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# NYC Customer Service Newsletter

*Prepared by the Customer Service Group, Mayor's Office of Operations*

## New City Clerk's Office Opened in Manhattan

On January 12, 2009 the City Clerk's Office, which provides marriage licenses, conducts civil weddings and issues marriage certificates, began operating out of a new, 24,000 square foot, revamped, state-of-the-art location at 141 Worth Street.

Beyond the new space, many improvements have been made with the customer in mind: a new line-management system that tells customers their wait time; fourteen computer kiosks for online

application processing; one-stop windows for service instead of multiple windows; credit card processing (replacing the need for money orders); large restrooms with vanities and full-length mirrors; refinished and decorated chapel space; an area to take photos in front of a backdrop of City Hall; a branch of the City Store where fresh flowers can be purchased, as well as other sundries such as disposable cameras, film, costume rings, and NYC merchandise. The wedding chapels feature

artwork on loan from the Brooklyn Museum of Art and the City Hall backdrop was supplied by Duggal Visual Solutions. Literature in the new Marriage Bureau is available in English and Spanish. Customers can also speak to clerks in their preferred language using a telephone interpretation system available in 170 languages.

For more information contact Michael McSweeney at [mmcsweeney@cityclerk.nyc.gov](mailto:mmcsweeney@cityclerk.nyc.gov).

## New Initiative at DOHMH to Prevent and Treat STD's among High School Students

In March 2006, DOHMH launched STEP-UP (STD Testing and Education Program for Urban Populations), an initiative designed to reach sexually active teens in the City's public high schools who may have contracted Chlamydia or Gonorrhea.

STEP-UP provides preventive education and free urine-based testing, as well as counseling and treatment for students who test positive for Chlamydia or Gonorrhea, along with their sex partners. During the 2007-2008 school year, 89 schools participated. More than 24,000 high school students were educated, and almost 12,000 were tested for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea - 7.3% (10.1% of females and 4.4% of males) tested positive for one or both of these STDs. Roughly 95% of students testing positive were treated, along with 75% of their sex partners.

DOHMH enhanced STEP UP in November 2008 by creating the web site Teen Health ([www.nyc.gov/teenhealth](http://www.nyc.gov/teenhealth)), which focuses on teen health and links students confidentially to their test results. The website also links students to locations of free health clinics, STD facts, what to expect at an STD clinic, hotlines, and DOHMH's *NYC Teen Mindspace*, a MySpace.com page focused on mental health problems.

The Department expects thousands of New York City high school students to visit the new Teen Health site each school-year.

For more information contact Sophie Nurani at 212-788-4450 or [snurani@health.nyc.gov](mailto:snurani@health.nyc.gov).

The Customer Service Newsletter was created to keep City managers and staff informed of the latest customer service news in the City of New York. If you have any ideas for topics to cover, please feel free to contact us at: [customerservice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:customerservice@cityhall.nyc.gov).

### Table of Contents:

New City Clerk Office	1
DOHMH Teen Initiative	1
DOT "Get to Know Us" Day	2
New Call Center Greeting Standard	2
DEP Improves Call Center Performance	3
Social Networking Site for Government	3
HHC's First Baby-Friendly Hospital	4
TLC's New Complaint Testimony by Phone	4
DPR Conducts First Golfer Survey	5
NYCHA's New HR Initiative	6
Language Access Executive Order	6

**Federal GSA's Office of Citizen Services Accepting Applications for Citizen Service Award**

The GSA's Office of Citizen Services is now accepting applications for its Annual Citizen Service Award. This year's program is open to federal, state, and local government agencies. GSA wants to recognize those who have achieved excellence in customer service by: establishing and meeting performance metrics, ensuring the accuracy of information delivered to citizens, using Web 2.0 technologies to increase awareness of programs and services, and attracting, training, and retaining quality staff.

**The application deadline is February 20.** Finalists will be announced in March, and the winners will be recognized at the Interagency Resources Management Conference (IRMCO, [www.irmco.gov](http://www.irmco.gov)) in Cambridge, MD, April 19-22. In addition to a trophy, the winners and finalists will receive one free admission to the conference, recognition on the IRMCO website, and recognition in a press release announcing the award-winning programs.

