

**Our DHS Customer Service Commitment**  
**to**  
**Ensure a Welcoming and Culturally Competent Environment**

**WELCOMING WORKSITE CHECKLIST**

The DHS Welcoming Environment Checklist is intended to provide guidance to DHS staff in creating client/customer service environments that are respectful, inclusive and culturally competent.

**Definition of Cultural Competence**

Cultural Competence refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, disabilities, religions, genders, sexual orientation and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms and values the worth of individuals, families and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each.

Operationally defined, cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, policies, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services, thereby producing better outcomes.

## **I. Facilities/Physical Worksites**

- DHS offices will be easily identifiable, clean, accessible, and in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Decorated DHS lobbies will ensure that decor reflects/celebrates the people we serve.
- DHS will maintain offices that are free of clutter, clean and organized.
- DHS offices will have clearly marked exits.
- Whenever possible, we will have equipment available to accommodate the needs of all our customers (e.g. computers with screen readers, ergonomic keyboards, etc).
- Offices will have a TTY or TDD (and staff will be trained to operate them) to ensure persons with hearing impairments have equal access to programs and services.
- Signs will be clear and use at least a 70% color contrast to ensure visibility.
- DHS offices recognize sensitivity to fragrances by some persons and will respond to customer feedback.

### ***Resources/Tools***

#### **Tips:**

- Ensure that the reception/work areas are free of clutter and paths of travel are free from barriers. Every three months conduct a review of work areas/lobby using “Existing Facilities Checklist” and make adjustments.
- Do not discuss confidential matters with customers in the lobby.
- Ensure that staff and management welcome and respond to customer feedback concerning physical space, decorations, office layout (e.g., furniture placement) fragrance sensitivities, etc.; and take action to remedy them whenever possible.

**Documents:**

\*ADA Existing Facilities checklist (abbreviated version).

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HIPAA Checklist

**Websites:**

[http://www.dhs.state.or.us/admin/info\\_security/privacy.html](http://www.dhs.state.or.us/admin/info_security/privacy.html)

**Other:**

**Contacts:**

Privacy Officer, Jane Alm, 503-947-5255

**Trainings:**

## II. Practices/Tone

- When calling our offices during regular work hours (Monday through Friday, 8am-5pm), customers will have the option to speak with a DHS employee or be provided with a phone number. If customers choose to leave a message (with clear and up-to-date contact information), we will strive to return the call within one standard workday.
- Our employees will be friendly, professional, knowledgeable, and courteous both in person and on the phone. They will identify themselves by name and will wear a picture identification badge, where available.
- If customers have an appointment, they can expect to be seen in a timely manner, as established by each office.
- When applying for services, customers can expect their application to be processed accurately, in a timely manner, and in compliance with state and federal regulations.
  - \* We will be ready to explain policies and the basis for any decisions made.
  - \* We will keep our customers informed about processes and timeframes.
  - \* We will offer relevant local resources to ensure our customers know their options.
  - \* We will be ready to explain client rights and provide clients methods for conveying feedback or filing a complaint.
- We will ensure all customers are able to communicate with us (via language interpreters, sign language interpreters, etc.).
- Information about our programs, services, and other functions will be available in a variety of formats, including large print, Braille, audio tape and computer diskette.
- We will take personal ownership for our interactions with each customer (not only those with whom we are currently working).
- We are committed to welcoming staff and customers with diverse experiences, cultures, and abilities.

## ***Resources/Tools***

### **Tips:**

- SMILE – this is seen as welcoming in most cultures.
- Be careful about assumptions or stereotypes that you may have.
- Treat customers as individuals. Let them lead you in how to behave culturally; i.e., mirror their eye contact, personal space and timing in communication.
- The goals of customer service are the same: treat all people as individuals, find out their needs, and meet or exceed their expectations. To meet the needs of our diverse customers, we must be flexible and sensitive. We may need to spend extra time and develop extra patience. We need to adapt our traditional skills to meet the variety of cultures of the clients/customers we serve.
- Help preserve your customer's dignity and respect; we will remember that DHS is serving our customers/families.

### ***Regarding Privacy:***

- Put a bell on the door, or some other form of notification, to let you know that someone has entered the area.
- When possible, let people know, in a friendly manner, that you have noticed them entering, and give them an idea of the wait time.
- Develop ways to distance those who are waiting to be serviced from the person you are currently serving:
  - \* Put a strip of tape on the floor, and ask those who are waiting to stay behind the line for privacy purposes.
  - \* Put up a partially walled-off area for customers to enter when being served.
  - \* Ask customers if they would prefer to write down their personal information and show it to you, and then shred the information while they are standing there.
  - \* Think of other creative ways of ensuring customer privacy; brainstorm ideas in staff meetings.

- DHS will ensure that all staff members are trained on how to access sign interpretation and language services.
  - Within public areas, acknowledge and address the customer's or family's needs; i.e., ask if they need any assistance and provide information/directions as needed.
  - DHS staff will be aware of verbal and non-verbal communication – take the lead from the individual. They will show you how they best give and receive communication.
  - Employ active listening techniques.
  - Restate or paraphrase what you think you are hearing.
  - If the communication is not going smoothly, do a self-assessment and be open to using a different approach. If you are unable to articulate your customer's needs, ask how they prefer to communicate with you to assist in your ability to serve them effectively. If they do not respond or do not know, offer such things as a language or sign language interpreter, an alternate format, and a pencil for writing information.
  - Do not take your customer's attitude or behavior personally.
  - Be creative – every person is unique, so the ways in which we each best communicate are often very different.
  - Speak directly to the client – not to the interpreter.
  - Be patient, do not look at your watch (provide the customer your full attention).
    - \* Worker Guides – Know your policies and practices.
    - \* Local resources (Offer and be knowledgeable of your local resources.)
- Use a customer service survey to assess how you are doing.*

### **Documents:**

The National Center on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) titled “Achieving Quality Services: A Checklist for Evaluating Your Agency”.

