SERVICE WITH A SMILE:
ENHANCING CUSTOMER SERVICE TO PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Excellent customer service is crucial to the success of our child support programs. What is good customer service? How do we keep it alive and well in our offices? In this workshop we will provide a brief overview of what it means to provide good quality customer service and then, more importantly, we will provide tried and true tips and tools for putting concepts into practice. This will be an interactive discussion on how to promote and sustain helpful, respectful, neutral interactions with child support customers. We invite you to share what you have done in your office to be proactive, productive, and professional on the customer service front! In other words, how to get a “Thank You” even when you have no new information to provide!

Presenters:
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“When it Comes to Supporting Children We Don’t Horse Around!”
SERVICE WITH A SMILE: ENHANCING CUSTOMER SERVICE TO PARENTS AND CHILDREN
Who Are We?

- Robyn Large
  - Training Manager, CSF – South Carolina
  - ERICSASA President

- Joe Leavell
  - Ombudsman
  - Jefferson County Attorney, Child Support Division
Excellent customer service is crucial to the success of our child support programs.

What is good customer service?

How do we keep it alive and well in our offices?
Did You Know?

• 1 in 4 children in the United States participates in the child support program, and the program serves half of all poor children?

• The child support program lifts 1 million people out of poverty each year and provides about 30 percent of income for the poor families who receive it.
• Child Support Enforcement agencies are CUSTOMER SERVICE agencies
Who are your Customers?

– “A person with whom one has dealings.”
What is Customer Service?

• Customer service is a series of activities designed to enhance the level of customer satisfaction – that is, the feeling that a product or service has met the customer expectation."
“Listening, whether done by individuals or by companies and government, is a signal of respect. When people don’t feel listened to, they don’t feel respected. And when they don’t feel respected, they feel anger and resentment. This resentment is exacerbated if people think you’re pretending to listen but aren’t.”

Hugo Powell
Listening

• Listening improves communications

• Listening shows you care

• Listening shows respect for the customer
Listening

• Listen to content
• Listen to intent
• Listen nonjudgmentally
Listening

• Telephone etiquette can make or break the caller’s perception of your service
Listening

• 86% of the message is from your tone of voice

• 14% is grasped by the actual words
• Sometimes you have to say “no,” but if you do it right, you can still get a “thank you” for your service
• Explain why it can’t be done
• Don’t quote policy
• Don’t be patronizing
• Offer alternatives when you can
• Avoid making excuses
• Eliminate negative phrases
• Don’t mention other/similar complaints
• One of the most important aspects of a customer service is what is often referred to as the "Feel Good Factor". Basically the goal is to not only help the customer have a good experience, but to offer them an experience that exceeds their expectations.
Key points for Good Customer Service
Know your Product

- Know what products/service you are offering back to front. In other words be an information expert. It is okay to say "I don't know", but it should always be followed up by... "but let me find out" or possibly "but my friend knows!"
• Whatever the situation may be, make sure that you don't leave your customer with an unanswered question.
Anticipate Needs

• Nothing surprises your customer more than an employee going the extra mile to help them. Always look for ways to serve your customer more than they expect. In doing so it helps them to know that you care and it will leave them with the "Feel Good Factor" that we are searching for.
Don’t Make Promises Unless You WILL Keep Them

• Not plan to keep them. Will keep them. Reliability is one of the keys to any good relationship, and good customer service is no exception.
• If you say, “You should expect a call back in 48 hours”, make sure the call is returned in 48 hours. Otherwise, don’t say it. The same rule applies to client appointments, deadlines, etc.. Think before you give any promise – because nothing annoys customers more than a broken one.
**Deal with Complaints**

- No one likes hearing complaints, and many of us have developed a reflex shrug, saying, “You can’t please all the people all the time”. Maybe not, but if you give the complaint your attention, you may be able to please this one person this one time - and position your business to reap the benefits of good customer service.
Be Helpful - Even If There's No Immediate Profit In It

• Customer service is an integral part of our job and should not be seen as an extension of it. A company’s most vital asset is its customers. Without them, we would not and could not exist in business.
10 Commandments of Customer Service

1. Know who is boss.
2. Be a good listener
3. Identify and anticipate needs
4. Make customers feel important and appreciated
5. Help customers understand your systems
10 Commandments of Customer Service

6. Appreciate the power of "Yes"
7. Know how to apologize
8. Give more than expected
9. Get regular feedback
10. Treat employees well
Putting Good Customer Service into Action - Tried and True Tips
Anatomy of a Complaint

1. Origin of complaint
2. Reason for complaint
3. Status of complaint
   * Pending review
   * Waiting on additional information
   * Resolved
Dissecting a Complaint

1. Is the complaint a common one?
2. Does the complaint have merit?
3. What proactive steps can be taken to reduce the number of complaints for the same/similar reasons?
4. Who is responsible for tracking complaint trends and making recommendations for needed changes?
Origin of Complaint

- County/District Attorney referral
- Director referral
- Assistant director referral
- Assistant County Attorney referral
- Supervisor referral
- Caseworker referral
- Customer service referral
- Direct call from customer
- Letter from customer
- Email from customer
Origin of Complaint

Customer office visit
News reporter
Out of county child support worker
Out of state child support worker
IV-D Director
State Ombudsman
Elected Official
Private Attorney
Complaint form
Email from state office
Complaint Reasons

Arrearage dispute
Agency inaction
Requested documents not mailed/provided
Call transferred too many times
Issue with caseworker
Inconsistent answers given
Service of process issue
Health insurance issue
Issue with Assistant County Attorney
Issue with court date
Complaint Reasons

Out of state court issue
Issue with tax intercept
Issue with DRA fee
Customer comment or threat
Partial or no payment received
Non custodial parent released from custody
Unreturned phone message
Suspected welfare fraud
Other
Status of Complaint

Waiting for customer call back
Waiting for additional info from customer
Waiting for caseworker input
Waiting for financial review
Waiting for attorney response/opinion
Waiting for return call from employer
Waiting on records from SSA or VA
Waiting on court orders
Customer meeting scheduled
Status of Complaint

Resolved – call to employer
Resolved – ombudsman meeting
Resolved – county attorney meeting
Resolved – sent records to osc
Resolved – call to customer
Resolved – letter to customer
Resolved – meeting with caseworker
Resolved – meeting with supervisor
Status of Complaint

Resolved – meeting with director
Resolved – meeting w/asst director
Resolved – court date scheduled
Resolved – financials reconciled
Resolved – documentation received
Resolved – timely payments received
Resolved – interstate appt scheduled
Resolved – letter/call to private atty
Helpful Hints

• Be sure to enter a case event that contains accurate/detailed information as to the nature of complaint and the manner in which it was resolved.

• Some information (particularly if it involves an employee) should not be included in case events that can be viewed by everyone.
Helpful Hints

• Identify common complaints and diligently work to implement ideas/processes with the goal of alleviating them

• Are there some informational documents that can auto generate when actions are filed that will provide clients with realistic expectations of what to expect as a result of the action taken?
Helpful Hints

- Create a complaint module
- Clearly articulate the complaint process to all staff
- Completing an objective review and following up with the customer in a timely manner is key to regaining customer confidence
Helpful Hints

• Feedback (both good and bad) assists us in recognizing staff for doing a great job, and assists in identifying areas in which our staff may need additional training/development to better serve our customers in the future.

• Work directly with caseworkers and department managers to develop solutions to common complaints.
Helpful Hints

• When changes are implemented, be sure that all staff is made aware of changes
Any Questions?

Thank you for coming!