

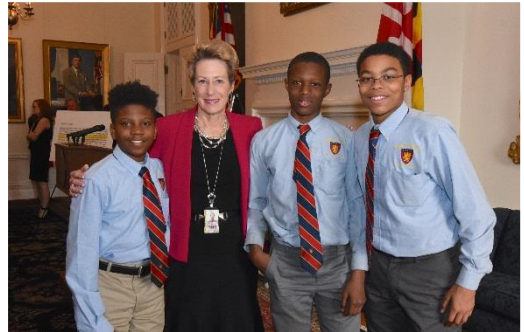


MARYLAND STATE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Customer Service Annual Report

FISCAL YEAR 2017





Left to right:

Dr. Carol Williamson, Ed.D, presents Maryland's Green Ribbon School Winners: William Tyler Page Elementary and John Poole Middle School.

Dr. Karen B. Salmon Ph.D., State Superintendent attending a Teacher of the Year event.

First Lady Hogan and Marcella E. Franczkowski, pose with a student at the First lady's Mental Health Awareness Youth Art Display: Celebrating Through Arts.

Dr. Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., with students at the State House.

Contributors:

Debra Lichter, Director, Departmental Coordination and Federal Legislation
Debra.lichter@maryland.gov
410-767-4694

Jasmine Brown, Teresa Dantzler, Amy Horan, Gayle Secrist

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Introduction

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) provides leadership for the State's system of Pre-k –12 public education, child care services and rehabilitation services. MSDE holds the core belief that all children benefit from a quality education. We provide strong leadership, strategic resources and policy guidance to our local schools as they prepare our students for success beyond graduation.

Every child deserves exceptional schools and teachers, regardless of age, background, or learning style. As we work toward that goal, MSDE provides Maryland's school systems and educators with a wide range of services including student assessment, liaison to government bodies, professional development of teachers and administrators, childcare licensing services and educator certification to name a few. Through strong leadership, wise stewardship, and collaborative innovation, we are providing the resources, support, and evidence based solutions needed by local school systems and the educators we serve. Together we are helping each and every Maryland student fulfill his or her potential.

Through MSDE's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), we provide leadership and support in promoting the employment, economic self-sufficiency and independence of individuals with disabilities. DORS also operates the Disability Determination Services (DDS), which makes medical decisions about disability claims filed by Marylanders for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI).



Left: Governor Larry Hogan and State Superintendent, Dr. Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., greet crowd members during their visit to Hampstead Elementary School.

Top: CTE Staff admire State Superintendent Salmon's recent award beautifully hand crafted by St.Mary's County CTE students.

FY 2017 Highlights

- Received an overall 89.7% “Satisfactory” rating on Customer Service surveys.
- A total of 1,029 employees completed Customer Service Training.
- Members of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Senior Leadership Team were briefed on the Customer Service Initiative and MSDE’s Implementation Plan. Members of the MSDE Senior Leadership Team then disseminated the information to the personnel in their respective Divisions.
- Customer Service Promise posters were posted at each entrance to the Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building, as well as at the Division of Rehabilitation Services, Disability Determination Services, and satellite offices throughout the State. Additional Customer Service Promise posters were posted in public spaces and employee gathering places.
- A link to the Customer Service Promise is prominently displayed on the MSDE Home Page. The Customer Service Promise is displayed on the “About Us” section of the MSDE website.
- All employees were required to place the Customer Service Satisfaction Survey link in their email signatures. The Customer Service Satisfaction Survey link is also posted to the MSDE webpage.
- MSDE launched an Employee Recognition Program in January 2017 to recognize employees who have made significant contributions or demonstrated exemplary achievements. Employees of the month who have exhibited extraordinary customer service are also nominated for the Governor’s Customer Service Hero Award.
- A Customer Service overview is included in New Employee Orientation.
- MSDE elevated the visibility of the Ombudsman position.
- Employee’s semi-annual Performance Evaluation reviews include a rating on Customer Service.
- The Pulse: a monthly publication for MSDE employees, includes a “Customer Service Corner” that provides helpful hints about customer service.

