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# NYC Customer Service Newsletter

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

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## DOHMH Sponsors 'Mind Your Health' Workshops

For people with mental or psychiatric disabilities, staying physically healthy can be a challenge. A 2006 multi-state report found that people in treatment for psychiatric conditions die, on average, 25 years younger than the general population. The leading causes include treatable, preventable conditions such as heart disease and diabetes.

To help ease this burden, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene's Office of Consumer Affairs hosts a workshop series called *Mind Your Health*. The workshops give consumers of mental health services the tools

they need to avoid preventable physical illness.

The series, launched in 2007, has included workshops on topics ranging from medication side-effects to smoking cessation and sex communication and safety. The latest session, held on February 20 at the New York Psychiatric Institute, was entitled "Wellness is for Everyone: Improving the Physical and Mental Health of New York City's Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Communities." The speakers included doctors, researchers and consumer advocates. The Office of Consumer

Affairs serves people with mental retardation, developmental disabilities, psychiatric disabilities and histories of substance use. It is staffed by people in recovery from psychiatric conditions. Their experience uniquely qualifies them to understand and meet the needs of their customers.

"Good customer service is always about good communication," says Jody Silver, Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs. "But in this case, communication can save lives."

For more information contact Jody Silver at [jsilver@health.nyc.gov](mailto:jsilver@health.nyc.gov)

## Do you know someone who needs a wheelchair accessible taxi ?

The Taxi & Limousine Commission began a 2-year pilot project in July 2008 to provide wheelchair-accessible taxi service in New York City. The program provides a central dispatch system for wheelchair accessible taxis for passengers who use wheelchairs and scooters. Customers call 311 and are connected to a central dispatcher, who then dispatches the closest available

wheelchair-accessible taxi. TLC partnered with the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities, the Mayor's Office of Operations, and the Department of Information Technologies and Telecommunications to create the program.

The project provides a chance to test dispatching technology, measure demand for wheelchair accessible vehicles, and

determine how to best provide wheelchair accessible service. Since the beginning of the pilot, the 238 wheelchair-accessible taxis have served 1150 passengers. The average wait time for a taxi has been 30 minutes.

For more information on how to start a program like this call the TLC Call Center at 212-227-0700, where you will be referred to the appropriate staff person.

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

### 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.

**Parks Customers' Answer to "What is Most Important to You?"**

<b>Bathrooms</b>	51%
<b>Benches/tables</b>	43%
<b>Drinking fountains</b>	39%
<b>Children's play equipment</b>	38%
<b>Cleaning/litter removal</b>	37%
<b>Security</b>	37%
<b>Gardens and flowers</b>	35%
<b>Children's spray showers</b>	27%
<b>Programming</b>	26%
<b>Pool</b>	25%

<b>Comfort Stations by Borough</b>	
<b>Borough</b>	<b>Comfort Stations</b>
Bronx	117
Brooklyn	172
Manhattan	130
Queens	180
Staten	
Island	40
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>639</b>

**"I Love the Park, but Show Me the Restroom"**

Did you know that Parks & Recreation offers over 600 restrooms in parks in every borough and neighborhood in New York City? DPR calls them comfort stations and they are among the most important services Parks offers, as revealed in customer service surveys.

Since 2002, Parks has conducted surveys of parks, playgrounds, beaches, pools and other park facilities. DPR conducts the surveys in person and online: [www.nycgovparks.org/contact\\_us/html/surveys.html](http://www.nycgovparks.org/contact_us/html/surveys.html). In each survey DPR asks patrons to rate the most important service to them. As expected, the public cares about park cleanliness, security, play equipment and horticulture. However, the most commonly cited

priority was bathrooms. In the 2008 park surveys, 51% of participants selected bathrooms as a priority, with benches/tables and drinking fountains next on the list. A majority of park users report that they come to the parks to rest and relax and spend time with friends and family. The presence of a clean and accessible bathroom is critical to the length and enjoyment of their stay.

