



POLICY AND PROCEDURE

SUBJECT/TITLE:	Customer Service Policy
APPLICABILITY:	All Staff
CONTACT PERSON & DIVISION:	Health Commissioner, Administration
ORIGINAL DATE ADOPTED:	03/01/2017
LATEST EFFECTIVE DATE:	6/26/2025
REVIEW FREQUENCY:	Every 5 years
BOARD APPROVAL DATE:	n/a
REFERENCE NUMBER:	800-022-P

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to guide Canton City Public Health (CCPH) employees towards excellence in customer service. This policy supports CCPH's goals of equitable access, community trust, and trauma-informed care.

B. POLICY

Any employee of CCPH shall be courteous, helpful, respectful and polite to all customers of CCPH whether the customer is walking into CCPH, e-mailing an employee of CCPH, telephoning an employee of CCPH or out in the field, regardless of race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, disability, personal appearance or cultural belief. The employee will treat every customer with equal respect and every request with equal importance in accordance with CCPH Health Equity Policy. Employees are expected to be mindful of implicit biases and to conduct themselves in a manner that ensures all community members feel safe, respected, and heard.

- The employee will respond to inquiries with the best information available, but will refrain from offering personal opinions or advice in response to inquiries.
- Courtesy and attention to the needs of CCPH customers will be vital to all interactions. Employees will try to be flexible in meeting the customers' needs. Whenever possible, judgment calls will be made in the customers' favor.
- Employees will use their knowledge of CCPH resources to fulfill requests in a timely manner or else present alternatives when requests cannot be met immediately.
- Employee rules and procedures exist to make CCPH resources available on an equitable basis. If an employee has a question about why CCPH has a policy or if the purpose of the policy is not understood, an explanation should be provided or else referred to the division leader, the employees' immediate supervisor or the Health Commissioner.
- Employees will refrain from using profanity at a customer or in the presence of a customer.
- Employees will treat customers with dignity and respect. The goal of CCPH is to meet customer's expectations for service while fulfilling CCPH's mission.
- Instructions or explanations should be given to a customer in a clear and concise manner. If necessary, employees must provide step-by-step written detail based on the need of the customer.
- Employees recognize the confidentiality rights of customers and will not reveal the identity of people using CCPH services unless required by law.

C. BACKGROUND

Canton City Public Health strives always to provide excellence in customer service. Excellence in customer service means that educated and knowledgeable employees are ready to assist customers in finding the materials and services they want and need. Excellence in customer service also means that the employee will

try to offer services in a fair manner and treat everyone with courtesy and respect and asks for courtesy and respect in return.

D. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Customer: A customer can be defined as a customer, client, patient, community at large, food vendor, business, or other. For the purpose of this policy, the word customer will be used throughout the policy to identify any of the above mentioned.

Customer service: Assistance and other resources that a company or organization provides to the people who buy or use its products or services.

E. STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

1. All CCPH employees shall follow the policies listed in section B of this document at all times indicated in that section.
2. ANSWERING TELEPHONES
 - a) Try to answer the telephone by the third ring.
 - b) Answer the telephone in one of four ways:
 - i) "Canton City Public Health, how can I help you" or
 - ii) "Canton City Public Health, how may I direct your call" or
 - iii) "Good Morning/Good Afternoon, Canton City Public Health" or
 - iv) "Canton City Public Health, {then your division name}".
 - c) When transferring a telephone call to another division, let the customer know who or what division you are transferring the telephone call. The employee shall follow the best practices listed in 800-022-02-A_Phone Routing Best Practices.
 - d) When an employee answers a telephone call, other employees should keep the noise to a minimum. Sometimes loud talking and/or laughing from other employees make it hard to hear what the customer is saying.
 - e) If the employee does not know the answer or feels like they cannot help the customer, check with another employee, the employee's immediate supervisor or the division leader.
 - f) If a customer calls in asking about other departments or organizations, try to help the customer accordingly.
 - g) Telephone calls should be returned as soon as possible and no longer than one working day. If follow-up is needed beyond one business day, employees must communicate an estimated timeline and who will follow up.
 - h) Staff should speak in a calm, clear, and friendly tone, even during challenging calls.
 - i) At no time, shall an employee engage in an argument or disagreement on the phone with a customer. If the customer becomes heated, belligerent, difficult, angry, frustrated or begins to use profanity the employee shall follow the guidelines listed in 800-022-01-A_Dealing with Difficult or Abusive Customers.
 - j) If an employee cannot help a customer or the employee does not feel comfortable helping a customer, please ask another employee to help (or check with the employees' immediate supervisor or the division leader).
 - k) When an employee will be working with the customer again in the future, the employee shall provide the customer with their 4-digit telephone extension or direct dial telephone number (if applicable for division) so the customer can reach the employee directly. This can also be provided to the customer in written communications (i.e. e-mails, letters, etc) and on the employee business cards (if applicable for

