

FLORIDA'S CHILD WELFARE  
*Customer Service Model*

**TRAINING  
WORKSHOP**



# Objectives

**This workshop will provide you with knowledge and skills to:**

- Define customer service in child welfare
- Differentiate between internal and external customers in child welfare
- Increase knowledge of customer service standards and guiding principles
- Identify the steps of quality customer service
- Understand the importance of proper face to face, phone and electronic communication with customers
- Understand the importance of providing optimal service delivery and how that leads to the recruitment and retention of resource families
- Understand the relationship between excellent customer service at all levels and the delivery of quality care for our children





# Customer Service in Child Welfare

*Customer Service begins at the first point of contact and extends throughout all of our relationships. We are respectful, courteous, communicative and professional with each other, with our children, families, community partners and the public.*

# Champions of Change



**Every day we should provide a valuable public service that:**

- Benefits children and families we serve
- Demonstrates high standards of personal integrity and professionalism
- Gains the trust and respect of our customers and co-workers
- Positively contributes to the success of the community

**You are in a noble profession.  
Be proud of what you do and where you work!**

# Defining Our Customers



## Who are the customers in child welfare?

- External Customers (anyone we do business with)
- Internal customers (anyone within the agency/organization)



# Group Activity

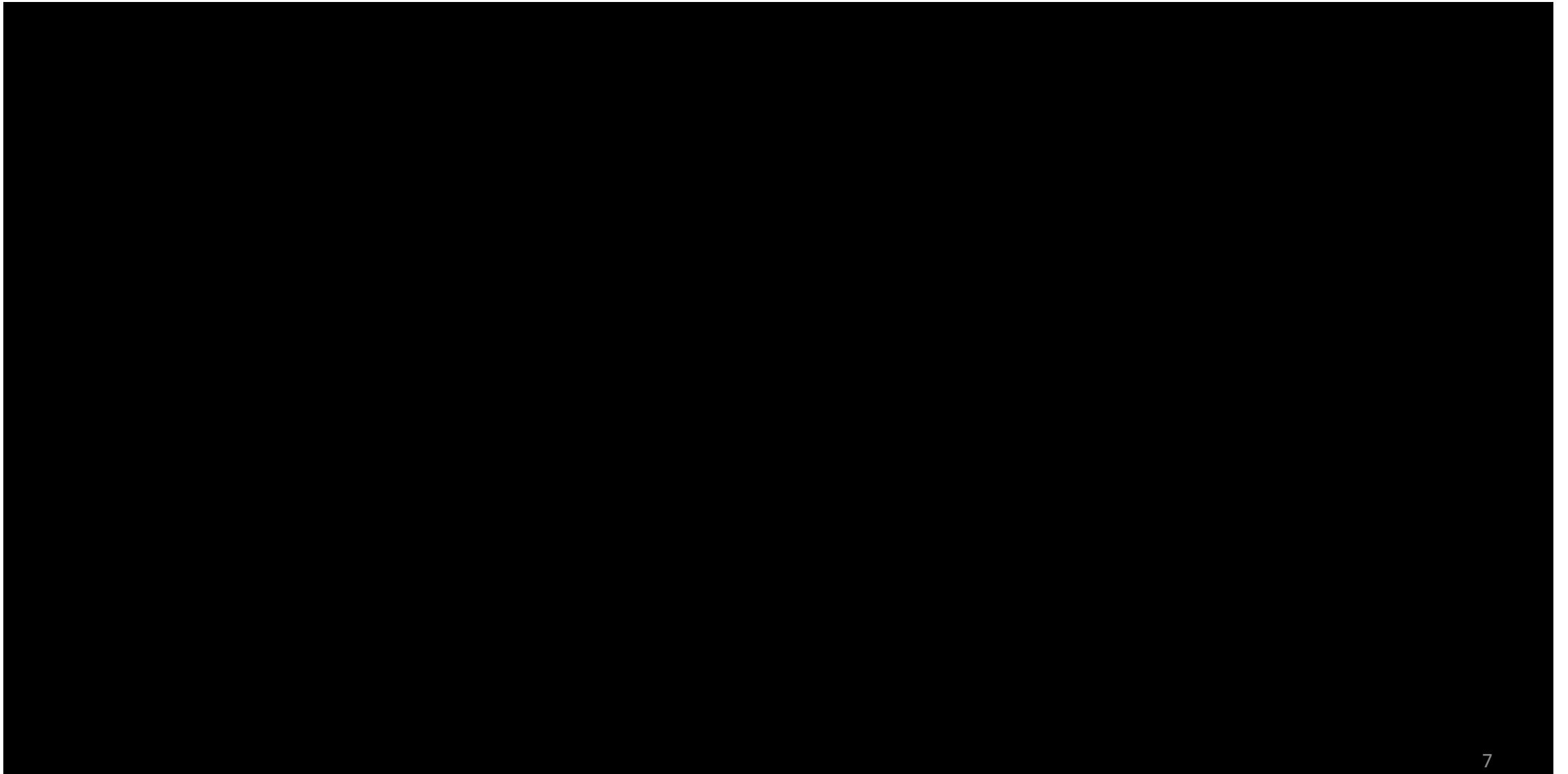


## THE ROLE OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

- Define customer service
- Identify and list internal and external customers
- Pick one representative from group to present



# Foster Parents & Good Customer Service - [YouTube Link](#)



# What is Customer Service?



***Customer service is the customer's perception of the way they are treated, the responsiveness to the needs identified, and the extent to which they are engaged and valued in teamwork to meet the needs of children and families.***



# What is Customer Service?

- Describe a time you have received good customer service and how did it make you feel?
- Describe a time you have received poor customer service and how did it make you feel?
- Describe a time you experienced good customer service in child welfare.
- Describe a time you experienced poor customer service in child welfare.



## 3 Core Competencies of Quality Customer Service

### ● P – Processes

- Timely response and relevant services
- Consistency, efficiency, and accuracy

### ● R – Relationships

- Building mutual trust and respect
- Family engagement
- Creating partnerships

### ● O – Organization

- Customer service is a top-down, bottom-up strategic priority
- A culture that responds to staff & families' needs



