

WOOD COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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**103.01 PURPOSE AND GENERAL POLICY:**

It is best practice to have a formal, documented approach to customer service so that Sheriff's Department staff responsible for managing and delivering service has clear customer service guidelines to work within. In addition, people using or assessing our services should have a point of reference for the standards of service that they can expect to be provided by us.

This policy aims to:

1. Provide a clear framework and set of standards, covering the key areas of contact and response with customers.
2. Provide customers with a high quality of service and to manage their expectations positively.
3. Ensure that dissatisfaction or complaints from customers about service levels are:
  - a. Dealt with promptly and effectively.
  - b. Used to continuously improve customer satisfaction.

The scope of this policy covers everyone directly or indirectly involved in delivering services to people and organizations. It also supports how we should interact with internal customers, other agencies and third parties.

Customers are defined as individuals or organizations to whom we provide a service, and includes internal customers (colleagues, other departments) and external customers (members of the public, including victims, people reporting incidents, witnesses and those suspected or found guilty of crimes and other companies organizations and agencies).

Dissatisfied customers may complain or they may lose trust in our ability to protect and serve them and this may then lead to a loss of confidence in the Wood County Sheriff's Department which could influence community support for the Department.

This policy supports consistent standards of service delivery across the organization and reinforces the importance of customer satisfaction and confidence levels in the services we provide. It also promotes a customer service culture and helps drive changes that support improved user satisfaction results.

### **103.02 PROCEDURES:**

Wherever we work within our organization we are responsible for providing customer service either directly to people using our services, or indirectly by supporting colleagues who are providing frontline customer services.

We know what it feels like to receive good or excellent customer service and how frustrating and upsetting it can be when service received is unsatisfactory or leaves us feeling completely dissatisfied with the experience.

The procedural points below provide a broad summary of the service standards expected and there is no intention to insult the intelligence of anyone by stating what may appear as obvious requirements. These are minimum requirements that we should all be achieving and many may exceed these standards regularly or occasionally.

### **103.03 KEEPING VICTIMS OF CRIME/INCIDENTS INFORMED:**

Victims of crimes/incidents want to be kept informed about the progress of their cases in a timely fashion. Keeping people informed is considered to be the single most important area in maintaining and improving public satisfaction and confidence. Providing effective follow up to victims, should result in them being more satisfied with and confident in the Wood County Sheriff's Department, which in turn improves community engagement and provision of intelligence for future investigations.

### **103.04 FACE TO FACE COMMUNICATION:**

First impressions influence people's opinion significantly and each contact we have can affect confidence in our organization. It is important that we each support the drive to improve satisfaction and confidence with service by:

1. Presenting a professional image and ensuring that your appearance complies with our Personal Appearance Policy.
2. Using appropriate body language and tone of voice as these have much more impact than the words that you use. People remember how you made them feel not necessarily what you said.
3. Being polite, professional, helpful and friendly. Giving your name and asking for and using the person's name appropriately. Using appropriate eye contact when talking or listening to them.
4. Avoiding 'off the cuff' remarks such as, "*this is the third one of these I've been to today*" or negative comments about our organization or other colleagues as these cause loss of confidence and satisfaction in the service we provide.
5. Understanding that what may appear as routine to you maybe a once in a lifetime event for the victim/person reporting and demonstrating this to them by being sensitive to their needs and situation and using appropriate comments that reflect positively on you, our organization and the service we are providing.
6. Informing victims of the appropriate agencies that may be able to offer those help or advice.
7. Listening carefully to what the person is saying and showing that you have understood their issue by summarizing what they are saying and empathizing as appropriate.