division). Employee emails, 4-digit telephone extension, and direct dial telephone number will be placed on the CCPH website when approved by the division for customer reference and consistent with privacy practices.

I) Use of Voice Mail:

- a. Each employee shall record a personal greeting on their voice mail using this, or similar script:
 - i. "You have reached the voice mail of [name]. I am sorry that I cannot take your call at this time. I am either on the phone with another customer or out in the field. Please leave your name, contact information, and a detailed message and I will return your phone call within one business day. Press "0" if you need immediate help."
- b. If an employee will be out of the office for more than one day, an out of office greeting shall be recorded and activated using this or similar script:
 - i. "You have reached the voice mail for [name]. I cannot take your call at this time. I will be out of the office until [date]. Please leave your name, contact information, and a detailed message and I will return your call on [day or date] after I return. If someone else can help you, or this is an emergency, press "0" and the attendant will be glad to direct your call." The employee may also forward their phone extension to another number or employee if their work is being covered by another employee in their absence as directed by their supervisor.
- c. Employees shall check their voice mail frequently throughout the day and when returning from the field. Every effort should be made to return voice mail messages on the same day they are recorded. All voice mails should be returned with one business day, or within one business day of the employee returning back to the office.

3. CUSTOMER WALK INS

- a) Depending on what department the employee works in, the employee should walk to the counter and greet the customer. Otherwise, you can remain at your desk to greet the customer. The employee should check with their immediate supervisor on this. If you are not at your desk, do not yell from across the room. When you greet the customer, smile and say "Hi, how can I help you" or some other form of a courteous greeting. Staff should ensure that individuals with mobility, hearing, or language barriers receive appropriate accommodations.
- b) Go out of your way to help the customer. Do not push it off onto another employee, unless you are already helping a customer over the telephone or at the counter. If you are on the telephone and no other employee is available to help the customer at the counter, place the customer on the telephone on hold and acknowledge the customer at the counter that you will help them when you are off the telephone.
- c) Always be courteous to customers, no matter what. If a customer is heated, belligerent, difficult, angry, frustrated or begins to use profanity, the employee shall follow the guidelines listed in 800-022-01-A_Dealing with Difficult or Abusive Customers. Do not take it upon yourself to mistreat the customer based on their attitude.
- d) If an employee overhears incorrect information being given to a customer by another employee, it is a public duty for an employee to intervene to ensure the customer receives accurate information. This shall be done in a discreet and respectful manner to the employee.
- e) At no time, shall any employee engage in an argument or disagreement in front of a customer. This issue shall be brought to the employees' immediate supervisor or the division leader. If a customer appears to be in crisis or distress, staff should notify a supervisor immediately. If an employee cannot help a customer or the employee does not feel comfortable helping a customer, please ask another employee to help (or check with the employees' immediate supervisor or the division leader).