Parks has responded to meet this customer priority through the Operation Relief program, which adds comfort stations to the Park Inspection Program. Each week, about 15 comfort stations are randomly inspected for litter, graffiti, and structural conditions. Just as importantly, Parks managers are held

accountable for making sure that toilet paper, paper towels and soap are available.

As a result of Parks' inspection program and manager accountability, Parks has seen a vast improvement in comfort station conditions citywide. This winter, Parks achieved inspection scores of over 90% for amenities in comfort stations, meaning that the vast majority of Parks bathrooms are clean and properly supplied.

So, the next time you need a place to go, come visit your neighborhood park.

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

**Department of City Planning Launches New Community Data Portal**

On March 3rd, the Department of City Planning's (DCP) launched a new web page that enables community members and the public to more easily access vital information unique to the City's many neighborhoods.

City Planning's new "community data portal" provides a single central access point for neighborhood data, project information and other resources that DCP produces on a community district level. Visitors to the DCP web page can enter their neighborhood

or address using the new "Find the Data" tool on the left-hand menu of DCP's home page. Alternately, they can select a community district from a 5-borough map, which displays a selection of the neighborhoods encompassed by each district. Once a user has made a selection, the data portal for that community district appears.

The portal features all of City Planning's active projects within the community district, links to helpful land use review sources such as Commission reports and

filed applications for the district, as well as a consolidated resource for useful community data, such as: 1) Demographic facts like age, sex, and ethnic makeup of the district ; 2) Data on the social characteristics of the district, such as kinds of households, levels of education, and numbers of foreign born residents; 3) Economic facts detailing employment types , income ranges , and commuting patterns of local residents; 4) Housing data, such as # of units, types, occupancy levels, and rent levels.

The intuitive web search tool, and wide range of information it makes available, adds an additional layer of transparency to the planning process, and responds to Mayor Bloomberg's mandate to use technology to enhance transparency, efficiency, customer service and accountability. The DCP website is at [www.nyc.gov/planning](http://www.nyc.gov/planning).

For more information contact: Carolyn Grossman at (212) 720-3320 or [CGrossm@planning.nyc.gov](mailto:CGrossm@planning.nyc.gov)

## 311 Tops Government and Commercial Sectors in Customer Satisfaction

In 2008, the 311 Customer Service Center outperformed government and private sector industries in customer satisfaction performance, according to a 2008 survey completed by CFI Group Inc. The Call Center's performance was rated "very favorable" by over 2,000 survey respondents. As noted by CFI Group: *"Satisfaction with NYC 311 is above highest performing private sector benchmarks for call centers and is above local and federal government benchmarks"*.

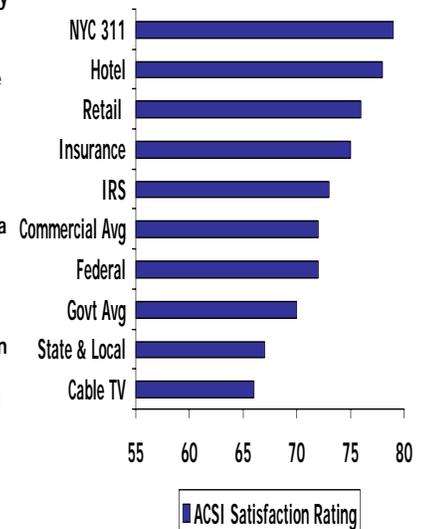
The 311 Customer Service Center achieved an overall Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) score of 79, outpacing government sectors and private

industry performance. Satisfaction with 311 Call Center Representatives was even higher, achieving a CSI score of 88 for performance in categories including: courtesy and professionalism, ability to determine customer needs, and providing information needed. This strong performance is a credit and tribute to New York City's vision and support of 311. The results also demonstrate the commitment of City employees who help deliver and maintain a level of excellence in support of the Administration's commitment to the accessibility, transparency and accountability of City government.