8. Giving a positive response where the person is criticizing or complaining about our service, or organization, or other colleagues, for example, thanking them for telling us and agreeing what you will and will not be able to do to resolve their issue. If you are unable to resolve their issue because it is not a Police matter, then provide them with the relevant points of contacts for other organizations.
9. Avoiding using Police jargon or acronyms/abbreviations in your conversations. Use plain English, explaining things in a clear and easily understandable way.
10. Managing the person's expectations positively by being clear about what you can and cannot do to help.
11. Taking personal responsibility for ensuring that the agreements you make are delivered as expected, for example agreeing how and when you will contact the person to update them with progress, what actions you or others will be taking and the likely timescales involved. This includes managing your planned absences, so that updates continue while you are away, or having a colleague complete routine updates for you.
12. Fully completing the actions to the agreed timescales and checking with the person that their issue/matter has been cleared/closed to their satisfaction and if not addressing any remaining requirements.
13. Being patient and taking reasonable steps to ensure that effective communication is possible, especially where you are unsure about a person's ability to understand you, or your ability to understand them.
14. Remaining calm, caring and professional when communicating with and helping someone who is angry, upset or vulnerable, (including suspects), to ensure that you are able to understand each other and find out how you can help them.

#### **103.05 PUBLIC AND FORMAL MEETINGS:**

If you are attending a meeting, or asking someone to attend on your behalf then you are responsible for ensuring that you (or the person attending for you):

1. Have the correct time, date, place and copies of relevant information such as minutes, agenda, presentation material and/or notes.
2. Dress appropriately for the type of meeting you are attending, refer to Personal Appearance Policy.
3. Obtain approval of Administration to discuss matters relating to your employment or the Department.
4. Arrive in time to set up/check any equipment needed to present your material.
5. Know the names and roles of who is chairing and attending the meeting.
6. Check how much time you have to present and take and answer questions, are well prepared and keep to time.
7. Avoid using Police jargon, technical terms, and unnecessarily long or unusual words. Use plain and simple English that is easy to understand and is aimed at your intended audience.
8. Know whether the meeting is public or private, whether minutes are being taken and published and that your contribution is appropriate to the type of meeting.
9. Turn your mobile phone/device off during the meeting, unless you are expecting a call of an urgent nature, in which case you should let the Chair of the meeting know that if you are called or texted you will have to leave the meeting to deal with the matter. It is rude and distracting to others if you are reading or texting on your mobile phone/device while in a formal meeting.
10. If you are the Chair of the meeting ask attendees to turn mobile phones off during the meeting.
11. Pay attention to presenters and discussions and avoid having separate conversations. If you are the Chair of the meeting and notice attendees engaged in separate conversations, bring their attention back to topic.

12. Avoid interrupting presenters unnecessarily with questions that come to mind. Most presenters leave time for questions at the end of their presentation and you may find that your query has been covered by the time the presentation is completed. If you are presenting encourage attendees to keep questions until the end of your presentation.
13. Take specific notes of any actions that are requested of you, or of the Department to ensure that these are appropriately addressed. You should not commit yourself or the Department to actions without approval from Administration.

### **103.06 TELEPHONE CALLS:**

The way in which we answer and deal with people's telephone inquiries has lasting impact on their perception of us as an organization and directly impacts their levels of satisfaction and confidence with our service. It is essential to provide a consistent and professional telephone response to internal and external callers.

#### **Business Calls:**

Telephone calls should be dealt with in the following way:

1. Answer your phone promptly.
2. Use an appropriate greeting and tell the caller your department, your name, and rank for example:
  - a. *"Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening, Wood County Sheriff's Department, Deputy Smith speaking"*.
3. Use a positive and authentic tone of voice as this leaves a lasting impression with callers, much more so than what you say. Sounding bored, annoyed, using an aggressive or overly assertive tone will leave the caller feeling dissatisfied, even if you have answered their questions.
4. Be polite, friendly and helpful through-out the call, ensuring that you have met the needs of the caller, or provided appropriate alternative contacts or solutions for them.
5. Do not eat, drink, continue other conversations or work during the call, focus your attention and responses on the person who has called you.
6. Standard office telephones pick up noise and conversations in the room, so it is very important that this is kept to a minimum when colleagues are taking calls. Ask colleagues to be quiet while you are on a call and do this for them when they are taking a call.
7. If you receive a call that is either not intended for you, or one that you are unable to deal with then politely advise the caller that you are unable to help and do one of the following:
  - a. Offer to transfer the caller if you are certain that you know the right person/business area to respond to the caller's inquiry. Transfer the call and provide the person you are transferring the call to with the caller's name (and organization if appropriate) and what they are calling about.
  - b. Take the caller's name, contact number(s) and details of their reason for calling, make a note of these and confirm them back to ensure accuracy. State that you will find out who they need to speak to and ask that person to contact them.
  - c. Contact the relevant person or division in a timely fashion and pass along the caller's name (and organization if appropriate) and what they are calling about.
  - d. If the caller asks for the correct number to call and says that they would prefer to call using that number, then give them the information they request.
8. If you receive a transferred call from a colleague, always ask for the caller's name and their reason for calling. When the call is transferred to you greet the person with their name, give your division/department and name and ask how you may help them.
9. If a colleague contacts you and passes a caller's details to you requesting that you contact them, call them back as soon as reasonably possible and at least within one working day.

