

The Role of Customer Service in Voucher Operations

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Perception vs Reality

What do you want the image of your
PHA to have within the community?



Technology Enhancements

- Improve Customer Service
- Increase Efficiency
- Reduce Long Term Costs
- Improve Performance

4 Function Approach to Customer Service

- Telecommunications
- Internet Applications
- Operations
- Staff

Telecommunications Goal – Less is More

- Focus on getting the client to the person or application that can help with as few touches as possible.
- Interactive Voice Response Systems (IVR)
 - **Language Prompt**
 - **Numerical Prompt**

Telecommunications – IVR Systems

- Limit the number of times a client should “press a key” before getting into the correct queue
- Industry standard is referred to as the “2 touch”
- Structure IVR at the lowest possible level where service can be provided and the lowest possible transactional cost

Telecommunications – IVR Best Practices

- Screen out and route clients to customer self service for redundant or repetitive questions
- Structure IVR with a separate routing for Owners and persons with disabilities (when possible)
- Client hotline to report fraud and program abuse

Telecommunications – IVR Systems

- Determine your customer service “pain tolerance” level, including for seniors.
 - 80% / 60 seconds?
 - 90% / 120 seconds?
 - ??% / ?? seconds
- Once you decide - consider the cost of the service level you choose and the quality of staff performance. Can you deliver?

Internet Web Applications

- Work with local libraries to set up links on their in-house systems with the PHA website
- Revise forms to request email addresses from owners and clients
- Direct Deposit of HAP and UAP
- Landlord Property Listings

Internet Applications – Self-Service

Set up public access terminal in waiting area

- View and print property listings
- View and/or print program rules
- Print program forms
- Schedule/re-schedule appointments
- Determine waiting list status
- Access inspection status and results
- Apply for the Waiting List
- Submit rent increase request

Internet Communications

- Newsletters to owners or tenants
- Inspection Results
- Owner notices
- Exchange information, documents and forms with owners
 - Allow owners to notify PHA when repairs are completed

Internet Applications – Online Information

Provide online program briefings on key subjects:

- Program briefings
- Moving briefings
- Inspection Process
- Client or Owner training videos

Internet Applications – Customer Feedback

Online Customer Service Surveys to be completed after key events:

- Program Interviews
- Briefings
- Inspections
- Training Sessions
- Workshops

Miscellaneous Applications of Technology

- Program videos in client waiting areas
- Document scanning
- Online appointment scheduling as opposed to mail. Allows client to see vacant slots and request appointment times to better fit their schedules.
- Use queue “buster” technology to reduce client hold times and set up call backs

Operations – Policies/Administrative Plan

- It is critical to review and revise internal policies frequently to assure they are customer friendly.
- Policies should reduce interim recertification processing and limit reviews for families with frequent income changes by using historical data to average income.
- Moving to Work demonstration program and SEVRA may help

Operations - Recertification Processing

- Processing annual recertifications via the internet or by mail greatly increases customer satisfaction.
- Use of Upfront Verification is an easy way to reduce fraud and obtain all income without extra burdens on the client.
- Point of entry document scanning decreases “lost paperwork” and “missing file” issues.

Operations – Reminders

- Automated “reminder” calls or emails one day prior to appointment or inspection can greatly reduce no shows and reschedules
- Pre-populated application forms help reduce the opportunity for error and allow for more timely processing by only dealing with changes and not having to re-enter all data.

Operations – Forms

- Pre-populated application forms help reduce the opportunity for error and allow for more timely processing by only dealing with changes and not having to re-enter all data.
- Assure that forms are in large print and easy to read and understand – no regulatory language!



Staff – The Importance of Training

- Job knowledge and competency is key!
- Cross-training on core business functions
- Understanding the power of “YES”
- Responsiveness and reliability of staff
- Computer systems proficiency
- Empathy among staff

“The problem is the enemy, not the customer!”

Staff – Internal Customer Service

- Internal and external customer service is essential to high performance and a quality customer service program.
- Supervisory training for managers
- Buddy System
- Flexible work hours/work from home capabilities

Questions and Answers

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