

ATTACHMENT J.1.5

Customer Service Operations Customer Service Standards for Telephone

In order to ensure that the District government is providing the highest level of customer service to each caller, District agencies and offices shall implement the following minimum standards for telephone-based customer service. The overall goal is to staff main and service numbers at all times during business hours.

Agency/department heads are required to comply with these telephone customer service standards to improve the level of customer service within their agency.

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Definition

From a customer service perspective, telephone services are operationally defined in four categories: Main numbers, large service numbers, small service numbers and desk numbers.

- **Main Numbers** – are entry points into the agency/department. Main numbers route calls throughout the organization. (i.e., Department of Health's main number is (202) 442–5999. **This number should be staffed at all times during business hours.**
- **Large Service Numbers** – are published numbers that go directly to an agency/department's operational unit that provides a service (i.e., The Office of Fire Code Inspections within the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services). **This service number should be staffed at all times during business hours.**
- **Small Service Numbers** – are numbers with a constituent volume that does not demand more than one dedicated full-time equivalent employee staffing the number. (i.e., Department of Public Works, Tree Trimming Services). This operation, albeit small, must be structured to provide the same level of high quality service as main and large service number operations. **This service number should be staffed at all times during business hours.**

Agencies/Departments have the option to collapse their small service operations into one service number so that it generates sufficient volume to require a full-time equivalent staff person manning the telephone number during business hours.

- **Desk Numbers** – are telephone numbers for agency/department employees. All employees should answer calls professionally and courteously. Desk voicemail should also reflect the same professionalism that would be provided during a direct conversation with a constituent.

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Receiving and Returning Telephone Calls

- **Returning Telephone Calls** – Calls made to all numbers at every level of government should be returned within 24 hours of receipt or within the next business day.

- **Salutation** – State name and agency, and solicit information (i.e., "Thank you for calling agency X this is John Doe. Can I help you?"). At the end of the conversation, thank the person for calling.
- **Receiving a Transferred Call**
 - All DC employees are expected to take transferred calls from telephone call distribution points (i.e., Mayor's Call Center).
 - The employee should minimize the number of times a caller is transferred to resolve an issue by taking the message and distributing it to the appropriate staff person for resolution. The goal is one transfer per constituent and the transfer should be to another person, not voicemail. If the call is inappropriately transferred to you, take down the caller's information and have the appropriate individual return the telephone call.
- **Basic Knowledge**
 - All DC employees are expected to have a basic understanding of the primary functions of their agency.
 - The employee should have a basic knowledge of District services (i.e. 311, 911, 727–1000, Answers Please, website address, and main agency numbers).

Telephone Etiquette

In addition to the requirements for salutation, call transfer and basic knowledge (as listed in Section III), each telephone call should be handled with the highest level of customer service by all District employees:

- Answer calls within 3 rings
- Give customers options (i.e., hold, call back, leave a message, try another number)
- Ask to put the caller on hold and wait for the response
- Check back with customer frequently when placed on hold
- Use judgment by handling callers as you would want your call to be handled
- Provide options for resolution
- Facilitate
- Speak as you would like to be spoken to

Courtesy

Each caller to a District agency should be treated with the highest level of customer service by all District employees:

- No speakerphones
- No food or gum while talking with constituent
- No secondary conversations with individuals other than caller while caller is on the phone
- Convey sympathy, professional courtesy and a pleasant attitude
- Provide reference information when transferring calls
- Treat callers as you would want to be treated
- No rudeness
- Do not become confrontational

Customer Service Operations

Customer Service Standards for Voicemail

- A. **Main and Large/Small Service Greetings** – Based upon the requirement that all main numbers are staffed during business hours, the voicemail greeting for all main numbers should be an "after hours" greeting. This greeting should convey the following information:
- Agency/Department unit Hours of operation Options for caller (e.g., leave a message, web site address, fax number, information about critical services available after normal business hours)
 - Statement on when calls will be returned (i.e. the standard is 24 hours or the next business day)
- B. **Desk Telephone Standard Greetings** – Every telephone equipped with voicemail should have a standard outgoing greeting that is professional, concise, and conveys relevant and useful information to the caller. Each desk phone greeting should include the following information:
- Name of employee Title of employee Organizational unit of employee Number to dial for immediate assistance, or "0" for operator assistance
 - Statement on when calls will be returned (i.e. the standard is 24 hours or within the next business day)
- Note: The automated greeting option available through the District's voice messaging system does not comply with the standard
- C. **Extended Absence Greeting** – Every employee who will be out of the office for more than two business days (annual/sick leave, training, jury duty) should record an extended absence greeting. In addition to the standards in section B, this greeting should outline the expected date of return or forward all calls to an employee in the office.
- D. **Returning Phone Calls** – Calls made to all numbers at every level of government should be returned within 24 hours or the next business day.
- E. **Voicemail Boxes** – All employee voice mailboxes should be set-up and ready to accept voice messages. Each voice mailbox should never be full and unable to accept new messages.