



Department of Buildings

Department of Consumer Affairs

Department of Environmental Protection

Fire Department

Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Taxi and Limousine Commission

Department of Transportation

Department of Sanitation



# Standardized Customer Service Training Curriculum for Inspectors

January 2020

# Table of Contents

## Contents

Overview	1
Facilitator Guide #1	2
Introduction	3
Snapshot – Inspectors and Inspections	4
How Are Inspections Different from Other Service Interactions?	6
The Purpose of Inspections	7
Inspectors and Customer Service	8
Why are we here?	9
Why are we here? (continued)	10
NYC Businesses	11
Entrepreneurs who Help our City Thrive	11
Inspector Support and Resources	12
Facilitator Guide #2	13
Inspector Authority	14
Inspection Consistency	15
What Inspectors Should Not Discuss	16
Great Service, Great City Part I	17
Making the Connection	17
Facilitator Guide #3	18
Customer Service Marketing Plan	19
Facilitator Guide #4	20
Values Tree	21
Facilitator Guide #5	22
NYC Vision, Values, Slogan	23
Facilitator Guide #6	24
Defining Internal and External Customers	25
Facilitator Guide #7	26
Who are our Customers?	27
Facilitator Guide #8	28
Customer Service Do's and Don'ts – Keeping it Real	29

## Table of Contents

---

Facilitator Guide #9	30
Role Play	31
Great Service Great City Part II	32
Cultural Appreciation	32
Facilitator Guide #10	33
Cultural Awareness	35
Cultural Competency	36
Accepting Differences	37
NYC's Language Access Policy	39
Local Law 132 of 2013 - Language Preference for Inspections	40
Understanding Gestures	41
Cultural Iceberg	43
Cultural Differences - Role Play	46
Communicating and Managing Conflict	47
Facilitator Guide #11	48
First Impressions	49
Facilitator Guide #12	52
Effective Communication	53
Facilitator Guide #13	54
Empathy	55
Negative Words and Phrases	57
Facilitator Guide #14	59
Body Language	60
Facilitator Guide #15	63
Communicating with Difficult People	64
Managing Conflict	69
Conflict Resolution Styles	70
The De-Escalation Process	73
Facilitator Guide #16	75
Giving Bad News	76
Putting It All Together – Final Role Play	79
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>



## Overview

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This inspectors' training manual includes "traditional" customer service training as well as material that addresses specific issues from the inspection environment and material on the Business Owner's Bill of Rights.

A major portion of this training is taken from Great Service, Great City customer service training and is available on CityShare at <http://cityshare.nycnet/greatservice>. Portions of the training were also derived from the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene customer service training program.

The two Great Service, Great City training modules for inspectors are:

- **Making the Connection: Excellence in Customer Service**, and,
- **NYC Cultural Appreciation**

**Making the Connection** addresses issues around customer expectations, communication, and empathy.

**NYC Cultural Appreciation** addresses the issues of understanding and communication that arise when dealing with the diverse cultural backgrounds and perspectives that comprise the City's customers.

These two courses combined will provide inspectors with a basic foundation that will equip them to address the more commonplace customer service issues as well as issues that arise from our City's cultural diversity.

# Facilitator Guide

## Facilitator Guide #1

### Facilitator Introduction:

- Introduce the module, goal and objectives. Let the group know that this training includes new material that is now mandated by Local Law, including the Business Owner's Bill of Rights.
- Let the inspectors know that they will also receive traditional customer service training.

### Instructions:

- Introduce the module, goal and objectives.
- Inform the group that in this module they will explore the role of inspectors in customer service, the Business Owner's Bill of Rights and the importance of businesses to the City's economy.
- Let the inspectors know that your agency and the City are committed to supporting inspectors in doing their jobs.
- The idea of this section is to get the inspectors to understand the "bigger picture" of inspections—how they support health and public safety, how they play an important role in customer service, how their customer—the business owners—are important to the City and its economy.

### Discussion:

To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary. Suggestions:

- Ask inspectors what makes their job different from other NYC staff who deal with the public.
- Ask inspectors how they see themselves as providing customer service.

**Materials:** *Participant's Workbook*

## Introduction

In 2009 the Regulatory Review Panel Report, issued jointly by the City and the New York City Council, recommended that the City “standardize customer service training for agency inspectors” to provide small business owners with “better overall service during their inspection and encourage more constructive interactions between small business owners and agency inspectors.”

This recommendation was made a requirement by Local Law 33 of 2013.





## **Snapshot – Inspectors and Inspections**

Over 1,700 inspectors conduct more than 1.8 million inspections each year to protect the public’s safety and health and to protect consumers.

**Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA)** inspectors enforce the City’s Consumer Protection Law that prohibits unfair trade practices when dealing in consumer goods or services, including practices such as false advertising, phony sales, and special offers with hidden conditions. The law also lays out proper behavior in the collection of consumer debts. DCA inspectors also enforce the City’s Weights and Measures Law which requires that any item must be sold by its true weight or measure, as well as the City’s Truth-in-Pricing Law that requires that price displays provide adequate information to the consumer.

**Department of Buildings (DOB)** inspectors enforce a wide range of laws that promote safety in building construction, electrical and plumbing work, elevator and boiler safety and a host of other construction-related issues.

**Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH)** inspectors enforce the laws that cover food vendors, restaurants, child care centers, radiology equipment, public pools, cooling towers and other businesses and services that impact the health and safety of City residents.

**Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)** inspectors enforce the environmental codes and rules concerning water and sewer service connections, wastewater discharges, proper metering, the city’s Air Pollution Control Code, Noise Code, and the Community Right To Know Act, which regulates the use and storage of hazardous substances in the environment.

**Department of Transportation (DOT)** inspectors enforce laws intended to promote safety by maintaining a state of good repair on streets and sidewalks as well as a transportation network that functions at all times for all street users. Inspections cover a range of issues including street construction, sidewalk defects, newsracks, canopies, and commercial cycling.

**Department of Sanitation (DSNY)** Enforcement agents monitor compliance by residents, commercial establishments and institutions with laws involving cleanliness and the maintenance of clean sidewalks and streets, removal of snow and ice from sidewalks, proper storage and disposal of waste and recycling materials, illegal dumping and theft of recyclables. Enforcement agents also enforce rules and regulations governing solid waste transfer stations, intermodal facilities and fill material operations, as well as laws governing the storage, transportation and improper disposal of asbestos and regulated medical waste.

**Fire Department (FDNY)** inspectors enforce the NYC Fire Code and rules that allow the manufacturing, storage, handling, use, sale and transportation of hazardous or combustible materials. Inspections are conducted on the maintenance of any manual, automatic or other fire alarm or fire extinguishing device equipment or system. Inspections are also conducted on high rise buildings, public buildings and public assembly spaces for the orderly evacuation of occupants of the building in an emergency.

**Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC)** inspectors enforce the rules governing yellow and green taxicabs as well as car bases to ensure the safety and consumer rights of riders and the condition of employment of drivers.



### How Are Inspections Different from Other Service Interactions?

Although inspectors interact with customers, they do so in an environment that is different from other City staff that interacts with customers on the phone or at a walk-in center:

- Inspectors conduct inspections at a proprietor's business
- Inspectors must be aware of and value the customer's time, their property and their reputation
- Inspectors provide a "service" that the customer did not request
- Inspections may result in a violations, fines or closing of the business



## The Purpose of Inspections

The City conducts inspections to enforce laws which are in place to promote a public good, like public health and safety or consumer protection.

- Department of Health and Mental Hygiene inspectors check restaurants to make sure that food is prepared and stored safely and that the restaurants are free of vermin.
- Inspectors from the Department of Consumer Affairs inspect stores so that shoppers are not taken advantage of and so that businesses do not sell cigarettes to minors.
- Inspectors from the Department of Buildings check elevators and boilers to ensure that these operate safely.



## **Inspectors and Customer Service**

The City has more than 1,700 inspectors in 8 agencies who conduct over 1.8 million inspections a year.

Each inspection is an opportunity to provide excellent customer service, even under difficult conditions.

Like City staff who work at call centers and walk-in centers, inspectors also have a customer service representative function.

Inspector interactions have a great impact on the customer service experience.



## Why are we here?

### Local Law 18 of 2010 – Business Owner’s Bill of Rights

The Business Owner’s Bill of Rights was created to ensure that business owners receive the same consideration provided to other City customers when dealing with the City.

Business owner have the right to:

1. Courteous and professional treatment from City employees
2. Inspectors who are polite, professionally dressed, and properly identified
3. Information about how long inspections will take and the cost of all related fees
4. Knowledgeable inspectors who enforce agency rules consistently
5. Receive information about agency rules from inspectors or other employees
6. Contest a violation through a hearing, trial or other relevant process
7. Request a review of inspection results or re-inspection as soon as possible
8. Receive explanation from inspectors (if requested) on violation details and instructions for viewing inspection results
9. Access information in languages other than English and request language interpretation services for inspections
10. Comment, anonymously and without fear of retribution, on the performance or conduct of our employees



#### AS A BUSINESS OWNER, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

1. Courteous and professional treatment by our employees
2. Inspectors who are polite, professionally dressed and properly identified
3. Information about how long inspections will take and the cost of all related fees
4. Knowledgeable inspectors who enforce agency rules uniformly
5. Receive information about agency rules from inspectors or other employees
6. Contest a violation through a hearing, trial or other relevant process
7. Request a review of inspection results or re-inspection as soon as possible
8. Receive explanation from inspectors (if requested) on violation details and instructions for viewing inspection results
9. Access information in languages other than English and request language interpretation services for inspections
10. Comment, anonymously and without fear of retribution, on the performance or conduct of our employees

New York City is committed to providing New Yorkers with excellent customer service. We want to hear from you. To provide feedback and comments, please visit [www.nyc.gov/customersurvey](http://www.nyc.gov/customersurvey).