### 311 Customer Satisfaction



- 2008 Customer Satisfaction Survey designed and compiled by CFI Group, using national American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) a uniform measure of industry / government customer satisfaction.
- "Baseline satisfaction measure using ACSI methodology shows a high level of satisfaction with 311".
- "Satisfaction with 311 is more on par with higher performing call centers in the private sector and well above scores for typical government call centers".



Source: CFI Group Inc, October, 2008

## City Agencies Add More Online Applications to Replace Paper Processing

City agencies continue to convert paper intensive processes to online applications to make it easier for the City's customers to conduct business. Three new applications were put online or will go live during the early part of 2009.

At the end of March, the Department of Finance will introduce a new corporate e-filing program that allows accountants who use vendor tax software to send corporate tax return data electronically to the IRS. From there, Finance's lockbox

vendor will retrieve the data, eliminating the need for data entry. This program will enable the vast majority of businesses that file through accountants to file more efficiently and with fewer data entry errors, enabling Finance to process returns more timely and accurately for more than 100,000 corporations doing business in the City.

In February, the Department of Consumer Affairs went live with two additional industries—Locksmiths and Pawnbrokers – bringing

the total number of online license application renewals to six. In the first several days of the renewal period, over 100 locksmiths renewed their licenses online. DCA also has four new license applications available online.

The Department of Cultural Affairs launched a new web-based funding application. 918 nonprofit cultural organizations applied online for Cultural Development Funding in March 2009. Bringing the former paper-based process online not only helped streamline the

process for the agency's constituents, but going forward, will help speed oversight and fiscal procedures.

For more information contact:

DOF: Sam Miller, 212.232.1863, [MillerS@Finance.nyc.gov](mailto:MillerS@Finance.nyc.gov)

DCA: Alvin Espinosa at [AEspinosa@dca.nyc.gov](mailto:AEspinosa@dca.nyc.gov)

DCLA: Kate deRosset, [kderosset@culture.nyc.gov](mailto:kderosset@culture.nyc.gov), 212 513 9323

**NYCHA Facts**

- This year, NYCHA is celebrating 75 years of providing affordable housing to low- and moderate-income New Yorkers.
- The New York City Housing Authority is the largest public housing authority in North America; and the largest landlord in New York City.
- A total of 633,637 people (about 1 in 13 New Yorkers) are served by NYCHA's Public Housing and Section 8 Programs.<sup>1</sup>
- If NYCHA were a city, it would rank 19th in population size in the United States, with New York City ranked first.<sup>2</sup>
- A wide variety of programs geared to special age and different needs groups are offered to enhance the quality of life at NYCHA through a network of over 400 community facilities.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> As of October 2008

<sup>2</sup> Ranking based on the 2000 Census

## Customer Satisfaction from an Unlikely Source...

NYCHA's Supply Chain Operations (SCO) Department determined that satisfying its internal customers— such as public housing development managers— will ensure that NYCHA's core customers— its residents— are also satisfied.

SCO Director, Gary A. Smith, shares some ways that NYCHA keeps its internal customers, their employees, satisfied:

SCO assigned Customer Service Agents to each of the boroughs to liaise with public housing development managers and be a single point of contact for questions about deliveries or for assistance placing an order, registering a complaint, or obtaining additional information on any commodity.

To ensure 24/7 response to gas-related emergencies, SCO set up an area in the Queens warehouse where emergency supplies are housed, including hot plates. Previously, developments would rush to area hardware stores to purchase hot plates that would then be distributed to residents to prepare meals. Now, development staff can assist residents in a much more timely fashion, as well as realize cost-savings by purchasing in bulk.

SCO also satisfies customers by ensuring inventory accuracy so that customers can be reasonably certain they will receive the items ordered when needed. In 2008, SCO's inventory accuracy exceeded 99%.

SCO also measures customer satisfaction by its ability to fulfill an order on time. Employees place orders online— similar to ordering from an online retailer— and can receive the item the same day. In 2008, 96% of orders were delivered on time.

Two years ago, SCO negotiated 2% "early payment" discounts with various vendors. In conjunction with the Accounts Payable Division, SCO developed a system whereby these savings are credited back to the purchasing public housing development or NYCHA department. In 2008, the 2% discount was applied to 80% of the eligible purchases.

