

2018 LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Award Project Evaluation

Project ID	GG-2
Title of Program	Customer Call Center
Program Category	
Submission Date	5/15/2018 2:21:11 PM
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Implementation Date	Mar-17
FLSA Designation	Both (if applicable to a team)
Project Team Members	Candice Rountree, Social Work Program Manager Family & Children's Medicaid Team, Food and Nutrition Services Team, Adult Medicaid Team, and Crisis Intervention

Description of Productivity Improvement

Our county department of social services started a customer service call center due to the increased volume of workload in Income Maintenance. Our staff were challenged to return customer service phone calls along with processing benefits timely and accurately. Customer service is a priority to our agency. It is of the utmost importance to meet increased demands without a negative impact to our quality customer service. We formed a team to strategize how to meet customer and staff needs. We conducted research and visited two other county's call centers. We purposely designed our Customer Service Call Center in order for staff to respond to Income Maintenance questions without having to pass them on; we wanted to meet the customer's need in an expedient manner. The Call Center's goal is to provide seamless assistance to the customer and we take calls regarding Family and Children's Medicaid, Food and Nutrition Services, Adult Medicaid - PLA and Crisis Intervention. We recruited staff members who we believed would be skilled in responding in multiple program areas and began cross-training. We, fully implementing the Customer Call Center and the One and Done approach in 2017. We currently have 7 staff members and 1 supervisor for the call center. We purchased off the shelf software, and have the staffing expense to operate the center. The software allows us to have all customer calls handled by the Call Center, affording the ongoing Income Maintenance caseworkers the time to process cases without having to respond to numerous phone

calls throughout the day. Our Customer Call Center embraces a one and done approach. We believe our Customer Call Center is worthy of a LGFCU Innovation Award due to our productivity improvement.

Our objectives included the following:

- Provide quality customer service and resolve the customer's issue
- Afford the ongoing Income Maintenance caseworker more time to process paperwork
- Educate our customers regarding upcoming deadlines for continued receipt of benefits

Description of why this project was initiated

Our goal is to be able to solve the issue without having to refer the caller to another staff person; essentially a One and Done approach; one contact to resolve the issue/question. The average monthly number of calls is approximately 3,600 - 4,000 calls per month. We have received positive feedback from income maintenance staff. In the past, we averaged between 1,000 - 1,500 customers per month who came in person and were not making applications or completing a review - they were here with questions or changes that could all be handled over the phone. Our ultimate goal is that customers can get their needs met through the Call Center without having to come into the agency. Our Call Center staff investigate the presenting question/concern and work towards a solution. For example, our staff issue replacement Medicaid and EBT cards, fax and request documentation from employers on behalf of the customer, resolve questions regarding unpaid medical bills. When customers do make an agency visit, we utilize Customer Care specialists who provide the face to face customer assistance across all Income Maintenance programs. This is another strategy that affords our case workers protected time to meet processing deadlines.

Quantifiable results (sustainability, cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of service).

Indication of what resources were used and what was done with any accrued time savings

We have collected data since 2016 to track the number of customers registering with our front desk; this is all customers with no distinction between income maintenance and services. Since the implementation of the Call Center, the number of customers who present in the agency for assistance has decreased dramatically.

Customers Registered	2016	2018	Percentage Decreased
January	5,808	2,752	52.6%
February	4,630	4,313	6.85%
March	5,672	2,473	56.4%
April	5,140	2,418	53%

The significant reduction in the number of customers who must present for services is a direct result of our Call Center. We are serving our customers in a more convenient manner for them, and easing the burden of crushing caseloads for our income maintenance staff.

In the past, the primary complaint we received with respect to customer service was that workers were not returning phone calls timely; since the implementation of the Call Center, this is no longer the case. We are more immediately available for customer calls and have the ability to return calls more effectively. Through our Call Center and One and Done approach, we have been able to cut

customer wait time in half. Our approach in providing quality customer service has changed dramatically. Maintaining receipt of services when they are needed coupled with the ability to conduct business via telephone call or e-mail creates a customer-centered dynamic that we believe translates to a higher level of service.

For those customers who do come in for service, we have significantly changed their interaction with front desk staff; using our One and Done philosophy with the first face to face contact. Our staff are able to facilitate the majority of what they need without the customer needing to sit down and wait to be seen by an income maintenance worker. This has led to increased customer service satisfaction and directly impacts our productivity as an agency.

Other descriptive information

A major obstacle to processing cases timely is the volume of customers who struggle with meeting deadlines regarding required documentation. Many of our Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) customers do not turn in documentation timely, compromising their continued receipt of benefits, and potentially putting them in a crisis situation. We are utilizing the concept of nudging to influence customer's behaviors to increase timely submission of required documentation. When we have a lower percentage of timely submission, there is a marked contrast in the tone and volume of calls received. Our Call Center employees call FNS customers to provide reminders that they need to submit their documentation to ensure continued receipt of benefits. We also educate callers regarding upcoming review dates, and provide information about other programs the customer may receive. We have used our call center staff to collect data on our Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) customers; collecting information about their education, employment history, transportation, and criminal record status. This data collection is helping us plan programming to meet the needs of our ABAWD customers. The average length of a call is 5 minutes. In the development of our Call Center, we wanted to avoid the obstacle of staffing the center with staff who lack expertise to resolve the customer's issue. We made a conscious decision to cross-train our staff in order to provide the best customer service experience while also easing the workload of our ongoing Income Maintenance staff. The Call Center staff is able to respond to the client needs by doing the following: changing managed care providers, completing FNS interviews, changing addresses, mailing out applications, providing wage forms, verifying eligibility for Medicaid providers, verify the status of their reviews, explaining changes in benefit receipt. The data indicates that some of the endless churning of leaving voicemail messages is being mitigated by our Call Center staff's ability to respond in real time. We recently began utilizing a Customer Call Center e-mail address and are having a great response and customers appreciate being able to make contact after-hours. The majority of calls received are from FNS customers, 58%; next is Adult Medicaid at 24%; and Family and Children's Medicaid at 18%. We believe this Customer Call Center is an innovative approach to managing increasing caseloads that balances the needs of our customers and the needs of our staff. Customers are able to speak with someone without leaving a voicemail message; and we intentionally designed the Call Center to give the staff operating the center the ability to meet the needs of the customer without having to pass them along to another staff member. This does require a great deal of training by the Call Center employee and an ability to understand multiple program requirements. Our staff have risen to that challenge and their ability to meet the customer need translates into our ongoing Income Maintenance workers having the time to process cases without the multiple daily distractions of "check-in" phone calls.