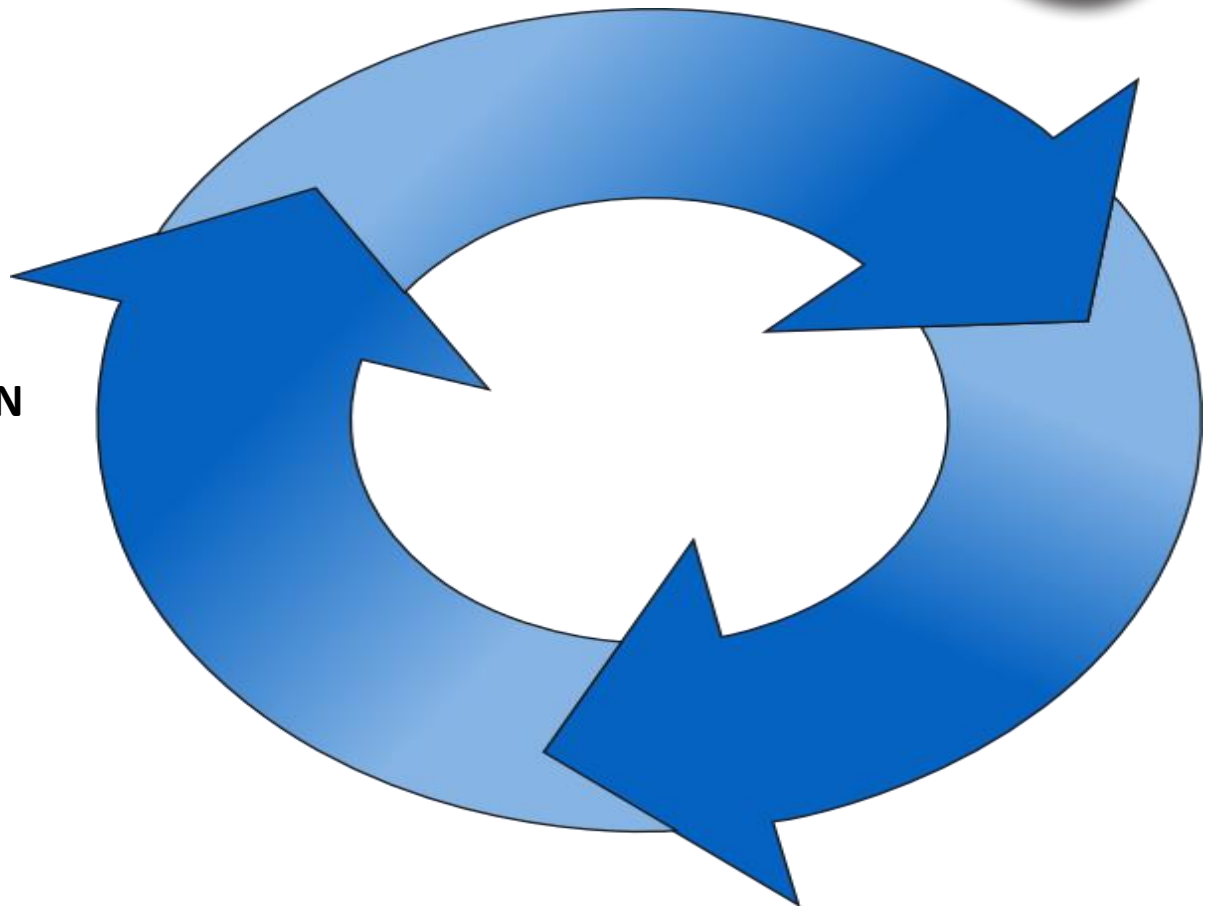
# 3 Core Competencies



PROCESSES

ORGANIZATION

RELATIONSHIPS



# Customer Service Standards and Guiding Principles



## **Customer Service Standards:**

- Provides a road map of priority in decision making
- Offers a means to measure the quality of service

## **Guiding Principles:**

- Outlines the customer service philosophy and defines expected customer service behavior

# Customer Service Standards & Guiding Principles

## 1. Safety

- *I value the role I play in ensuring safety for the the children and families I serve.*
- *I respond when appropriate to ensure safety.*



# Customer Service Standards & Guiding Principles

## 2. Courtesy

- *I am polite and respectful in my speech, behavior and appearance at all times.*
- *I value diversity of opinion and cultural experience.*





## Customer Service Standards & Guiding Principles

### 3. Communication

- *I provide accurate and timely information to children and caregivers at their level of understanding recognizing that the perception of time by a child or caregiver is not the same as my own.*
- *I facilitate open and frequent dialogue between the child's family of origin and the out-of-home caregiver.*
- *I listen to children, caregivers and partners regarding the relevance and quality of the services I provide.*



# Customer Service Standards & Guiding Principles



## 4. Engagement

- *I build and maintain the trust of those I serve.*
- *I partner with and empower caregivers in developing the skills and resources to provide safe and loving homes for children.*
- *I work collaboratively with my peers to deliver quality service whenever possible.*

# Customer Service Standards & Guiding Principles

## 5. Efficiency

- *I strive to streamline processes and reduce redundancy whenever possible.*
- *I own and resolve the concerns and needs of children and caregivers with a sense of urgency.*
- *I work alongside my peers and partners to serve and respond to them with a sense of urgency.*



# Johnny the Bagger - [YouTube Link](#)



# Steps of Service

## 1. Greet in a warm, sincere manner

- *“Good morning/afternoon/evening...”*
- *“How may I help you?”*
- Use proper names, *“Mr., Mrs., Ms.”* until directed otherwise