- f) When customers are at the counter of a department, the employees should not have personal conversations that the customer can overhear. Do not talk about other people (including staff, friends, other customers, etc.). This portrays an unprofessional environment.
- g) When a customer comes in, all conversations between employees should stop. Do not finish your conversation before addressing the customer at the counter.
- h) If the customer asks for an employee from another division, contact that division immediately.
- i) CCPH strives to provide a professional atmosphere when customers walk in. Therefore, the employees shall follow the following professional guidelines:
 - i) Employees with desks easily seen by the public are not permitted to have lunch at the employees work station unless authorized by the employee's immediate supervisor or the division leader. Snacks throughout the day may be allowed, but shall be placed inconspicuously to not be visible to the public.
 - ii) Employees are not permitted to have decorations, signs or pictures that contain an offensive word, message or slogan or picture directed at a race, sexual orientation, gender, age, religion, disability or are otherwise considered to be offensive or harassing in some way at the employees work station.
 - iii) Employees are required to be dressed in an appropriate professional manner.
 - iv) Employees will not brush hair, clip nails, paint nails, floss or other forms of personal grooming, at their work station. Such activities will be reserved for an employee's scheduled break time.
 - v) At no time, shall an employee talk, text or use a cell phone for personal purposes while customers are present.

4. E-MAIL

All email communication is subject to public records laws and applicable City of Canton and CCPH's policies.

- a) E-mails received from the customer should be acknowledged as soon as possible and no later than three working days, if a response is necessary.
 - a. If an employee is able to meet the needs of the customer's email in the acknowledgement email, then the email is considered handled. All email requests should be completed within 3 days of receipt. If the employee needs additional time to respond to the customer, the employee should contact the customer to inform them of the estimated timeframe to receive a response.
- b) If an employee is off and receives an e-mail, the employee should acknowledge the e-mail within three working days of returning to work.
- c) Employees who are off work for more than one day shall turn on their e-mail "auto-response" (i.e. out of office message) to provide an immediate message to the customer that they are out of the office and what day they expect to return to work, along with who to contact while they are out of the office.
- d) The e-mail should contain a detailed and direct answer or response to the customer. If the employee cannot help the customer, please refer the e-mail to the employees' immediate supervisor or the division leader.
- e) Staff should consider the audience when writing their email.
 - i) All return emails to a customer should contain the approved CCPH email signature. See Policy 800-036-P Branding Policy for additional details on email signatures.

5. IN THE FIELD

- a) If an employee is out in the field (i.e. inspecting restaurants, taking samples, Nursing home visits, house inspection, inspecting businesses, etc.), the employee should identify themselves to the customer by their name and as employed by Canton City Public Health.



- b) The employee shall be dressed in a professional manner in accordance with the dress code policy. An exception may be made to this requirement if the visit is of a confidential nature.
- c) The employee's city identification badge will be readily visible at all times unless the visit is of a confidential nature or there is a potential safety risk
- d) If the employee is provided with business cards, the employee shall have copies of their business cards readily available to provide to the customer if requested or appropriate.
- e) If a customer is heated, belligerent, difficult, angry, frustrated or begins to use profanity, the employee shall follow the guidelines listed in 800-022-01-A_Dealing with Difficult or Abusive Customers. If the customer appears to be under the influence of substances or in a mental health crisis, staff should follow established field safety protocols and report back to their supervisor.
- f) The employee should follow the above sections as written if they apply to the employee being out in the field. Employees should refer to earlier sections for consistency in behavior, language, and timeliness expectations while in the field.

6. All CCPH employees are required to follow this policy. Any employee that does not follow the policy will be subject to the CCPH 800-006-P_Discipline Policy. All new employees will receive customer service training during onboarding and existing staff will receive regular refreshers.

F. CITATIONS & REFERENCES

G. CONTRIBUTORS

The following staff contributed to the authorship of this document:

1. Christi Allen, Fiscal Officer
2. Christina Henning, Laboratory Director

H. APPENDICES & ATTACHMENTS

800-022-01-A_Dealing with Difficult or Abusive Customers

800-022-02-A_Phone Routing Best Practices

I. REFERENCE FORMS

N/A

J. REVISION & REVIEW HISTORY

Revision Date	Review Date	Author	Notes
06/14/2018		Terri Dzienis	Added new 800-022-02-A and reference to it in E.2.c.; added E.2.j.; Updated E.4.f.iii. and E.5.d. to include references to direct dial telephone numbers.
5/28/2025	5/28/2025	DThompson	General policy review. Updates made related to equitable customer service.

K. APPROVAL

This document has been approved in accordance with the "800-001-P Standards for Writing and Approving PPSOGFs" procedure as of the effective date listed above.