10. Ensure that you know how your telephone works (for example, how to transfer and pick up other colleagues' calls and to divert calls using Call Forward). It is your responsibility to find out how your telephone functions work.
11. Have Voicemail/Mailbox set up on your phone. Your callers are then able to leave a message when you are unable to answer your phone.
12. Using Voicemail/Mailbox to screen your calls or prevent interruptions when you are available to take calls is unacceptable. Only use Voicemail/Mailbox when you are genuinely unavailable to answer your phone.
13. Return calls or Voicemail/Mailbox messages as soon as possible and within one working day of your return.
14. For planned absences, ensure that your Voicemail/Mailbox message gives the caller(s) an expected return date and an alternative number to contact.
15. Set up your Voicemail/Mailbox message and listen to it, to ensure callers can clearly hear your information. Keep your message brief.

### **103.07 EMAIL COMMUNICATION:**

We all use email to communicate both internally and externally and it is important that we give a consistent and professional service with email by using the following guidelines:

1. Inbound emails requiring a response should be replied to as soon as possible and at least within two working days. If the sender has specified a Reply By date then ensure that this is met.
2. Ensure your email account and Inbox are set up correctly.
3. Use a corporate standard email signature. A signature should consist of your name, title, and work contact information. It should not include quotations and/or pictures.
4. Give a clear and relevant Subject heading, so that recipients know what your email is about before they open it.
5. Keep emails as brief as possible and state why you are emailing and what (if anything) you need the recipient(s) to do for you and by when.
6. Avoid writing your email using all capital letters, as this appears to the recipient as though you are shouting at them. Use upper and lower case letters as you would when writing or typing other correspondence.
7. Use the spellchecking tool (Tools/Options/Spelling) to help ensure that your emails are professionally presented and potential errors are identified and correct before your email is sent.
8. Introduce yourself when emailing a person for the first time for example your name, title, division and why you are contacting them.
9. Confirm that you have sent attachment(s) (if this is the case) explaining what the information is and why you are sending it to them.
10. Avoid the use of jargon and if you use acronyms/abbreviations then give these in full the first time for example: UCR (Uniform Crime Reporting).
11. Your email may be forwarded on to others internally and externally. Making personal, inappropriate or offensive comments in an email, even in jest is unacceptable — keep the content of your emails professional.
12. Avoid using Reply All unless this is essential and all recipients need to see your reply. Reply only to the person who sent the email unless they ask you to Reply All.
13. Use Out of Office Assistant if you are going to be unable to access your emails for a period due to planned absence. Your message should be brief, advising when you are back and giving alternative email/telephone contacts for urgent matters.
14. Avoid using Out of Office messages that state that emails will be deleted and should be resent on your return. While this may help you manage Inbox overload, it gives a poor impression to the sender(s).

### **103.08 CORRESPONDENCE – LETTERS & FAXES:**

Producing correspondence of a consistently high standard using corporate templates portrays a professional image and service level.

