

Department of Behavioral Health
TRANSMITTAL LETTER

SUBJECT Minimum Standards for Telephone-Based Customer Service		
POLICY NUMBER DBH Policy 681.2	DATE FEB 14 2014	TL# 233

Purpose. To set forth the minimum standards for telephone-based customer service in conjunction with the Mayor's Grade DC project which include prompt and thorough response to telephone calls and professional and courteous treatment of constituents.

This revision adopts the policy from the former Department of Mental Health, now merged into the new Department of Behavioral Health, in accordance with the DBH Establishment Act of 2013.

Applicability. This policy applies to all Department staff at the Behavioral Health Authority (BHA), and Saint Elizabeths Hospital (SEH).

Policy Clearance. Reviewed by affected responsible staff and cleared through appropriate Behavioral Health Authority offices.

Implementation Plans. DBH employees shall adhere to the minimum standards for telephone-based customer service. All staff shall be trained, as needed, using the guidelines indicated in the Minimum Standards for Telephone-Based Customer Service (Exhibit 1). Program managers are responsible for following through to ensure compliance.

Policy Dissemination and Filing Instructions. Managers/supervisors of DBH shall ensure that staff is informed of this policy. Each staff person who maintains policy manuals must promptly file this policy in the DBH Policy and Procedures Manual.

ACTION

REMOVE AND DESTROY


DMH Policy 681.2A

INSERT

DBH Policy 681.2


Stephen T. Baron
Director, DBH

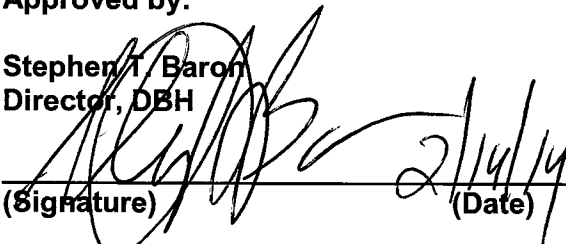
2/14/14
Date

<p>GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA</p>  <p>DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH</p>	<p>Policy No. 681.2</p>	<p>Date FEB 14 2014</p>	<p>Page 1</p>
<p>Supersedes DMH Policy 681.2A, same subject, dated October 6, 2003.</p>			
<p>Subject: Minimum Standards for Telephone-based Customer Service</p>			

1. **Purpose.** To set forth the minimum standards for telephone-based customer service in conjunction with the Mayor's Grade DC project which include prompt and thorough response to telephone calls and professional and courteous treatment of constituents.
2. **Applicability.** This policy applies to all Department of Behavioral Health (DBH) staff at the Behavioral Health Authority (BHA), and Saint Elizabeths Hospital (SEH).
3. **Authority.** Grade DC, the Mayor's program that enables constituents to submit comments about certain District agencies and view how District residents graded those agencies. The goal is to help constituents better engage with their government and help government agencies to improve the quality of their services.
4. **Policy.** Consistent with the Mayor's Grade DC project, it is the policy of the DBH to promote the highest level of customer service to each caller and for managers and supervisors at all levels to ensure that every aspect of the Minimum Standards for Telephone-based Customer Service (Exhibit 1) is followed.
5. **Actions Required of all Managers.**
 - a. Discuss the attached Minimum Standards for Telephone-based Customer Service (Exhibit 1) with staff under their purview and with new employees when they are hired.
 - b. Ensure that outgoing voice mail messages are set up in accordance with the attached guidelines.
 - c. Emphasize to staff the importance of courtesy and professionalism when dealing with all customers at all times.
 - d. Register staff in appropriate training to achieve excellence in customer service as required.
 - e. Develop measures to evaluate the effectiveness of customer service.
6. **Implementation.** The required actions shall be implemented promptly and on an ongoing basis, as necessary.
7. **Exhibit.** Exhibit 1 - Minimum Standards for Telephone-based Customer Service

Approved by:

**Stephen T. Baron
Director, DBH**

(Signature)  (Date) 2/14/14

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



Department of Behavioral Health
64 New York Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002

Minimum Standards for Telephone-based Customer Service

In order to ensure that the District Government is providing the highest level of customer service to each caller, District agencies and offices; such as the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), shall implement the following minimum standards for telephone based customer service. The overarching goal is to ensure that main numbers and service numbers are staffed at all times during business hours to provide the highest level of customer service.