DHS Feedback Form (under development)

Phone etiquette sheet – Developed by Bill Lynch

Providing Quality Service to Persons with Disabilities

Communicating with and about Persons with Disabilities

The Multi-Cultural Customer, Leader's Guide/Salenger Films, Inc.

DHS Client Grievance Form

**Websites:**

**<http://www.awesomelibrary.org/multiculturaltoolkit.html>**

**Multicultural Toolkit**

(Toolkit for Cross-Cultural Collaboration)

The Toolkit discusses barriers to cross-cultural collaboration and provides methods for assessing and improving communication patterns and cultural competence on an organizational basis and on an individual basis. By improving cultural competence, trust and mutual respect can be improved between agencies and minority communities, forming a solid foundation for cross-cultural collaboration.

**<http://www.dhs.state.or.us/publichealth/omh/lep/tools.cfm>**

The DHS Office of Multicultural Health maintains this website intended to assist agencies that receive federal financial assistance in their planning efforts to ensure that their program services address meaningful access for all of the people they serve, including those who are limited English proficient.

**<http://www.lep.gov>**

The U.S. Dept. of Justice maintains this website. It offers background information regarding Title VI regulations regarding language access and further acts as a clearinghouse, providing and linking to information, tools and technical assistance regarding Limited English Proficiency and language services.

**<http://www.georgetown.edu/research/gucdc/nccc/links.html>**

The National Center for Cultural Competence offers an array of resources and links to other organizations which all offer information on how to provide culturally competent services and create a culturally competent workforce/community.

**<http://www.onestops.info>**

The National Center on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) provides an article titled "Achieving Quality Services: A Checklist for Evaluating Your Agency".

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/ek98/provide.htm>

The Department of Labor website provides information on communicating with persons with disabilities. The key to providing quality services to customers with disabilities is to remember that all customers are individuals. Persons with disabilities come in all shapes and sizes with diverse personalities, abilities, interests, needs, and preferences – just like every other customer. Here you will find some basic tips for interacting with customers who have disabilities. However, in most cases, the best way to learn how to accommodate customers with disabilities is to ask them directly.

<http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/fact/comucate.htm>

This Department of Labor website offers more tips on communicating with and about persons with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act, other laws and the efforts of many disability organizations have made strides in improving accessibility in buildings, increasing access to education, opening employment opportunities and developing realistic portrayals of persons with disabilities in television programming and motion pictures. Where progress is still needed is in communication and interaction with people with disabilities. Individuals are sometimes concerned that they will say the wrong thing, so they say nothing at all – thus further segregating people with disabilities. Listed at this site are some suggestions on how to relate to and communicate with and about people with disabilities.

**Other:**

**Contacts:**

**Trainings:**

### **III. Staff Capacities for Culturally Competent Services**

- We will look for every opportunity to attend diversity/cultural competency trainings.
- We are committed to seeking out experiences that expose us to diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, abilities etc. (e.g. cultural events, one-on-one conversations, guest speakers at staff meetings, etc.).

### **Resources/Tools**

#### **Tips:**

- Look for opportunities to bring professionals of diverse ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, etc., to speak at your staff meetings.
- Take the lead in planning events that celebrate diversity (theme-dress days, potlucks, etc.).
- If your office is decorated, change the décor in your office or cubicle regularly and alternate posters, pictures and other items, which celebrate a variety of cultures/ethnicities/persons with disabilities and other forms of diversity.
- If your office has a diversity committee, seek the support of committee members to develop opportunities that enrich cultural competency.
- If your office does not have a diversity committee, form one!

#### **Documents:**

## **Websites :**

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[www.dhs.state.or.us/publichealth/omh/lep/tools.cfm](http://www.dhs.state.or.us/publichealth/omh/lep/tools.cfm)

This site provides hands-on tools, all of which can be downloaded for use. Some examples include treatment consent forms in four languages, a self-assessment tool to help determine where improvements can be made and “I Speak” cards that can be used to identify a non-English speaking person’s native language so that appropriate translation services can be obtained.

<http://www.onestops.info>

Here you will find the National Center on Workforce and Disability (NCWD) titled “Achieving Quality Services: A Checklist for Evaluating Your Agency”.

<http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org/visit/stay/standards.htm>

This Cincinnati Children's Hospital website outlines their Customer Satisfaction Service Standards.

We recommend that DHS offices look at these standards and adapt them to reflect the customer service values and commitments of the office team.

## **Other:**

### **Video: “If Looks Could Kill.”**

This is a video that illustrates how to provide and not provide excellent customer service, with a focus on our ability to “choose our behaviors as professionals.”

**Video: “The Multicultural Customer”**

This is a video that is “basic in nature, emphasizing the importance of treating individuals as individuals and following their 'lead' in cultural preferences”. It also provides some important observational clues for cultural preferences.

**Video: “The Ten Commandments of Communicating with People with Disabilities”**

This video offers tips on the best ways to communicate with persons with disabilities. The video utilizes professionals with disabilities and takes a playful but poignant look at the common assumptions and fears we hold around persons with disabilities. It provides very practical ways of alleviating our concerns by using “person first” language, engaging with each person as a person and not as a disability.

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**Trainings:**

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