For more information contact Gary A. Smith at [gary.smith@nycha.nyc.gov](mailto:gary.smith@nycha.nyc.gov) or at 718.707.5242.

## Agency Overviews Added to CityShare to Improve Interagency Referrals

The Mayor's Office of Operations, DoITT, and the Internal/Agency Support Subcommittee of the Customer Service Steering Committee launched this month an "Agency Overviews" page to City Share, the City's intranet. Agency Overviews, located under the "Working" navigation tab, allows City users to quickly access useful information about their fellow City agencies. The goal of the addition is to facilitate interagency contact and coordination

as well as to increase awareness of other City agencies. Each overview contains organizational charts (with names and titles), points of contact, key services the agency provides, an internal mission statement and role as part of City government, and FAQ's.

Agency Overviews will alleviate the need to rely on personal networks to make inter-agency referrals; instead, City users will have access to standardized and relevant

information and contacts. The Mayor's Office of Operations strongly encourages the user community to suggest improvements or to tailor content for their internal customers.

Agency Overviews update on a monthly basis. If your agency would like to participate and was not included in the initial launch, please contact [customerservice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:customerservice@cityhall.nyc.gov) for more information.



## New Citywide Welcome Signage Unveiled

The City is piloting a new standardized Citywide Welcome Sign for its walk-in facilities. Designed by the Mayor's Office of Operations in conjunction with the Department of Finance and NYC & Co, the sign represents a standard template for agencies to build facility-specific signage for their walk-in service centers.

The main features of the template include a greeting in multiple languages, a list of services provided, hours of operation, the name of the facility, and a request for feedback. Four pilot

agencies are customizing the Citywide Welcome Sign for use in their facilities: ACS, DOB, DOF, and TLC.

The recommendation for improving walk-in facility signage came from the findings of the Customers Observing and Researching Experience (CORE) Program in the summer of 2008. Mayor's Office of Operations staff conducted a "mystery shop" of a majority of City walk-in facilities and evaluated the sites based upon set criteria. One of the trends identified was the need for improved

signage. In order to provide agencies with a simplified solution, the Mayor's Office of Operations, in conjunction with the Customer Service Steering Committee, initiated the Citywide Welcome Sign project in the fall of 2008. Pilot agencies are expected to evaluate their signage and provide insight into the effectiveness of the program by May 2009.

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



Standardized signage template

## Federal Customer Service Website A Rich Resource of Information

With the goal of making government more open, transparent and citizen-centric, the Federal Government's Office of Citizen Services (OCS) within the General Services Administration was created in June 2002 to expand the direct delivery of services to citizens, and to provide government-wide leadership to improve all of government's customer service. Since its inception, the Office of Citizen Services, [www.citizenservices.gov](http://www.citizenservices.gov), has provided the public with easy access to accurate, consistent, and timely government information.

The site includes links to rich resources related to customer service. For example, you can access the PDF document

"Roadmap to Focused Web Site", where you get guidance on creating a user-friendly, customer-centric web site. Or, you can follow the links to information on best practices for contact centers. Although some of the information is applicable to only federal agencies, there are a lot of principles and guidelines that are useful and transferable to local governments.

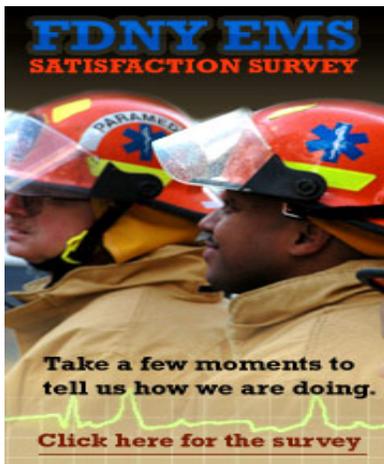
The Office of Citizen Services also supports a state-of-the-art search engine, [usasearch.gov](http://usasearch.gov), presenting results in English and Spanish (USA Search/BuscadorUSA), rapid response to telephone and e-mail inquiries, web chat, an online knowledgebase of FAQs ([answers.usa.gov](http://answers.usa.gov)),

a blog, listservs, RSS feeds, government podcasts and e-mail alerts, GovDelivery, training for government web managers, and the Spanish-language portal, GobiernoUSA.gov. Having all these programs within a single organization ensures that information provided to citizens is timely, accurate and consistent across all channels.