Recognition Given to Employees

The Maryland State Department of Education launched an Employee Recognition Program in January 2017, with the first award made in March, to recognize employees who have made significant contributions or demonstrated exemplary achievements in one or more of the following areas:

- Extraordinary Service – excellent performance going above and beyond job expectations
- Distinguished deed

- Makes a difference to MSDE, its customers and/or to members of the community
- Excels as a team player
- Innovative problem solving; and/or
- Role model for advancing the goals and mission of MSDE

Each Employee of the Month (EOM) Award recipient receives:

- An invitation to a Senior Leadership Team meeting to receive recognition
- A certificate signed by the State Superintendent and Director of Human Resources
- A photograph which is displayed for one month in the lobby alongside the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and State Superintendent
- An announcement with their picture displayed on the MSDE website and internal newsletter (The Pulse)
- One day (eight hours) of paid administrative leave

MARCH

Diana Hegmann, Education Program Specialist, Division of Career and College Readiness

Diana Hegmann is an Education Program Specialist with the Division of Career and College Readiness. Diana Hegmann is an outstanding member of the MSDE team as she provides exemplary customer service to Maryland school systems and community partners. She is responsible for the continuous improvement of Career and Technology (CTE) programs related to Business, Management and Finance.

APRIL

Karen Wentworth, Office Secretary III, Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), Leonardtown office

Karen Wentworth is an Office Secretary III with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), Leonardtown office. She is the first person people speak with when contacting DORS. She assists DORS clients in any way necessary. She prides herself in knowing school system representatives and service providers. Karen goes out of her way to problem solve and ensure the office runs smoothly. If another area in the Southern Maryland region is in need, such as when there are issues with staffing and vacancies, Karen is always the first to volunteer to assist.

MAY

Teresa Lewis, Childcare Licensing Supervisor, Division of Early Childhood Education (DECD), Office of Childcare - Licensing Branch, Region 3 in Baltimore County

The Licensing Branch licenses child care providers who provide out-of-home care for children in Maryland. All regulatory activity is conducted through thirteen regional offices statewide. Child care provider case files are managed and tracked in a Child Care Automated Tracking System (CCATS), and inspections of the child care facilities are conducted using an Electronic Licensing Inspection System (ELIS). These databases are the major, and most critical, tools used by licensing staff to perform their duties.

On her own initiative, Teresa took the time to become extremely knowledgeable of the data systems. In addition to performing her supervisory duties, Teresa consistently volunteers her knowledge and skills in finding solutions to technology issues that arise within the CCATS and ELIS data systems. She has also provided valuable input into the roll-out of a major CCATS modification and for planned modifications for the ELIS system. Teresa volunteers her services and is always willing to lend her talents and abilities to anyone in need.

JUNE

Boyd Pusey, Education Program Specialist/Autism Waiver Specialist, Division of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, Autism Waiver and Health Related Services

Boyd Pusey's dedication to the children and families of Maryland is displayed in his daily work where he supports the Maryland Autism Waiver as an Autism Waiver Specialist. This Waiver is a critical component of service delivery to 1,000 children and their families in Maryland. Children often wait 10 years to access the services available through the Autism Waiver, and Boyd's support to each and every family, school system staff, and service agency staff is unfaltering. He has received numerous satisfaction survey comments speaking to his knowledge, support, honesty, and willingness to support families who have the opportunities to work with him. He is kind, considerate, thoughtful and helpful.

Boyd seeks to find solutions for families and their children who are in daily need of understanding and assistance. Boyd plays a critical role in supporting Maryland's vulnerable children.



Far Left: Education Program Specialist/Autism Waiver Specialist, Boyd Pusey, receives his Employee of the Month recognition award.

Left: Chief of DBS Financial Reporting and Coordination Branch, Latanya McEachin, celebrates 30 years of service during our employee recognition ceremony.

Analysis of FY 2017 Results and Plans for FY 2018

FY 2017 RESULTS

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) was initially introduced to the Customer Service Initiative at a training on December 6, 2016. The training was attended by the Chief of Staff, the Director of Departmental Coordination, and the Ombudsman. Since that time, we have undertaken a number of activities to familiarize MSDE employees with Governor Hogan's Customer Service initiative and revitalizing our focus on customer service, as follows.

By the end of December, Customer Service Promise posters were prominently displayed at each entrance to the Nancy S. Grasmick State Education Building, as well as at the Division of Rehabilitation Services, Disability Determination Services, and satellite offices throughout the State. Additional Customer Service Promise posters were posted in public spaces and employee gathering places.

In January 2017, the MSDE Senior Leadership Team were briefed on the Customer Service Initiative and the MSDE's Implementation Plan. Members of the MSDE Senior Leadership Team then disseminated the information to the personnel in their respective Divisions. By the end of January, a link to the Customer Service Promise was prominently displayed on the MSDE Home Page and on the "About Us" section of the MSDE website. Additionally, all employees were required to place the Customer Service Satisfaction Survey link in their email signatures.

