

## CUSTOMER SERVICE

If you have any questions regarding customer service, you may contact Karen Goldman of the Customer Service Council.

1. The mission states of Veterans Health Administration is to:

- provide quality patient care to veterans
- facilitate an environment for excellence in education
- establish a climate which enhances research
- support the Department of Defense in a national emergency.

It is important that all employees adhere to the mission statement because you can make a difference.

2. The VA North Texas Health Care System (VANATHCS) does not just focus on meeting the needs of customers, the staff should strive to exceed their needs. Employees should make every effort to provide quality customer service.

3. The VA North Texas Health Care System is striving to provide quality customer service. Meeting the needs and expectations of customers in a safe, timely, efficient and effective manner are essential for providing a high level of customer service.

4. There are great benefits of providing quality customer service at the VA North Texas Health Care System (VANATHCS) including: increased patient satisfaction and loyalty; enhanced team work; problem solving and decreased stressful situations; improved community relations; more effective communication; and providing quality services will attract and retain new customers.

5. The purpose of a successful Customer Service Program (CSP) is to assist in providing high customer satisfaction and loyalty. It is important for customers to value the product, the service and the people that provide services in order to improve market share/revenue.

6. It can be natural to resist change. Change can cause stress and discomfort. Change is constant and it can be helpful to develop coping strategies in order to be more customer focused. It can be beneficial to embrace change, eliminate mindsets and change old ways of "doing business."

7. An advocate is a person who supports, upholds, defends, or intercedes on behalf of another person. Staff perform this function when they assist and support the customers.

8. All "Speak to the Director" letters related to consumer inquiries, concerns, and complaints are forwarded to the Director's office of the VA North Texas Health Care System (VANATHCS). To help insure the best customer service possible, the Service that is involved with a question, concern or complaint will perform analysis and take appropriate action to resolve the situation. In some instances a patient representative or a patient advocate may be helpful in resolving a formal complaint.

9. A goal of the VA North Texas Health Care System's (VANATHCS) is to provide high quality service to both internal and external customers. The core values or descriptions of outstanding customer service for VANATHCS are trust, respect, excellence, commitment and compassion. It is the responsibility of all employees to provide services in a manner that is representative of the core values.

10. According to VA North Texas Health Care System (VANATHCS) Memorandum QC-2, Customer Inquiries and Concerns, employees will be responsive and sensitive to the needs of all health care customers or their representatives and will attempt to resolve complaints in a positive and timely manner. Issuance of a complaint will not compromise a patient's future access to care.

11. According to VA North Texas Health Care System (VANATHCS) Memorandum QC-2, Customer Inquiries and Concerns, it is essential for all VANATHCS employees to know the mechanism for receiving and responding to consumer inquiries, concerns, and complaints. The knowledgeable employee at the lowest level possible will resolve oral complaints.

12. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) conducts monthly patient satisfaction surveys to determine how both inpatients and outpatients feel about the medical care they experienced. This survey is called SHEP which stands for Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients. Nine customer service standards are addressed in the survey:

- respect for patient preferences
- emotional support
- information and education
- coordination of care
- physical comfort
- involvement of families
- transition between inpatient and outpatient care
- courtesy
- timely access to healthcare.

13. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) respects and supports patient's rights. Basic rights and responsibilities are outlined as follows:

- Respect and Nondiscrimination (patients/families are treated with dignity, compassion and respect as individuals)
- Information, Disclosure and Confidentiality (patients will be given information about the health benefits, patients' medical records will be kept confidential)
- Participation in Treatment Decisions (the patient and any person they choose will be involved in decisions about their care)
- Treatment Team (care will include the team and patient working together when possible)
- Complaints (patients and families are encouraged and expected to seek help from the treatment team and/or a patient advocate for complaints).

14. Effective communication is essential in achieving quality customer service. A key element in effective communication includes the art of listening. Attentive listening will most likely result in a positive experience for the customer.