriff/Coroner's Office, Assessor/Recorder, Tax Collector and County Clerk. At that time, all calls were answered in English. AT&T's translation service is used for all other languages, which adds to the response time for non-English speakers.

Solano County's seven cities have chosen not to participate in the program on a shared-cost basis at this time. County officials indicated that more effective marketing of this program to show the cost benefits to each city, such as improved customer service, might increase participation of the seven cities. Calls received for Solano County cities at the 311 Call Center are handled by giving the caller a city contact phone number.

## **FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Finding 1 – The 311 Call Center has received inadequate advertising/marketing.

Recommendation 1 – The County should explore additional avenues of advertising and marketing the program. One suggestion would be to include with County mailings to Solano residents information on the 311 Call Center. Another suggestion would be to have this item included on Solano County or city meeting agendas.

Finding 2 – The 311 Call Center is new and very few call statistics are available.

Recommendation 2 – The County should closely monitor reports from ACS and, in addition, perform independent analysis of the figures to assess the value and costs involved with the system.

Finding 3 – All calls are currently answered using only the English language.

Recommendation 3 – Some 311 Call Center staff should be bilingual potentially expediting response time for non-English speakers.

Finding 4 – Solano cities are not participating in the 311 Call Center program.

Recommendation 4 – The County should develop more extensive marketing to each city to show the cost benefits of joining the program.

Finding 5 – Currently, there is no limit on the number of billable minutes.

Recommendation 5 – The County should examine renegotiating the contract with Affiliated Computer Services with the goal of capping the monthly billable minutes.

## **COMMENTS**

Since little information and statistics are currently available, this Grand Jury recommends that the 2009-2010 Grand Jury review any reports that may become available to further assure the appropriate use of Solano County tax payer funds.

## **AFFECTED AGENCIES**

Solano County Information Technology Department  
Solano County 311 Call Center  
Solano County Board of Supervisors

## **COURTESY COPY**

Affiliated Computer Services  
City of Benicia  
City of Fairfield  
City of Suisun City  
City of Rio Vista  
City of Vacaville  
City of Vallejo