



May 21, 2014

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** NIH Supply Center Employees

**SUBJECT:** SMB Policy 14-07 – Customer Communication Guidelines

**1. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish Customer Service Communications expectations for the National Institutes of Health, Supply Center (NIH SC).

**2. POLICY**

The goal of this policy is to provide the best possible service to all of our customers both internal and external.

**3. IMPLEMENTATION**

- a. The Chief of the Supply Management Branch (SMB) shall be responsible for ensuring that this customer service communications policy is implemented.
- b. Work plans for all employees will include an expectation of good customer service.
- c. All departmental communications shall be conducted in a professional and courteous manner, responsive to the needs of the internal and/or external customer.
- d. It is expected that all NIH SC employees shall adopt the communication behaviors outlined in the attached guidelines.
- e. The attached guidelines are not meant to be all inclusive and additional behaviors, which support the goal of providing good customer service, should be encouraged and supported by the SMB.

The POC for this memorandum is the undersigned at [gary.marquez@nih.gov](mailto:gary.marquez@nih.gov).

  
Gary A. Marquez  
Chief, Supply Management Branch

Enclosure

## CUSTOMER SERVICE POLICY FOR THE TELEPHONE

All telephone calls shall be answered promptly and in a professional and courteous manner in accordance with the NIH Supply Center guidelines for responding to telephone calls.

### 1. Guidelines for the Telephone

When answering the telephone use a friendly, professional manner. Our greeting is the first thing heard by callers; you are setting an example and making the first impression for the Supply Center. Speak distinctly, with a warm welcoming tone. Let your caller know which office he or she is talking with, by identifying the division/agency and telling him or her name. Imagine that you are the caller, and answer in the way that you would want to be treated.

**Here are sample greetings to use when answering office lines:**

- *"Good Morning. NIH Supply Center, Jane Doe speaking. May I help you?"*
- *"Hello. Supply Management Branch. May I help you?"*
- *"Good Morning. Self Service Store, Jane Doe. May I help you?"*
- *"Good Morning, NIH Supply Center, Self Service Store."*

Sometimes callers are in a hurry. They may interrupt you and seem rude. You should remain cool, friendly and cooperative.

Become a better listener. Stop talking and focus your attention on the caller. Avoid distractions. Concentrate on what the other person is saying. Show interest and concern to the reason for the call.

### 2. Putting callers on hold

The telephone should never be answered with an immediate request for the caller to hold. Always ask the caller first if he or she minds holding and wait for his or her reply. When you initially put a caller on hold, never leave him or her on hold for more than thirty seconds.

**Here is a sample greeting to use in this type of situation:**

*"NIH Supply Center" Do you mind holding?"*

When getting back with the caller, who is on hold, always thank the caller for his or her patience. If you need to research information for the caller's inquiry, give him or her the option to either hold or you will get back with the caller when you have obtained the information. If the caller chooses to remain on hold, two minutes on hold is the maximum amount of time without returning to the caller for updates. If the caller prefers that you call him or her back, indicate the timeframe in which the caller may expect your call. Always thank the caller for waiting and use the person's name.

**Here are samples:**

- *"Thank you for waiting." or "I really appreciate your patience, Ms. Smith."*
- *"I will need to check out that information for you. Do you mind holding or would you prefer I call you back?"*

### **3. Transferring calls**

Do not transfer calls. Focus on solving all the customer's issues. If you cannot resolve the customer issue briefly explain why you are unable to resolve the issue and get their name and number and call the customer back within 15 NLT 30 minutes.

**Here is a sample response:**

- *I apologize but I need more time to research this; can you please give me your telephone number and I will get back with you shortly?*