**PRO Tip: Don't sound scripted. Let your personality SHINE!**





# Steps of Service

## 2. Fulfill and Anticipate Needs

- Listen fully to customer needs and summarize back
  - “I want to make sure I understood correctly...”*
  - “I understand that you...”*
- Respond to requests with a sense of urgency
- Always find the answers when not known
- Do not expect the customer to find the answer themselves
  - “That’s a great question. I’ll be happy to find out for you...”*





# Steps of Service

## 2. Fulfill and Anticipate Needs (Cont.)

- Identify areas at high risk of service breakdown and plan accordingly
- Everyone's job is to respond to service failures before they become service problems

**PRO Tip: Fulfillment of needs is the minimum requirement. Great service is the result of **ANTICIPATING** needs!**

## Steps of Service

### 3. Give a fond farewell when relationships end

- *The way a relationship ends is just as important as how it began*
- *Celebrate successful outcomes*
- *Express gratitude for the relationship*

**PRO Tip: Sometimes agencies need to end relationships with their customers. Do this in a way that maintains positive feelings.**



# Customer Service Tips

- Attitude matters!
  - What you feel about your customers = how you treat them
  - Number one thing that matters to customers is how they are treated
- Focus on what you can do to solve a customer's concern
- Exhibit a "*glad I could help*" attitude
- Always use "Please" and "Thank You"
- Smile!

**PRO Tip:**

**First Impressions:  
You only get one!**





# Polite and Customer Focused Responses

## WRONG APPROACH

- “I don’t know.”
- “No.”
- “That’s not my job.”
- “That’s too bad.”
- “That’s not my fault.”
- “You want it by when?”
- “Calm down!”
- “I’m busy right now.”
- “Call me back.”

## POLITE ALTERNATIVE

- “I’ll find out.”
- “What I can do is...”
- “Let me find the right person to help you.”
- “I understand your frustrations.”
- “Let’s see what we can do about this.”
- “I’ll try my best.”
- “I’m sorry.”
- “I will be with you in a moment.”
- “I will call you back.”

# Discussion: Using Solution-Based Language

Using constructive words that are solution-based rather than blame-based is another valuable customer service tool.

## Instead of saying....

- I need (want) you to..
- I'll try...
- Sorry...
- You are required to...
- You must...
- You have to...
- We don't do that here...
- I can't do that...
- You need to...
- Don't you want to be a better parent?



# Communicating with Unsatisfied Customers: Do's

- Express your apologies
- Acknowledge their feelings
- Do not argue or interrupt
- Maintain self-control
- Focus on the facts
- Admit the problem
- Involve the customer in problem solving
- Use active listening skills
- Follow up with the customer to ensure the problem was remedied



**PRO Tip: People in distress do not always remember what is said to them. Repeat as needed to ensure their understanding.**



## Communicating with Unsatisfied Customers: Don'ts

- *"The computer system was down half the day."*
- *"That's out of my control."*
- *"I never got the message."*
- *"That's just the way it is."*
- *"Management is making me do that."*
- *"You got yourself in this position not me."*
- *"That's just the way things go."*

**PRO Tip: Never start a conversation with "no" or "I/you can't do." Nothing else will be heard. Focus conversation on what you can do!**





## **Activity:** Interpersonal Skills Self-Assessment

This is an individual assignment

Review the questions on the Interpersonal Self-Assessment and select the answer that best describes how you would respond in the scenario.

## Be Mindful

Small, interpersonal interactions mean a great deal in the area of customer service! They can change customer perceptions and ultimately affect the success of your customer service efforts.

- Personal Space
- Posture
- Personal Hygiene
- Facial Expressions
- Tone of Voice/Choice of Words
- Deliver a strong firm handshake
- Avoid using phone/computer while in meetings, trainings





# Phone Etiquette

It's not *what* you say; it's **HOW** you say it.

