ACT PUBLIC SERVICE

Customer Service Standards

Revised September 1999
FOREWORD

To all staff,

Since the ACT Public Service (ACTPS) Customer Commitment Program was introduced in 1995 there have been many noticeable improvements in the way we interact with our customers and the quality of the services we provide. These improvements have occurred because of the efforts of staff from across the whole of the Service.

The Program has involved essentially three elements for improving customer service. Briefly, these three components are:

- **Customer Research** - asking our customers what services they think the Government should provide and how they should provide them. The research has also centred on our customers’ level of satisfaction with services - allowing us to pinpoint areas for improvement;

- **Setting Standards** - this has involved a number of key processes. Commitment to Service Statements are on display for customers and provide service commitments that an agency guarantees their customers. The Customer Service Standards, introduced in July 1997, provide staff with a minimum set of best practice standards they should apply to their work practices in dealing with internal and external customers. The third component in standard setting is the Customer Service Awards. The Awards are run jointly with the ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce and aim to recognise and reward excellence in customer service, both in the public and private sectors.

- **Changing the way we do business** - Using the results of customer satisfaction research and feedback we have been able to look closely at our business processes and design better ways of doing things. This aspect of the program is one of the most fundamental in bringing about changes for the customer.

While many improvements have occurred in the way we serve our customers there is never room for complacency. That is why these Customer Service Standards have been revised - to ensure they still represent best practice and are applicable to each agency.

The Standards should be applied to all areas that have customers, whether they are internal or external. It is important that staff be involved in the setting of standards to be applied in their work area. This will ensure they know what the standards are and how to apply them. Managers should regularly review the standards that have been set and determine where improvements are needed.

I am very pleased to present staff with the revised version of the Customer Service Standards and urge you to adapt them to your workplace so that we can continue on our journey for a truly customer focussed public service.

Rod Gilmour
Chief Executive
Chief Minister’s Department

September 1999
CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS

1 Staff within public contact areas and, where applicable, internal service delivery areas, should implement strategies that demonstrate the following service standards:

Know your customer base
Staff should demonstrate a good understanding of their customer base.

Focus on Customer Needs
Customer-focused organisations base their business decisions around the needs of their customers. They ensure that they fully understand their customers’ needs and provide their products and services in a way that suits them.

Individuals that are focused on customer needs will make an effort to empathise with customers, analyse inquiries or predicaments and adjust their service delivery to match. They also ask questions to clarify the customer’s needs but don’t assume that they fully understand their needs.

Use a Can-Do Approach
A can do approach is one where the service provider focuses on how much and how best they can help each customer rather than on what they can’t do or how difficult it will be.

A can do approach can be taken in every interaction with customers, both internal and external ones.

A can do approach means interpreting the customer’s stated requirements and considering whether you might have additional services or information to help them.

Customer Friendly Staff
The Customer Service Code of Practice (page 5) should be applied by all staff in ACTPS public contact areas.

Customer Focused Public Contact Area
Public contact areas will:
- Be clean, presentable and welcoming to customers.
- Be accessible to all customers including disabled access, customer friendly opening hours etc.
- Be customer oriented including integrating customer friendly initiatives such as seating for customers, pens available etc.
- Possess clear and customer-friendly sign-posting, instructions, brochures, forms and information.
- Clearly display Commitment To Service (CTS) Statements and performance targets in accessible areas.

1 Public contact areas are areas where face-to-face interaction between ACT Government service providers and members of the community occurs. Internal service delivery areas represent key service support areas as determined by your agency’s Chief Executive.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Comprehensive Complaints Handling Process</strong></th>
<th>The public contact area should develop formal and effective complaints-handling processes. These processes will, as a minimum, satisfy the <em>Best Practice Complaints Handling Standards</em>.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customer Value Performance Measures &amp; Targets</strong></td>
<td>The public contact area will:</td>
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<td>• Develop performance measures and targets against a minimum of four (4) key customer priorities/values.</td>
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<td>• Monitor and report performance against the targets.</td>
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<td>• Integrate the performance measures and targets with your <em>Commitment To Service (CTS) Statements</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Telephone and Counter Techniques</strong></td>
<td>The public contact area should develop formal and effective telephone and counter techniques. The techniques will, as a minimum, satisfy the <em>Best Practice Telephone and Counter Standards</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Continuous Improvement</strong></td>
<td>Public contact areas should continually seek opportunities for customer-driven service delivery improvement.</td>
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CUSTOMER SERVICE CODE OF PRACTICE