The Maryland State Department of Education launched an Employee Recognition Program in January 2017 to recognize employees who have made significant contributions or demonstrated exemplary achievements. Employees of the month who have exhibited extraordinary customer service are also nominated for the Governor's Customer Service Hero Award. The first Employee of the Month was named in March 2017, and one has been named each subsequent month.

In May 2017, all employees were notified of the requirement to complete Customer Service training. A total of 1,029 employees completed Customer Service Training. This represents 72% of the MSDE workforce. MSDE utilized the MDH online training module.

Additional actions have been taken to improve customer service. While for many years the MSDE has had a staff person who responded to constituent concerns, the services were not widely publicized and the individual's title, Education Program Specialist, did not overtly indicate the services provided. In late 2016, the job title was changed to Ombudsman and in March 2017, MSDE made the Ombudsman position more visible by providing a link with easy access from the MSDE Home Page and creating an

Ombudsman webpage. It has proven to be an effective and successful strategy for fast tracking requests for information and resolving constituent concerns.

Further, because exemplary customer service is expected of every MSDE employee, and is a vital component of our mission, a customer service rating is part of each employee's semi-annual Performance Evaluation.

Also, over the past six months MSDE has updated online publications, forms, FAQs, and pertinent information on our website so that our constituents can find relevant information quickly and accurately. Additionally, we use social media, both Facebook and Twitter, to help get the word out about services, events, and news to provide educators and citizens with information important to them.

Finally, a culture of excellence starts at the top. In June, the State Superintendent met with each MSDE division, individually, to share her thoughts on progress made over the first year of her tenure and to elicit feedback from employees. Included in Dr. Salmon's talking points was a discussion about the importance of continuing to provide exemplary customer service and the expectation that MSDE would continue its reputation for professionalism and excellence among our various stakeholders.

PLANS FOR FY 2018

Targeted Employee Training:

Based upon Customer Service Survey results, as well as correspondence received by the Superintendent, calls received by the Ombudsman, as well as observation, we have identified employees who would benefit from additional, targeted training. We plan to focus on those employees who have the most contact with the public and who work in areas of the Department with the highest volume of inquiries, with a particular focus on those employees who are most likely to deliver messages that are not what the constituent wants to hear.

We have limited staff available to internally develop and deliver customer service training. Currently, staff responsible for implementing the Customer Service initiative, has accepted the assignment on top of their existing duties. While they are enthusiastic about the initiative, existing workload prevents them from devoting as much time as they would like to this important work. It has become apparent that we probably need to identify resources from outside the agency for assistance. However, we have not yet initiated procurement of a vendor for targeted training for two reasons. First, we currently have no funding budgeted for this purpose. Second, at the April Customer Service meeting, we became aware of the work being done to identify potential vendors for customer service training via a State Master contract. While we currently have no available funding, should the Master Contract identify consultants whose services could

be procured at a reasonable cost, we would work to identify funds for training for those employees who need it most.

Customer Service Handbook:

MSDE plans to develop a Customer Service Handbook to be distributed to MSDE employees. The Handbook will explain the importance of providing excellent customer service, MSDE's expectations of its employees related to customer service, best practices in telephone, email, social media and in-person communications, and in handling challenging situations. While a Handbook cannot be a substitute for in-person training, it could prove to be a valuable resource for MSDE employees.

Continued Monitoring:

MSDE will continue to monitor its Customer Service delivery through analysis of Customer Service surveys, correspondence and phone calls. Each Customer Service survey received by MSDE will continue to be reviewed by staff. Surveys that indicate any level of dissatisfaction will continue to be shared with leadership level staff for follow-up. Surveys with positive comments about a particular staff member will also continue to be shared with applicable senior leadership for employee recognition and, perhaps, nomination for a Governor's Service Award.



Left: MSDE Employees enjoy popcorn at an organized Employee Appreciation event.

Top: Governor Larry Hogan visits excited school kids at a Carroll County school.

Customer Service Survey Results

From January 9, 2017 through June 30, 2017, a total of 1,171 customers responded to the Customer Service survey. On average, 47 survey responses were received each week. The fewest number of surveys received in a week was 22; the most was 65.

