

211 is number to remember to find low-cost services

DEAR ABBY: We are writing in response to the question you printed (Jan. 13) about where to find affordable counseling. Your suggestions were helpful, but we want to share another one:

211 is an easy-to-remember telephone number that, where available, connects people to information about critical, free or low-cost health and human services in their community. 211 reaches about 270 million people (90 percent of the U.S. population), covering all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Canada. It is a free, confidential resource.

Similar to dialing 911 for emergencies, calling 211 helps people seeking training, employment, food pantries, shelter,

assistance for aging parents, addiction prevention programs for teens, affordable housing options and support groups. It provides a one-stop service for community referrals.

Abby, won't you share this information with your readers? Everyone knows someone who needs help. 211 is there for them. — STAFF OF 211, ORANGE COUNTY, CALIF.

DEAR STAFF: I'm pleased to pass along this important resource, which serves such a large portion



Dear Abby

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of the population. Thank you for taking the time to offer it to my readers.

DEAR ABBY: I am 28 and engaged to marry a wonderful man, "Ryan." Before I met him, I was involved in an affair with my married boss and was deeply in love with him. (I still am.) We continued our affair even after I met Ryan, and now I think I'm pregnant. I told my boss and, naturally, he's not happy about it.

I don't know how to tell Ryan or if I even want to. I have always wanted to be a mother, and now I have the chance. But I may end up doing it alone in poor financial shape. I also won't have a home to live in once my old-fashioned mother finds out I've gotten myself

pregnant before marriage. Any advice? — SCARED STUPID IN NEW JERSEY

DEAR SCARED STUPID: Yes. Take a pregnancy test to determine if you really are pregnant. If it turns out that you are, then you must tell your fiancé everything. Even if Ryan walks away, the baby's father will be legally responsible for child support.

It is important that you also tell your mother what's going on. She may not be thrilled to hear the news, but I doubt she will put you and her grandchild-to-be out on the street. A generation or two ago that might have happened, but no longer.

DEAR ABBY: I know if a girl breaks off the engagement, she's

supposed to return the ring to her ex-fiance. Does the situation of a wife filing for divorce fall under the same set of rules? I need a response soon. — CRAIG IN HOUSTON

DEAR CRAIG: No. If the rings were given with the promise of marriage and the promise was fulfilled, she is not expected to return them.

TO MY IRISH READERS: A very happy St. Patrick's Day to you all. — Love, ABBY

• Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.