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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.

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.

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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), 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.

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) 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 or Desiree Maple at 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 or Craig Hosang at 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.

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

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 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

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.

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.



**La Tourette Golf Course
Staten Island**

Parks Department Golf Courses

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

New York City Housing Authority's HR STARS Shine!

Customer Service Group Mayor's Office of Operations

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New York, NY 10013

Email:
customerservice@cityhall.nyc.gov

www.nyc.gov

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In 2008, the Human Resources Department at NYCHA began an initiative to better assist NYCHA's 12,260 employees and job applicants. The program, "HR Strategic Transformation And Realigned Structure" – or **HR STARS** – redefines how the HR department fulfills its mission to improve customer service.

HR STARS goals include: 1) the development of a comprehensive communication strategy and performance measures that ensure provision of necessary services to achieve business objectives; 2) clearly defined points of contact to support direct interaction between HR professionals and their customers; and, 3) the

establishment of frequent, two-way communication between HR and business units.

As part of **HR STARS** two committees were established: **The Communications Committee** and **The Customer Service Desk (CSD) Committee**.

To date, the **Communications Committee** has conducted focus groups and summarized the results of each session, and developed an **HR STARS** logo and website to allow employees to directly access HR-related information. A host of **HR STARS** promotional items and a marketing strategy for the launch of the department's customer service desk in Spring

2009 has also been developed.

The **CSD Committee** is working to establish an HR Customer Service Desk to serve as a single point of contact for employees. The team has drafted standard operating procedures, created a staffing plan, and selected the telephone system to track and monitor calls. Work is nearly complete on development of a knowledge base and work ticket system.

HR STARS will transform the way business is conducted to improve internal customers' experience.

For more information contact:
dawn.pinnock@nycha.nyc.gov,
or
sharon.samuel@nycha.nyc.gov

Mayor Bloomberg's Language Access Executive Order 120 Closer to Implementation

Thirty-eight City agencies submitted language access implementation plans to the Mayor's Office in accordance with Executive Order 120. Each plan includes milestones for plan implementation that will be monitored by the Mayor's Office of Operations throughout 2009. The plans include 1) Limited English Proficient (LEP) population assessment of the agency's customers; 2) Identification and translation of essential public documents; 3) Interpretation services – including telephonic interpretation services; 4) Training of front-line workers and managers on language access policies and procedures; 5) Posting of signage in conspicuous locations about availability of free interpretation services; 6) Establishment of an appropriate monitoring and measurement system of language access services; and, 7) Outreach and public awareness strategies for agencies' service populations.

The Customer Service Group and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) also developed tools to guide agencies in the development of their plans and eventual implementation of their language access services. CSG created plan guidance from best practices research around the nation, and an evaluation checklist for agency plans to maintain quality, consistency, and accountability for agency language access services. In addition, CSG and MOIA developed guidance documents on how agencies can participate in DOITT's citywide vendor contract and how to start and maintain a Volunteer Language Bank.

CSG has also created signage and language identification tools in conjunction with NYC & Company, Language Line, and MOIA to both raise awareness of free translation and interpretation services and facilitate the process of identifying a customer's primary language. These include a *Language ID Poster* with a list of New York City's top 22 languages, an *I Speak Card* for customers that indicates their primary language, and a *Notice of Free Translation Services* that can be provided with agency documents.

For more information contact Kate Pielemeier at kpielemeier@cityhall.nyc.gov.

NYC Free Interpretation Service Available
English translation: Point to your language. An interpreter will be called. The interpreter is provided at no cost to you.

Shona / Albanian Tregoni me gjuhë gjuhën tuaj. Do të dërgojmë një përkthyes. Përkthyesi do të merret falë për ju.	한국어 / Korean 귀하께서 사용하시는 언어를 지적하시면 해당 언어 통역 서비스를 무료로 제공해 드립니다.
عربي / Arabic اشرح لي لغتك وسوف يتم إرسال مترجم لك مجاناً.	普通话 / Mandarin 請指出您所使用的語言。
বাংলা / Bengali কোন ভাষায় কথা বলতে চান, সেটা উল্লেখ করে একজন মুখের ভাষাভাষী প্রেরণ করা হবে।	தமிழ் / Tamil Please indicate which language you wish to use. We will assign an appropriate interpreter.
廣東話 / Cantonese 請指出您所使用的語言。	Português / Portuguese Indique o seu idioma. Um intérprete será chamado. A interpretação é gratuita para qualquer língua que você quiser.
Français / French Écrivez votre langue et on appellera un interprète qui vous sera fourni gratuitement.	উর্দو / Urdu اپنی زبان کو لکھ کر اس کے لیے مترجم کو بلائیے۔ یہ سروس مفت ہے۔
Ελληνικά / Greek Ποιούστε να γράψετε την γλώσσα που θέλετε να χρησιμοποιήσετε. Ο μεταφραστής σας θα έρθει δωρεάν.	Русский / Russian Укажите язык, на котором вы говорите. Наш менеджер предоставит вам бесплатного переводчика.
Kreyòl / Haitian Creole Lèye dezi ou sou lang ou pale a epi a ap nò pou nou voye pou ou. Nou ta ou sèvi gratis la pou ou.	Español / Spanish Señale su idioma y llamemos a un intérprete. El servicio es gratuito.
עברית / Hebrew אנא ציינו את שפת הדיבור שלכם ונשלח את המעלה לך בחינם.	Tagalog / Tagalog Pano po lang ipangayon ninyo. Isang interpretang itatagayoyan ninyo libre sa inyo.
हिन्दी / Hindi कृपया हमें बता दें कि आप किस भाषा में बातचीत करना चाहते हैं। हमें आपकी मदद करने के लिए मुफ्त में एक अनुवादक भेजेंगे।	Українська / Ukrainian Напишіть мову якою ви розмовляєте. Ми надішлемо вам безкоштовного перекладача.
Italiano / Italian Puntate sulla propria lingua. Un interprete sarà chiamato. Il servizio è gratuito.	اردو / Urdu اپنی زبان کو لکھ کر اس کے لیے مترجم کو بلائیے۔ یہ سروس مفت ہے۔
日本語 / Japanese あなたの話す言語を指して下さい。無料の通訳を提供します。	יידיש / Yiddish צווישן די שפראכן וואס דיין שפראך איז, צעייכען די שפראך וואס דיין שפראך איז. אן עקסטרא קאסט וועט איר אונטערשטעצט ווערן.

Language ID poster to be placed at walk-in centers

About the Customer Service Group

The Customer Service Group (CSG) was established by Mayor Bloomberg's Executive Order 115 to support and implement the mandates of the order. CSG is part of the Mayor's Office of Operations.