For the period from January 9, 2017 to June 30, 2017, Customer Service Survey results were as follows:

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Very Satisfied, Satisfied, or Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Overall	73.9%	8.6%	7.2%	89.7%	3.2%	7.2%
Friendly and Courteous	78.1%	8.8%	7.0%	93.9%	1.8%	4.4%
Timely and Responsive	74.9%	9.1%	6.4%	90.4%	3.3%	6.3%
Accurate and Consistent	74.2%	9.7%	7.3%	91.2%	3.4%	5.4%
Accessible and Convenient	73.2%	10.2%	7.7%	91.0%	2.85	6.2%
Truthful and Transparent	75.7%	8.1%	8.5%	92.3%	2.4%	5.3%

MSDE is pleased with its current overall “satisfaction” rate of 89.7%. Within the agency, we promote an overall professional atmosphere and an understanding of the importance of treating all customers with dignity and respect. We also recognize that not every customer is going to indicate satisfaction with the customer service they have received, particularly when the response is not the outcome for which they were hoping. While, ideally, MSDE management would like to see 100% of our customers indicate some level of satisfaction, we believe a goal of 85% is reasonable and attainable. Given that some customers will reflect their dissatisfaction with an outcome as a negative response to a survey, a 100% goal is unrealistic. That being said, we do not plan to “rest on our laurels” because we have achieved a high rate of satisfaction. As noted in other areas of this report, we have identified areas where additional training and supports are needed and planned for the upcoming year.

Status of Customer Service Training

A total of 1,029 employees completed Customer Service Training out of a total of 1,428 regular and temporary employees, including contractual employees. This represents 72% of the Department's workforce. MSDE utilized the MDH online training module. We plan to identify those employees who have not yet completed the training and ensure all employees comply.

MSDE has identified employees who would benefit from additional, targeted training. We plan to focus on those employees who have the most contact with the public and who work in areas of the Department with the highest volume of inquiries, with a particular focus on those employees who are most likely to need to deliver messages that are not what the constituent wants to hear. At this point, we have been unable to identify funding to provide this specific professional development for our employees. We have not issued a solicitation to contract with a consultant to conduct the deeper level training due to the lack of funding. Additionally, we were awaiting a State Master Contract to see if the State was able to identify any consultants that would provide these services at a reasonable cost.

Best Practices

Office of the Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman office at the Maryland State Department of Education was established more than 20 years ago to help assist parents and other members of the public with their educational concerns. While for many years MSDE has had a staff person who responded to constituent concerns, the services were not widely publicized and the individual's title, Education Program Specialist, did not overtly indicate the services provided. In late 2016, the job title was changed to Ombudsman and in March 2017, MSDE made the Ombudsman position more visible by providing a link with easy access from the MSDE Home Page and creating an Ombudsman webpage. It has proven to be an effective and successful strategy for fast tracking requests for information and resolving constituent concerns.

Improving the Customer Experience via Online Transactions:

While only a few of the services MSDE provides involve transaction processing, MSDE offers customers an online option for those services. Examples include completion of applications for teacher certification and uploading required supporting documents;

applications for child care center licenses; and applications for disability determinations. Because all of these services require careful review of supporting documentation and follow-up contacts by MSDE specialists, response times vary widely. However, response time from application to notification of customers of final decisions has been reduced significantly since moving from paper documents and mail submission to web-based processes over the past decade.

Communication with Stakeholders/Customers:

MSDE takes very seriously its responsibility to communicate and collaborate with a broad array of interested stakeholders and customers in carrying out its mission.

Understanding that, for many customers, the first point of contact is our website, MSDE has completed an extensive upgrade over the past two years, making it easier to navigate so that our customers can find relevant information quickly. MSDE has also updated online publications, forms, FAQs, and pertinent information on our website so that the information our constituents locate is accurate and current. Our work is ongoing in that regard.

Additionally, we use social media including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to provide educators and citizens with information about our services, events, and news that is important to them.

Further, MSDE distributes many publications and provides numerous resources for its customers, including, but not limited to the following:

- Maryland Education Bulletin: a monthly publication for external customers providing a glimpse at the priorities and new initiatives of the Maryland State Board of Education and MSDE
- The Pulse: a monthly publication for MSDE employees, includes a “Customer Service Corner” that provides helpful hints about customer service.
- Frequent News Releases for interested news outlets and stakeholders
- A weekly newsletter from the State Superintendent to Local Superintendents of Schools
- Partners: A quarterly publication of the Division of Early Childhood Development
- Maryland Learning Links Website
- MD Report Card Website
- 5th Floor View: a publication from the Fine Arts Office for arts educators and interested citizens



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