## **Department of Transportation Reaches Out to Its Customers with "Get to Know Us Day"**

**"Thank you for a great meeting"**  
P. Shubert, Rockaway Beach, Queens

**"Thanks so much for inviting me to the informative presentation".**  
J. Kelly, Crown Heights, Brooklyn

These were some of the reactions from the newly launched **"Get-To-Know-Us"** day sponsored by DOT's Customer Service Division, held at DOT's headquarters. This was a unique opportunity for customers to air their concerns and receive answers directly. DOT offered the two-hour event on November 20th and 21st to accommodate customers' schedules. Over 20 participants attended.

The Department encouraged participants to use any of the channels available to them, and

highlighted writing letters to the Commissioner, using the DOT Website, and calling 3-1-1.

During the event, customers were invited to voice their desires for improved transportation services. For example, some requested speed bumps in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, traffic signals and pedestrian ramps in Queens, municipal lots repainted in Lower Manhattan, pedestrian safety measures in downtown Brooklyn, and "One Way" street conversions in the Bronx.

Customers who attended were extremely pleased to know that DOT took extra steps to give them an opportunity to personally voice their concerns and to follow-up on issues they brought to DOT's

attention.

Participants went home with a complimentary package that included DOT's Sustainable Streets: Strategic Plan; a 2009 Alternate Side of the Street Parking Calendar; and, a Bicycle Map.

As for DOT, Customer Service managers and staff were happy to know that participants were very satisfied with the extra attention DOT gave them.

The event sent a clear message to DOT's customers: that DOT's goal is to assist them the best way that DOT can.

For more information contact Catherine Messana at [cmessana@dot.nyc.gov](mailto:cmessana@dot.nyc.gov) or Desiree Maple at [dmaple@dot.nyc.gov](mailto:dmaple@dot.nyc.gov).

## **Call Center Standardized Language**

The Mayor's Office of Operations, in partnership with agencies, developed new, standardized call-center language for all City call-centers. As part of the City's effort to present a uniform image, call-centers will now use the same language to greet and introduce themselves to the customers and to thank them on the phone. Changes to call-center language are effective beginning January 19, 2009.

In an effort to spread the message, the Mayor's Office of Operations made available to agencies posters and "hot sheets," briefing their call-center staff on the changes. The standardized language was a product of the Customer Service Steering Committee, involving call-center directors from across the City. Input on the ideal language and method of talking with customers was gathered during the fall of 2008 and underwent many reviews and revisions before appearing in its final form.

Beginning January 19 quality assurance assessments of City call-centers will determine the effectiveness of the project. Customer Service Liaisons serving as part of the Customer Service Steering Committee will take part in the quality assurance assessment, providing an opportunity for agency call-center directors to interact with other City call-centers.

For more information contact Jeff Roth at [jroth@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:jroth@cityhall.nyc.gov) or Craig Hosang at [chosang@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:chosang@cityhall.nyc.gov).

## DEP Call Center Improves Average Speed Answered and Percentage of Calls Answered

The Department of Environmental Protection has a cadre of workers who staff the Bureau of Customer Services Call Center located in DEP's offices in Flushing, Queens. New York City's property owners, building managers, and agents can contact the call center at 1-718-595-7000 for water and wastewater (sewer) billing and account information, or to access a host of customer services including service inspections, repairs and detailed information on incentives and payment options.

Over the last two years, the Call Center team successfully established an improved and consistent trend in two key measures: customer average speed answered (or the length of time before a customer service representative comes on the line) – down to less than a minute from an average of well over 4

minutes in 2006 – and percentage of calls answered – currently averaging above 97%, up from the 2006 average of 91%.

Improving communications between DEP and its 828,000 account holders is a challenge; new initiatives on compliance and collections have been introduced and added to the extensive menu of services already available. The Bureau of Customer Services now plans for peak periods in the year, when initiatives cause customer inquiries to spike. For example; collection notices, water only tax liens and annual rate increases directly cause high call volumes periodically throughout the year. Proper training allows the call Center to successfully manage fluctuations in call traffic and maintain effective levels of service: statistics for November 2008 show the average speed

answered was 15 seconds.

