

Customer Service in Health Care

Customer Service Is.....

- Having a fresh approach to each of your clients and your coworkers—because everyone is an individual!
- Finding new ways to do things better all the time.
- Working to solve problems as soon as they arise.
- Keeping a positive attitude.
- Treating your customers like you would want to be treated if you were in their shoes.

Who are your Customers?

A customer is anyone who expects something from you or who has needs that must be met by you. This includes two main groups of customers:

1. Internal Customers- These are customers (including every employee at your workplace).
2. External Customers- This group includes everyone else that you come into contact with at work...such as your clients, their family members and visitors to your workplace. Even a neighbor who asks you about your work is a potential customer!

Interesting Facts About Customer Service

- Poor service is the number one reason that American companies lose business. (And when a company loses business, it has less money for things like salary raises and other employee benefits!)
- 96% of unhappy customers DO NOT complain to you. However, they'll tell up to 20 of their friends and family members about the problem!
- While dissatisfied customers tell about 20 people, satisfied customers only tell 5 people.
- 90% of unhappy customers will move on quietly—to a new health care organization.
- It costs up to ten times more to attract a new client than it does to keep an existing one.

What Do Your Clients Expect?

- Clients have learned what to expect from health care workers based on their past experiences. For example, last year Mrs. Brown had surgery. While she was in the hospital, a nursing assistant promised to help her to the bathroom a, but never did. Mrs. Brown wet the bed. This experience means that she may not trust the next nursing assistant that takes care of her. Or, Mr. Nelson used to have a home health aide that ironed his clothes for him-even his underwear! Now, he'll probably expect that every home health aide do the same.
- Part of your job –if you want to give great customer service-is to find out what your clients expect from you.
- Remember, most people have some basic expectations. They expect to be safe and comfortable. And, they expect you to do what you say you are going to do.
- The more often you meet a customer's expectations, the more that person will come to trust you.

The Price of Poor Customer Service

Example:

Sarah was mistreated by a clerk in her local grocery store. Even though she had been shopping there for 3 years, she was so offended by the incident that she switched to another grocery store.

Twelve years later, Sarah returned to the original store and decided to tell the owner. He listened carefully, apologized, and thanked her for coming back.

Then, Tom sat down with his calculator. He figured that Sarah would have spent at least \$25.00 a week in his store. Over the past twelve years, that would have added up to \$15,600! Since Sarah probably told 10 of her friends *not* to shop at his grocery store, Tom lost business worth more than \$150,000 because of one incident of poor customer service!

How do customers decide if their needs have been met?

<i>Quality</i>	<i>Internal Customer</i>	<i>External Customer</i>
<p>1. Reliability Do you deliver what you promise?</p>	<p>If your scheduler asks you to work next Friday, will you arrive to your visit when you are expected?</p>	<p>If you tell your client that you will be back tomorrow morning at 9:00, will you be there on time as promised?</p>
<p>2. Responsiveness If there is a problem how quickly do you take care of it?</p>	<p>If logging requests that you do a documentation visit how long does it take you to complete it?</p>	<p>If your client tells you that you prepared the wrong type of food, how long will it take you to prepare the correct meal?</p>
<p>3. Assurance Can people trust that you know what you are doing?</p>	<p>Your new client needs to be moved with a mechanical lift. Can your supervisor trust you to tell her if you don't know how to safely use the lift?</p>	<p>It's the first time your client has ever been moved using a mechanical lift. Can your client trust you to move him safely without pain?</p>
<p>4. Empathy Are you able to put yourself in other people's shoes?</p>	<p>If your supervisor asks you to have a new employee shadow with you can you remember how it felt to be a brand new Home Health Aide?</p>	<p>If your client seems grumpy with you, do you look for reasons for her grumpiness (like pain or problems sleeping) rather than getting mad?</p>
<p>5. Professionalism Do you look and act like a professional healthcare worker?</p>	<p>Can you be counted on to show up to work on time, wearing an appropriate uniform and name badge? Are all tattoos covered and facial jewelry removed? Are you in compliance with the nail policy?</p>	<p>Will you keep all of you client information confidential? Do you refrain from talking about your personal life and inappropriate conversations? Do you leave your phone on vibrate and refrain from personal calls?</p>

- ***To meet your clients' expectations, keep learning new skills and improving old ones.***
- ***Try doing MORE than your clients and coworkers expect of you.***

What About Customer Complaints?

- All complaints should be directed to your supervisor or a patient liaison so that they can be properly documented, investigated and resolved.
- Some complaints happen as a result of employee mistakes and some happen due to misunderstandings. For example, Mary is a HHA who is scheduled to see Mr. Smith at 10am Monday through Friday. On her first visit she tells Mr. Smith that she will see him at the same time every day. Mr. Smith thinks that every day means Saturday and Sunday too. He calls to complain when Mary doesn't show up on Saturday.
- Some people are afraid to complain. Or, they don't want to seem difficult. Or, they don't know who to talk to about the problem. Make sure that your clients know *how* to make a complaint. It is one of their basic rights.
- If a client makes a complaint to you in person, stay calm. Don't get upset or argumentative. Just listen to your client's story –and consider that he may be right!
- Be sure to apologize to clients after they've made a complaint-even if you feel you've done nothing wrong. For example, Mary should say to Mr. Smith, "I'm sorry I didn't make it clear to you that I wouldn't be coming on Saturday."
- People who have their complaints resolved to their satisfaction are usually more loyal than customers who have *never* complained.

Tips for Providing your Clients with Good Customer Service

- Make an effort to remember your client's name.
- *ALWAYS* ask, "Is there anything else I can do for you today?"
- When you are with a client, give that person your full attention.
- Offer your clients as many choices as possible.
- Try to think of ways to make your client's day better or easier.

Giving your Client's 100% Quality

If you think it's OK to give less than 100% consider these facts....If 99.9% was good enough for customer service in America then.....

- We'd have 1 hour every month when the water was unsafe to drink.
- There would be 5 airplane crashes a day.
- Every minute the phone company would send over 1000 telephone calls to the wrong number
- The IRS would lose 2 million documents every year.
- The US Postal Service would lose over 16,000 pieces of mail every hour.
- Every week, surgeons would do 500 operations on the wrong patients.
- 50 newborn babies would be dropped every day.