Staff within public contact areas and, as appropriate, internal service delivery areas, should demonstrate the following key standards of service:

1 **Focus on the Customers Needs**
   - Always focus on solutions for the customer.
   - Provide a ‘can do’ approach.
   - Always provide alternatives and assistance for the customer.
   - Anticipate, understand and focus upon customer needs.
   - Follow up on customer needs where necessary.

2 **Customer Friendly Presentation**
   - Always be neatly dressed and well presented for customers.
   - Wear a name badge that clearly identifies you and/or your role.
   - Adopt and portray the ACTPS corporate identity.
   - Wear a corporate uniform where possible
   - Display a positive image to customers including customer-friendly body language and posture.
   - Always project a positive attitude towards the customer.

3 **Customer Friendly Attributes**
   - Demonstrate the following key customer service attributes:
     - Friendly, cheerful, courteous and helpful.
     - Understanding and empathy.
     - Patience, reliability and trustworthiness.
     - Promote a positive attitude to customers.
     - Display integrity, trust and respect.
     - Display loyalty to the organisation.
     - Remain sensitive to your customer base.

4 **Professional Skills & Knowledge**
   - Demonstrate the following key customer service skills/competencies:
     - Appropriate customer service skills/competencies relevant to your role
     - A sound knowledge of ACTPS services and products.
     - Clear and concise verbal and written skills.
     - Ability to listen to customers.
     - Conduct administrative processes in an accurate, rigorous manner.
     - Take responsibility for meeting customers needs.
     - Work well in a team environment.
     - Respect confidentiality of information where appropriate.
     - Meet the ethical obligations and requirements of the Public Sector Management Act 1994.
BEST PRACTICE TELEPHONE STANDARDS

Public contact areas and internal service delivery areas should demonstrate the following key telephone standards:

**Telephone Operation**
- Make sure you know how to put customers on hold, transfer them etc.
- Always have a pen and paper ready to record the caller’s details.
- When absent from your work area for a long period, arrange to have calls answered by team members, an answering machine or voice mail etc.
- If you use answering machines or voice mail develop a protocol for responding to calls and ensure all staff are aware of it and apply it.
- When transferring calls, advise the recipient of the transfer of the caller’s name and the nature of their enquiry.
- Never transfer a call more than once. Get the caller’s number and ask the appropriate area to return their call.
- When placing customers on hold, check back regularly to see if they are happy to remain on hold. If there is a long delay, explain why and keep them informed.
- Advise the switchboard/call centre of any staffing changes and details of your service.
- Use the online Functional Directory and check that agency details are up to date. To do this, open your internet browser and type “directory” in the address field.

**Answer Promptly**
- Establish the maximum number of rings you will let phones ring within your work area. Review this number regularly.
- Always answer the phone promptly, ideally within {the standard you’ve set} rings, even if it is not your own.

**Friendly Voice**
- Use a friendly tone on the phone - your voice represents the organisation.

**Answering the Phone**
- Develop a formal, written, customer-friendly telephone greeting to be used by all staff.
- Ensure all staff are aware of and use the greeting.
- Example - Welcome the caller by saying:
  - Good morning/Good afternoon (Greet)
  - {Organisation Name} (Identify)
  - {Name} speaking (Introduce)
  - How may I help you? (Assist)

**Listening**
- Identify and use the caller’s name.
- Concentrate on what the caller is saying.
- Don’t make assumptions or interrupt unnecessarily.

