



Customer Service Policy

Purpose

The purpose of the Customer Service Policy is to establish uniform guidelines and procedures pertaining to customer service for the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA).

Authority

- a. O.R.C. § 121.91

Policy

Each state agency shall develop, and as it becomes necessary or advisable may improve, customer service standards for each employee of the agency whose duties include a significant level of contact with the public.

Scope

This Policy is applicable to all ODA employees.

Guidelines

Standards Covering All Customer Interactions

1. Courtesy, respect, honesty and professionalism.
2. The staff person will listen to the customer's request/question, ask for clarification if necessary, and provide complete, knowledgeable, accurate, precise information regarding their inquiry.
3. The staff person will make a reasonable effort to provide information about ODA and, as appropriate, other outside agencies.

Customer Service Standards

Telephone/Voicemail

1. Telephones will be answered promptly (within three rings) whenever possible.
2. Calls will be answered in a courteous manner (with a smile).
3. A person, not voicemail, will answer the main number at each answering station during business hours.
4. Staff will: listen and understand the nature of the request before transferring a call; inform callers to whom they are being transferred; and provide callers with the telephone number and division of the person to whom they are being transferred. (Each department is responsible for making arrangements to ensure the telephone is answered during business hours). If a call comes during interdepartmental coverage, staff will explain that they are covering for a different division and offer to take a message or transfer the call to voicemail.
5. Before transferring a call, staff will provide the caller with available options to either, go to voicemail, try to assist the caller, or leave a message.
6. Callers will receive acknowledgements of their voicemail messages within twenty-four (24) hours on regular business days.



7. Outgoing voicemail messages will be kept current and voicemail messages at answering stations will be changed on days that ODA is closed.
8. Voicemail messages give at least one optional telephone number to call.
9. Calls will be answered and returned in the order received. Callers may be given the option to be put on hold or called back.
10. If a caller is on hold for an extended period of time, periodic updates will be provided.
11. All incoming telephone calls from external sources will be answered with a consistent greeting such as "Department of Agriculture, [division], how may I help you?"
12. Staff will leave their full name, department, telephone number, and time available when leaving a message.

Meetings and Open Houses

1. They will be given reasonable advance notice of meetings.
2. Meeting notifications contain accurate information (date, time, place, point of contact, telephone number, and directions).
3. They will be informed of schedule changes or cancellations prior to the meeting.
4. Agendas will be available and distributed in advance of meetings.
5. Meetings will start on time and end on time.
6. Meetings will be organized, run efficiently (proper equipment and handouts), and conducted in a professional manner.
7. Meeting notices will be removed after a meeting has completed.
8. All public meeting requests will be adhered to governing laws.

Public Amenities

1. Properly maintained facilities, which are sanitary, completely operational, fully stocked and supplied, accessible, adequate to need, and compliant with ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards.
2. Appropriate and timely responses to identified problems at a facility.

Money/Currency Exchange

1. User-friendly bills/statements.
2. Accurate financial transactions.
3. A receipt or verification of transaction, if requested.

Written Correspondence (Includes Letters, Memoranda, E-mails & Faxes)

1. Written correspondence formatted to ODA standards.
2. Information regarding the customer's inquiry is complete, accurate and precise.
3. A timely response to the customer's request or an interim communication explaining the delay. A timely response for e-mail is within twenty-four (24) hours on a regular business day and within five (5) business days for letters.
4. All e-mails should contain a signature block including: the staff person's name, title, division, Ohio Department of Agriculture, address, telephone number, fax number and e-mail address.
5. When appropriate, mass e-mails will use blind carbon copied to protect the privacy of citizens' email addresses.
6. Fax cover sheets are legible, includes name, telephone number and department of the sender and the name and fax number of the receiver.



In Person

1. A timely, courteous acknowledgement, such as eye contact or a positive indication that the staff person knows they are there, especially if the staff person is on the telephone or with another customer.
2. If there is a person at a counter and the phone rings, the staff person will excuse themselves, answer the telephone, ask the caller if they prefer to be put on hold or have their call returned, and continue to help the customer.
3. Each main informational counter will be staffed during core business hours (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) or, if staff is unavailable, will have signage referring them to the appropriate department.

In Person Contacts with Field Personnel

1. When someone approaches an ODA employee who is doing work in the field, whenever possible, staff will attempt to answer the question if it pertains to the employee's duties, or if the employee knows the answer.
2. If a question pertains to an area outside of the employee's scope of duties or division, the employee will explain it is outside of the scope of their duties, and will provide them with the ODA toll free inquiry telephone number.
3. If the employee cannot answer the question and it is related to their duties, staff will offer the option to contact a supervisor, so that the supervisor can respond.

Contact

The Human Resources Director is available for consultation or questions regarding this policy.

This Policy supersedes any previously issued directive or policy and will remain effective until cancelled or superseded.

Revision History

Date	Description of Change
11/2012	Policy Issued
8/2014	Policy Reviewed
7/2015	Policy Reviewed