- Flat tone = *"I don't like my job and would rather be somewhere else."*
- Slow pitch and presentation = *"I am sad and lonely- don't bother me."*
- High pitch, rapid voice = *"I'm enthusiastic and excited!"*
- Loud voice = *"I'm angry and aggressive."*
- Cutting people off = *"I don't value what you have to say."*
- Trying to listen to a co-worker and the caller at the same time = *"I have more important things to focus on than you."*

# Phone Etiquette



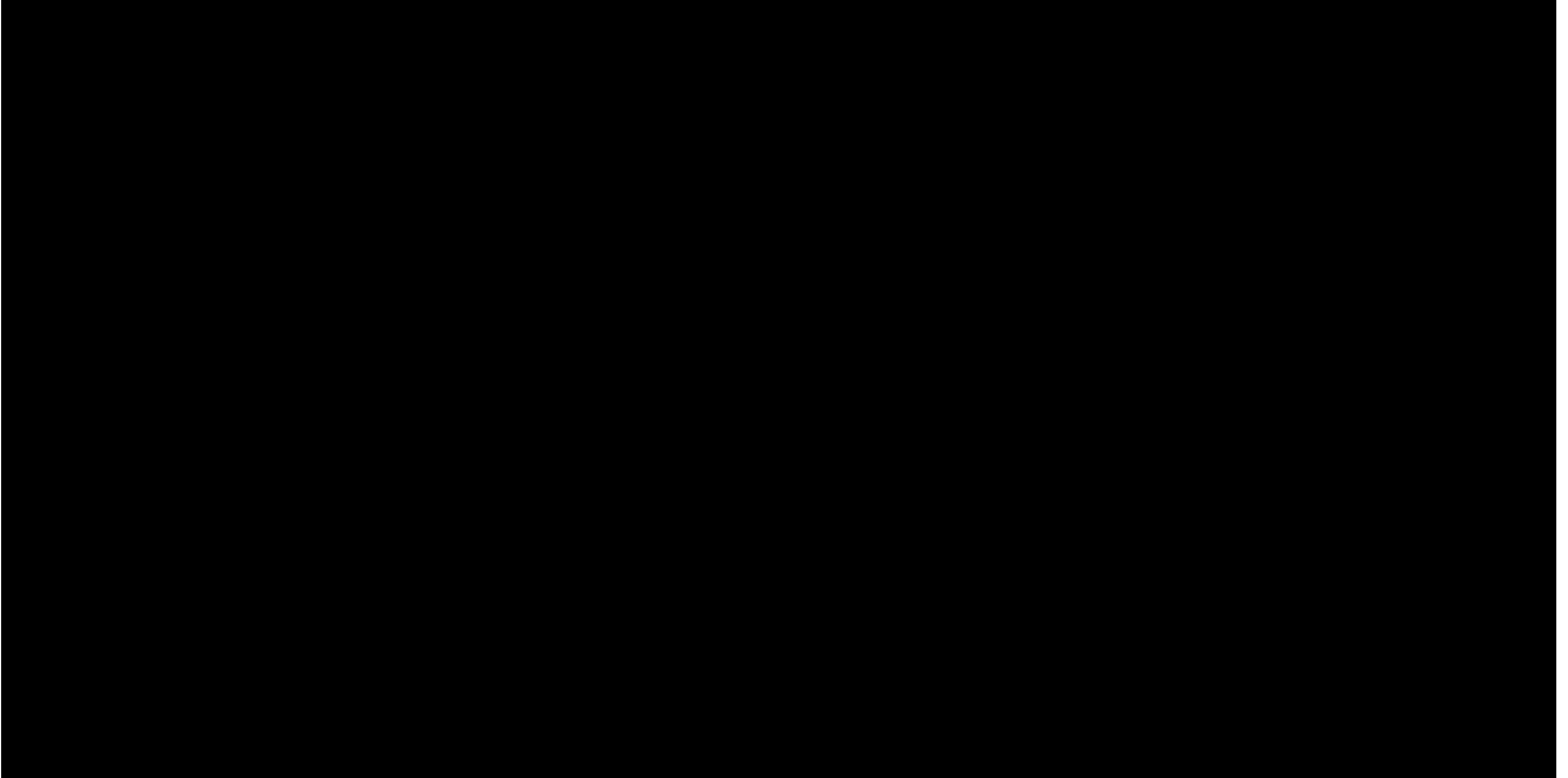
## Answering the phone:

“Good morning. Thank you for calling Heartland for Children, this is Faye speaking. How may I help you?”