**Take Action**
- Tell the caller what you intend to do to help them.
- Always look for positive solutions.
- Always provide alternatives and assistance for the customer.
Thank & Farewell

- Develop a formal, written, customer-friendly telephone farewell to be used by all staff.
- Ensure all staff are aware of and use the farewell.
- Example - Close the call by saying:
  - May I do anything else for you? (Finalise)
  - Thank you for calling (Positive closure)
  - Good bye (Farewell)

Follow up

- Make sure you keep the customer informed of any follow up action to be taken.
- Make sure you complete any follow-up action for the customer.
- If you have passed the enquiry on to someone else, ensure they complete the necessary follow-up action.
BEST PRACTICE COUNTER STANDARDS

Public contact areas should demonstrate the following key communication standards:

**Customer Management**
- Provide a customer-focused public contact area.
- Create clear and customer-friendly sign-posting that includes:
  - Where to queue, i.e., how to obtain service.
  - Waiting times.
  - Opening hours.
  - Complaints.
  - Alternatives.
- Ensure forms and documents are customer-friendly and in plain English.
- Demonstrate pro-active customer management techniques.
- Provide a team approach to customer service.
- Educate the customer by informing them of alternative options etc.

**Prompt Service**
- Serve people as soon as you are able (ideally within the performance measures and targets set for response times).
- Apologise to customers if they had to wait a long time.
- Inform your supervisor promptly if the queue is unmanageable.
- Respond promptly to Email, faxes and telephone inquiries.

**Greet Customer**
- Ensure you are dressed neatly and are well presented for customers.
- Project a positive attitude and posture to your customer.
- Smile and use a friendly tone - your presentation represents the organisation.
- Develop a formal, written, customer-friendly counter greeting for all staff. Ensure all staff are aware of and use the greeting.
  - **Example** - Welcome the customer by saying:
    - Good morning/Good afternoon (Greet)
    - How may I help you? (Assist)

**Listening**
- Concentrate on what the customer is saying.
- Identify the customer’s needs.
- Paraphrase their inquiry so they know you have understood them.
- Don’t make assumptions or interrupt.
- Take notes if necessary.

**Take Action**
- Conduct the transaction for the customer in a professional manner.
- Look for positive solutions.
- Always provide alternatives and assistance for the customer.

**Thank & Farewell**
- Develop a formal, written, customer-friendly counter farewell for all staff.
- Ensure all staff are aware of and use the farewell.
  - **Example** - Close by saying:
    - May I do anything else for you? (Finalise)
    - Thank you (Positive closure)

**Follow up**
- Keep the customer informed of any follow-up action to be taken.
- Ensure that you complete any follow-up action.
BEST PRACTICE COMPLAINTS HANDLING STANDARDS

Public contact and internal service delivery areas should develop formal and effective complaints handling processes that include formal escalation procedures. This will satisfy the minimum following requirements based on the Australian Standard for Complaints Handling:

**Commitment**

The policy on complaints handling and the associated processes, procedures and responsibilities will be documented in writing and communicated to staff. There will be commitment by the team at all levels to this initiative.

**Responsiveness**

Complaints will be dealt with quickly and treated courteously. The service delivery area will establish specific performance standards including response time targets reasonable for all stages of the complaints process. A complainant shall be:

- Informed of timeframes for action.
- Provided with other pertinent information including the contact officer’s contact details and copies of documents as appropriate.
- Kept informed of progress.

**Openness & Accessibility**

The complaints handling process will:

- Provide relevant and simple information to customers about the complaint process including how, where and to whom to make complaints.
- Ensure information about the process is prominently displayed, circulated and publicised both to customers and staff.
- Provide complaint mechanisms which are customer-friendly, flexible and simple to meet the needs of all customers.
- Ensure customers know their complaints are being treated seriously and, when appropriate, in the strictest confidence.
- Provide special arrangements for customers with disabilities or specific needs.

**Resources**

There will be adequate resources for complaints handling including sufficient training and support to ensure complaints are dealt with efficiently and in a customer-friendly manner.

**Monitoring & Review**

The complaints handling process shall:

- Ensure appropriate and comprehensive recording of complaints and their outcomes.
- Be reviewed every 12 months (minimum) to improve customer and organisational outcomes.
- Provide appropriate monitoring and reporting against specific performance standards including analysis of complaints and the outcomes.

**Continuous Improvement**

The complaints handling process will link to organisational improvement mechanisms within the service delivery area.
CONTACT US

If you would like to know more about the Customer Commitment Program or have any comments about these Customer Service Standards, please contact the Customer Service Unit on:

Telephone: 620 76275
Facsimile: 620 76366
Email: community_liaison@act.gov.au

“Attn: Customer Service Unit”