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

1. Main Numbers – are entry points into the agency/department. Main numbers route calls throughout the organization. (e.g., Department of Behavioral Health main number is (202) 673-7440). This number should be staffed at all times during business hours.

DBH Office Hours

Monday to Friday, 8:15 am to 4:45 pm

Connect With Us

64 New York Avenue, NE, 3rd Floor, Washington, DC 20002

Phone: (202) 673-7440

Fax: (202) 673-3433

TTY: (202) 673-7500

Email:dbh@dc.gov

2. Large Service Numbers - are published numbers that go directly to an Agency/Department's operational unit that provides a service. This service number should be staffed at all times during business hours. The Access HelpLine at 1(888)7WE-HELP or 1-888-793-4357 (24/7 telephone line). Call the Access Helpline to: (1) Get emergency psychiatric care, (b) Help with problem solving, (c) Determine whether to seek ongoing mental health services or other types of services, and (d) Find out what services are available.

3. Small Service Numbers - are numbers with a constituent volume that does not demand more than one dedicated full-time equivalent employee staffing the number. (e.g., 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.

4. 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.

B. Voicemail/Outgoing Message — Every telephone equipped with voicemail should have a standard outgoing greeting that is professional, concise, and conveys relevant and useful information to the caller.

1. Main number — Based upon the requirement that all main numbers are staffed during business hours, the voicemail greeting for all main numbers should be an "afterhours" greeting. This greeting should convey the following information: Agency/Departmental Unit; Office Hours; options for caller (e.g., leave a message, web site address, fax number, information about critical services available after normal business hours); That caller will receive a return telephone call to verify receipt of the service request within 24 hours or within the next business day.

2. Large Service Number — should have an "afterhours" greeting. This greeting should convey the following information: What office the caller has reached; What number has the caller reached; What service is provided through this service number; What type of information the caller should leave on a message; and that the caller will receive a return telephone call to verify receipt of the service request within 24 hours or within the next business day.

3. Small service numbers — should have an "afterhours" greeting. This greeting should convey the following information: What office the caller has reached; What number has the caller reached; What service(s) are provided through this service number; What type of information the caller should leave on a message; and that the caller will receive a return telephone call to verify receipt of the service request within 24 hours or within the next business day. Employees assigned to small service numbers are responsible for managing the operation at the highest level of customer service.

C. Desk Telephone Standard Greetings — should have the following information included within the greeting:

- Name of the Employee
- Title of the Employee
- Organizational Unit of the Employee

- What number to dial for immediate assistance or "0" for operator assistance
- When calls will be returned — Within 24 hours or within the next business day

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. Receiving and Returning Telephone Calls

Returning Telephone Calls: Calls made to all numbers at every level of government should be returned within 24 hours or within 1 business day of receipt.

Salutation: State name and agency and solicit information (e.g., "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.

D. Receiving a Transferred Call

All DC employees are expected to take transferred calls from telephone call distribution points (e.g., 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.

E. 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 (e.g. 311, 911, 727-1000, Answers Please, web site address, and agency main numbers)

F. Telephone Etiquette

In addition to the requirements for salutation, transferring calls and possessing basic knowledge (listed in Section E above), 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 (e.g., hold, call back, leave a message, or try another number)
- Ask to put the caller on hold and wait for the response
- Check back with customer frequently when 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

G. 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

H. Compliance

Agency/Department heads/Managers are required to ensure compliance with this telephone customer service standards to improve the level of customer service within DBH.