1. Sending
  - a. Letters should be written in plain English, be polite and tactful, have an introduction, main body and conclusion.
  - b. Use standard templates to produce your correspondence documents.
  - c. Ensure that Spellcheck is used to avoid mistakes. Read your letter through carefully and make any corrections needed, before sending it.
  - d. Avoid using Police jargon, technical terms, and unnecessarily long or unusual words. Use plain and simple English that is easy to understand and is aimed at your intended audience.
2. Receiving/Replying:
  - a. Inbound correspondence requiring a written response should be replied to within ten working days of receipt by the Wood County Sheriff's Department or sooner, even if this means that we send an acknowledgement letter to confirm that we have received their letter and are for example, investigating the matter and will send a further letter as soon as possible.
  - b. Correspondence should be read and passed to the appropriate person for action on the same day that it is received.

### **103.09 DEALING WITH SERVICE COMPLAINTS:**

A complaint may be about our quality of service or relate to our procedures, operational matters or be about an officer or staff member.

When a person or organization lets us know that they are dissatisfied with any aspect of the service we have provided (or failed to provide) this is a learning opportunity for us to prevent recurrence and improve service in the future. It is also a chance to complete 'service recovery' by understanding what caused the dissatisfaction and then taking any necessary action, where appropriate to meet the person's expectations and regain their confidence.

Often complaints or dissatisfaction with the service received stem from raising expectations that we are able or willing to do something that we subsequently don't or can't do. For example, a simple "I'll get back to you" is often taken as "*later today*", or "*tomorrow*", when in fact what may have been intended was "I'll get back to you (*once I have investigated this matter and that will be in two weeks*)". Provide those we deal with an accurate and detailed summary of what to expect.

We should ask victims how and when they would like to be updated and then ensure that this is delivered. Arrangements should be made for colleagues to help when shift patterns and workloads could cause a delay with providing the update. Planned and unplanned absences must be managed effectively also. Either have someone else provide the updates or agree to a delayed update schedule with the victim.

Ensure that you have the complainant's contact information and preferred method of contact as well as the full detail of the complaint they have reported.

1. Contact the complainant as soon as practicably possible and within one working day to obtain further, or validate existing information. Thank the person for bringing the matter to our attention and assure them that their comments are being investigated and that we will get back to them. Agree how and when the customer would like to be kept informed and updated. Ensure that this contact happens.

2. Complete any preliminary checks to validate the issues raised within 3 working days, for example, checking system records of the events and discussing the matter with those involved to identify what may have happened to cause the complaint or dissatisfaction with our service.
3. Ensure that you provide updates to the complainant as agreed with them. When you have sufficient information to understand and resolve the matter satisfactorily, contact the customer and:
  - a. Thank them for telling us about the issue they had with our service.
  - b. Advise them how this matter happened.
  - c. Reassure them about what has/will be done to prevent recurrence.
  - d. Apologize on behalf of our organization and thank them again for bringing the matter to our attention.
4. The aim is to regain their trust and confidence. By dealing with their complaint promptly and fully, we have the best chance of achieving this.
5. Take personal responsibility for ensuring that the investigation is completed and take any necessary remedial action to address the issue(s) raised. Use the complaint positively to prevent similar situations arising in the future, for example, when training or briefing others to prevent recurrence.
6. If after investigating the complaint it is found to be unreasonable, untrue, based on incorrect assumptions or similar then this needs to be very carefully communicated with the complainant. The aim is retain or regain their trust and confidence that we do provide a good service, but that what they were/are seeking is for example, outside of our jurisdiction, unable to be delivered for specific reasons (and detail these), or similar. If other agencies may be of help to them then provide this information or liaise direct with the agency if this is appropriate. Provide any other appropriate advice that may help the person to accept that we are unable to progress their complaint further. It is appreciated that despite following these guidelines, some people will remain dissatisfied regardless of their being no substance to their complaint.

#### **103.10 POSITIVE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK:**

We often receive positive comments from people and organizations that have used our service and should ensure that this information is used effectively to promote excellent customer service within our organization. Distribute the positive feedback appropriately and promptly ensuring that the individuals concerned receive details of the praise given.

Depending upon the nature of the feedback, consider using the situation and way we delivered service as a positive training opportunity.

1. If a person or organization has written or emailed detailing their positive service experience then respond to their correspondence appropriately.

#### **103.11 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT:**

We will continually seek ways to improve our service performance and use the information and feedback we receive from customers, and our own internal assessments to make positive changes.