## Troubleshooting:

- Putting a customer on hold
- Transferring a call
- Taking a message
- Ending the call
- Dealing with a frustrated caller

# Case Manager / Parent Relations - [YouTube Link](#)







## Electronic Communication Etiquette

- Respond to business emails quickly and with a sense of urgency
- Be cautious when addressing sensitive issues via email
- ALL CAPS = YELLING!
- Be mindful of the tone of the message (No sarcasm)
- Wait before composing email if you are upset/emotional
- Include a signature line with your contact information in email

## Electronic Communication Etiquette

- Create an out-of-office message when necessary
- Protect confidential information when emailed
- Spell and grammar check prior to sending email
- Busy background effects/colors in email = Distracting
- Limit use of "Reply All"
- Avoid using emoji's in correspondence 😊



## Home Visit Etiquette

- Review relevant information (abuse report, previous visit notes, provider summaries, case plan, etc.) prior to visit
- Use sidewalks and pathways when on their property
- Knock on door with authority but not threatening
- Always wear your name badge
- Introduce yourself by first and last name, identify agency and give business card



## Home Visit Etiquette

- Share reason for visit and give time for questions
- Sign in if requested
- Ask permission & follow instructions on where to sit
- Follow obvious rules of the home (i.e. *No sitting in the formal living room, removal of shoes before entering home, etc.*)
- At end of visit, review next steps and follow up as needed
- Set appointment for next visit and thank the caregiver





**To Be Early is to  
Be On Time,  
To Be On Time is  
To Be Late,  
To Be Late is to  
Never Have Shown Up at All**



## Supporting Our Caregivers

**Understand the connection between the overall success of the agency and the ability to attract, train, support and maintain qualified resource families.**

- Apply family-centered principles of partnership when interacting with caregivers:
  - ✓ Everyone deserves respect
  - ✓ Everyone needs to be heard
  - ✓ Everyone has strengths
  - ✓ Judgments can wait
  - ✓ Partners share power
  - ✓ Partnership is a process





## Supporting Caregivers During Investigations

- Maintain open communication with the investigator
- Gather facts before making judgments
- Keep caregivers informed about the process
- Partner with the family's Relicensing Specialist and visit with the family together whenever possible



## Supporting Staff and Co-Workers

**It is important to understand the way supervisors and employees support and partner with each other is a critical aspect of customer service.**

- Great internal customer service = Great external customer service
- Staff are an agency's most valuable asset.
- Managers must embrace and model a customer service culture.
- Research by Gallup reflects that **employees leave managers not companies.**
- High staff turnover significantly impacts an agency's ability to consistently deliver high performance.

## Caregivers as Recruiters

- Satisfied caregivers are the single best tool for recruitment.
- The satisfaction of caregivers is in direct correlation with the relationship and experiences they have had with child welfare professionals.
- Working in collaboration with caregivers to increase recruitment should improve retention as well.

**PRO Tip:** *Foster and Adoptive parents who receive good customer service will tell others about this experience.*



# Parallel Process of Customer Service



Quality customer service drives positive outcomes for children and families in Florida.

Quality customer service strengthens partnerships and collaborations that impact service delivery.



# Customer Service Pledge

**Today and every day, I commit myself to providing quality customer service by:**

Understanding customers come first

Delivering a smiling, helpful, positive, professional outlook and attitude

Treating everyone with respect, fairness, and dignity

Listening to our customers with a caring demeanor

Returning phone calls within one business day

Providing knowledgeable answers, and resolving issues promptly and accurately

Keeping customers informed about their concerns

Continually exceeding customer expectations

Understanding customer satisfaction is a  
direct reflection of our effectiveness as an organization.

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*Florida's Child Welfare*  
CUSTOMER SERVICE MODEL



Thank you!