OCS also supports several communities of interest to support government employees and their agencies. The [Federal Web Managers Council](#), an interagency group of almost 30 senior web managers from the federal government; the [Web Content Managers Forum](#), an ad hoc group of over

1,400 federal, state, and local government web managers who are responsible for the content of our agencies' websites; and the [Government Contact Center Council](#), an interagency group of over 50 managers and directors of federal government contact centers.

Please visit [www.citizenservices.gov](http://www.citizenservices.gov) for more information.



#### FDNY/EMS Survey Questions

- Borough of Service?
- How did you learn about this questionnaire?
- Who called 911?
- Which ambulance (City or private) arrived at your location?
- Was the ambulance crew polite and respectful?
- Were you (or the patient) transported to the hospital of your choice?
- Did the ambulance crew understand and treat the illness/injury to your satisfaction?
- How satisfied were you with our ability to communicate with you in the appropriate language?
- Was a translation service utilized to facilitate communication?
- How many times have you (the patient) used the ambulance service (in the last 12 months)?
- Gender of patient
- Age group of patient

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## FDNY Launches EMS Customer Satisfaction Survey

The Fire Department runs the largest emergency medicine pre-hospital care system in the nation. Last year, the FDNY dispatched 1.4 million ambulances to 1.2 million incidents throughout the 5 boroughs, or an average of more than 3,800 ambulances per day to persons in varying degrees of medical need. The FDNY Emergency Medical Service (EMS) system not only includes 582 City ambulances, but also an additional 354 ambulances dispatched from participating private hospitals and other health-care agencies each day. Delivering the highest quality pre-hospital care possible to more than 8 million residents and 45 million visitors in New York City stands as one of the Department's core missions.

In support of Mayor

Bloomberg's initiative to improve customer service, in January 2009 the FDNY initiated a new online EMS Patient Satisfaction Survey. Accessible through the FDNY internet website, [www.nyc.gov/FDNY](http://www.nyc.gov/FDNY), the survey provides patients and their families the opportunity to provide feedback to the FDNY on services provided by both FDNY\*EMS and private ambulances dispatched 911. The survey is anonymous and the results will be used to target improvements in patient care.

The Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire captures customer feedback in four different areas: 1) Demographic information; 2) Quality of medical care; 3) Ability of FDNY to communicate in diverse languages/communities; and 4) Frequency of

service need. The eleven survey questions were designed by members of the FDNY\*EMS Office of Medical Affairs (OMA), and a quality control group of physicians, Paramedics and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). The survey tool will add another component to OMA's patient-care review to ensure that the best quality emergency medical care is delivered throughout the system each day.

The FDNY has received several hundred responses. The program will be formally launched in April 2009. The FDNY expects that increased familiarity with the on-line feedback mechanism will result in several thousand public responses yearly.

For more information contact:  
EMS Communications Chief  
Abdo Nahmod 718-999-1778

## Health Department's Food Safety Course Now Available Online in Chinese and Spanish

On March 5, in addition to providing the online course in English the Health Department made its online food safety course available free of charge in Spanish and Chinese, making it easier for restaurant supervisors to take the necessary food protection course. Under the New York City Health Code, every food service establishment must have a certificate holder present during business hours to ensure food safety. The online course consists of 15 lessons covering food

safety topics such as health hazards, food borne illness, and pest control. It also includes an overview of the restaurant inspection process. Anyone can register for the course and complete it online free of charge. After completing the online course, participants must take and pass a final exam at the Health Academy in order to receive a food protection certificate. Click [here](#) for the press release and click [here](#) for more information on the course.

For more information contact  
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