What is the key to the Call Center's success? According to DEP, it's people. Call Center employees provide customers with specialized help using a combination of computer technology, service skills and specialized business knowledge about New York City's complex water system – a highly regulated service supported by a vast infrastructure. Since 2006, Call Center staff retention has increased from 80% to 90%, which makes ongoing training easier when new technology is introduced. Keeping the City working faster and smarter will enhance the long-term service relationship that DEP enjoys with New Yorkers.

For more information contact Robert Garcia, Call Center Manager, at [RobeGarc@dep.nyc.gov](mailto:RobeGarc@dep.nyc.gov).

### DEP Call Center Performance Data



**DEP Customer Service Representative Ronald Reyes taking phone calls at the Call Center**

CALENDAR YEAR 2008

**Staff:**

40 customer service representatives

**Number of calls received:**

363,750

**Average answering time:**

37 seconds

**Abandonment rate:**

1%

## New Social Networking Site for Government - [www.govloop.com](http://www.govloop.com)

A new social networking site for the government community was started in 2008 by Steve Ressler, a federal government employee. The site has grown to over 2,000 members and includes a number of blogs and community groups.

In today's budget environment, online networking sites provide

an innovative twist on best practice research. As with other social networking sites, the government community can engage in discussions, upload photos and videos, and add friends. Employees can post a question to many knowledgeable individuals, and collectively find low- and no- cost ideas to addressing your agency's

[www.govloop.com](http://www.govloop.com) problems. However, you should exercise prudence when taking the advice of an online network. Common sense and privacy concerns should be kept in mind when you ask questions or respond to other users.

Also, govloop.com has blogs that focus on topics such as Web 2.0, cost-

benefit analysis and leadership. Community groups include Government Customer Service, Young Government Leaders and Knowledge Management in Government.

*Employees at all levels of government, whether in federal, state or local municipal government, are welcome to join.*

### 10 Steps to Successful Breastfeeding and Baby-Friendly Certification

1. Have a written breastfeeding policy, and routinely communicate it to all health care staff.
2. Train all health care staff in skills necessary to implement the breastfeeding policy.
3. Inform all pregnant women of the benefits and management of breastfeeding.
4. Help mothers initiate breastfeeding within one hour of birth.
5. Show mothers how to breastfeed, and how to maintain lactation even if they are separated from their infants.
6. Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breast milk, unless medically indicated.
7. Practice rooming-in, which allows mothers and infants to remain together 24 hours a day.
8. Encourage breastfeeding on demand.
9. Give no artificial teats or pacifiers to breastfeeding infants.
10. Establish breastfeeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from the hospital or clinic.

## Harlem Hospital Center Certified as First “Baby-Friendly” Hospital in New York City

In 2008 Harlem Hospital Center became the first hospital in New York City to receive “Baby Friendly” certification. The certification is granted by Baby Friendly USA, part of a global initiative sponsored by the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children Fund.

The global Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative selects hospitals and birthing centers that successfully implement the recommended 10 steps of a comprehensive breastfeeding program (see sidebar).

“We want to do all we can to improve the health of the littlest New Yorkers and encourage the use of mother’s milk for the nearly 22,000 babies born

in our hospitals each year,” said HHC President Alan D. Aviles.

“I congratulate Harlem Hospital on their progress supporting new mothers,” said Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, New York City Health Commissioner. “By implementing the Baby Friendly Steps program, Harlem Hospital has once again demonstrated its commitment to helping New York City babies get a healthier start in life. There are so many wonderful benefits to breastfeeding for babies and new mothers, and this program will ensure that hundreds of families understand and benefit from this important message.”

In 2008, Harlem Hospital Center delivered close to 1,200 babies and the overwhelming majority of

mothers who delivered at Harlem were breastfeeding their babies when they left the hospital.

Breastfeeding exclusively for the first 6 months of an infant’s life has many health benefits for babies and mothers, including a reduction in infectious diseases and mortality during infancy, improved bonding, and postpartum maternal weight loss. Breastfeeding also helps reduce the risks of common childhood infections, asthma, diabetes and other conditions. It saves time and money for families in both baby formula and medical costs.

For more information contact Sylvia White at [Sylvia.White@nychhc.org](mailto:Sylvia.White@nychhc.org)

## Consumer Complainants Now May Offer Telephone Testimony at TLC Tribunals

Passengers of Taxi and Limousine Commission-licensed vehicles who were typically compelled by due process requirements to attend a hearing at the agency’s adjudication tribunal may now for the first time offer their testimony as a witness by telephone.

While passengers filing complaints with the TLC for any driver-related violation may continue to opt to attend a hearing at its tribunal, scheduled to their convenience, effective December 8, 2008, they may also choose to arrange a convenient date and time to call their testimony in during a scheduled hearing in real-time. Consumer feedback on the new option has been overwhelmingly positive.

The TLC has also announced that, as of December 22, 2008, the respondent, or responding TLC-licensed driver, may likewise opt to testify by telephone from the TLC’s Staten Island satellite facility (but *only* from that facility) or continue to personally appear at a hearing conducted at a TLC facility in either Manhattan or Long Island City. In order to be eligible for this option, the respondent must waive their ability to use mistaken identity as a defense.

For more information contact Allan Fromberg at [allan.fromberg@tlc.nyc.gov](mailto:allan.fromberg@tlc.nyc.gov).

## Parks Department Completes First Survey of Golf Customers

Did you know that the Department of Parks & Recreation manages 13 City-owned golf courses? Each of the outer boroughs has golf courses, and Manhattan has a driving range on Randall's Island. Fees are as affordable as you can find, anywhere from \$28 to \$41 if you can do without the cart, compared to \$80 to \$100 at private clubs. Each course is run by one of six contracted concessionaires who are responsible for all aspects of operating a golf course.

In Summer 2008, the Parks Department conducted the first customer survey of golfers at its courses. In total, 803 surveys were completed. (DPR is also offering the survey on the internet for any duffers who may have missed it on the golf course). The golf survey,

created by Parks Department staff, addressed a wide variety of issues including fairways, greens, traps, signage, bathrooms, customer service, carts, and vehicle parking, for example.

Overall, Parks courses scored well, with 83% of respondents rating courses excellent to good, and only 3% giving poor grades. The survey showed that City golfers get out on the course fairly often, with 70% of respondents playing 11 or more rounds per year.

True to its reputation as a life-long sport, over one third of players surveyed were over 61 years old. When it comes to performance, women who took the survey out-shined the guys. Of the women surveyed, 39% said they were bogey or better

golfers with handicaps under 20 shots. (Nationally, the US Golf Association reports that 21% of women can score that well.) For the gents, 65% were 20 handicap or lower, as compared to 75% nationally.

In their comments, golfers identified areas where Parks could improve the golfing experience – by speeding up playing time; providing more seating areas; and, replacing more gas-powered golf carts with electric-powered carts, for example.

Parks will share the survey results with the golf operators and use them to drive continued success.

For more information contact Keith Kerman at [keith.kerman@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:keith.kerman@parks.nyc.gov).



**La Tourette Golf Course  
Staten Island**

### Parks Department Golf Courses

Bronx	Brooklyn	Manhattan	Queens	Staten Island
<b>Mosholu</b> Mosholu Parkway 3700 Jerome Ave. (E. 213th St) & Bainbridge Aves.	<b>Dyker Beach</b> Dyker Beach Park 7th Avenue & 86th St.	<b>Randall's Island</b> Driving Range Randall's Island Park North of Ichan Stadium	<b>Clearview</b> 202-12 Willets Point Blvd.	<b>LaTourette</b> <a href="#">S.I. Greenbelt</a> 1001 Richmond Hill Road
<b>Pelham/Split Rock</b> <a href="#">Pelham Bay Park</a> Shore Road north of Bartow Circle	<b>Marine Park</b> 2880 Flatbush Avenue near Belt Parkway		<b>Douglaston</b> Douglaston Park 6320 Marathon Parkway	<b>Silver Lake</b> <a href="#">Silver Lake Park</a> 915 Victory Blvd. near Forest Ave.
<b>Van Cortland Park</b> Bailey Avenue & Van Cortland Park			<b>Forest Park</b> <a href="#">Forest Park</a> 101 Forest Park Drive	<b>South Shore</b> <a href="#">South Shore Golf Course</a> 200 Huguenot Ave.
			<b>Kissena</b> Kissena Park 164-15 Booth Memorial Avenue	