**NYC**

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## **Why are we here? (continued)**

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### **Local Law 33 of 2013 – Customer Service Training for Inspectors**

In 2013 the City Council passed Local Law 33 which requires City agencies to provide customer service training to inspectors. The law also required that the Mayor's Office of Operations create a curriculum to serve as a template for the training.

### **Local Law 67 of 2015 – Business Owners Survey**

In 2015 the City Council passed Local Law 67 which requires the Mayor's Office of Operations to collect feedback from business owners. By December 2018, business owners submitted more than 2,500 surveys rating different aspects of services and providing feedback. Feedback is used to address training and procedures.

Questions related to inspections include:

- Inspector clarity in explaining violations
- Inspector behavior
- Overall customer satisfaction with inspection



**Welcome to the NYC Customer Service Survey**

**Bienvenidos a la Encuesta de Servicio al Cliente de Nueva York**

Please choose the language you wish to do the survey in:  
Por favor, elija el idioma que desea hacer la encuesta:

[English](#)

[Español](#)

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## NYC Businesses

### Entrepreneurs who Help our City Thrive

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#### Small Businesses

- Small businesses support the City's economy
- Small businesses are a key sector of City employment

#### Small Business Owners

1. Gain a foothold on the "American Dream"
2. Are risk takers
3. Invest their own money
4. Work long hours



## **Inspector Support and Resources**

Inspectors can expect from the City:

- Support in educating business owners
- Support from their agencies in carrying out their duties
- The right resources and tools to do their jobs
- Training to succeed at their jobs
- Recognition for a job well done



## Facilitator Guide #2

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### Facilitator Introduction:

- Introduce the section on inspector authority and consistency.

### Instructions:

- Remind the group that these are sensitive areas in dealing with business owners.

### Discussion:

- Ask the group to give their opinion of what they think is allowed under their authority. Ask the group to express what they think are the limits to their authority.
- Ask the group if they recall situations where business owners expressed surprise at their findings.
- Ask the group for examples from their personal life where inconsistency in rules or decision making has caused them problems.
- Use examples from other professions—e.g. law enforcement, teachers, judges, etc. to generate discussion.
- Ask the group to list actions on their part which are strictly forbidden.

**Materials:** *Participant's Workbook*



## **Inspector Authority**

- Inspectors are agents of the City and have the unique authority to enter a business owner's premises, inspect it and issue violations
- The inspector needs to exercise this power in his or her official capacity but not beyond the authority to enforce rules and regulations
- The inspector must recognize the reasons for, the effectiveness of, and the limits to their authority
  - Inspector must never address business owners in a threatening or condescending manner



## **Inspection Consistency**

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### **Inspection Consistency is Good Customer Service**

- Inspections should be consistent over time and between different business owners
- Consistency is a high professional standard
  - Provides a sense of fairness
  - Provides stability and predictability
- Consistency helps business owners know what to expect
- Consistency helps business owners prepare to meet our standards

**What Inspectors Should Not Discuss**

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[Your agency should teach and complete this section as appropriate to the policies of your individual agency. This topic varies between agencies.]

Great Service, Great City – Making the Connection

Great Service, Great City Part I  
Making the Connection



## Facilitator Guide #3

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### Activity Goal:

- Create a learning environment conducive to the transfer of knowledge, the retention of information, and the contribution of thoughts and ideas.

### Facilitator Introduction:

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

### Instructions:

- **Separate** class into small groups of five or less.
- **Review** instructions with group and allow 15 minutes to complete the activities. Have each group choose a member (or everyone) to present their ideas to the class. Only allow each group 3-5 minutes to present (depending on class size).

### Discussion:

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

**Materials:** Paper, tape, glue sticks, markers, scissors, tape, other craft items

## **Customer Service Marketing Plan**

We are all here to contribute to the betterment of customer service throughout New York City.

Work in groups and play the role of an agency senior manager or marketing executive

Your task is to create a marketing campaign for the agency.

You may use pictures, songs, skits, ads, and commercials to promote the theme of delivering quality customer service.

You may include anything that adequately represents the quality of customer service we provide.

Select one member of the group or all members to make the presentation for your group.

**YOU HAVE 10 MINUTES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

**YOU HAVE 1 MINUTE FOR PRESENTATION**

## Facilitator Guide #4

### Facilitator Introduction:

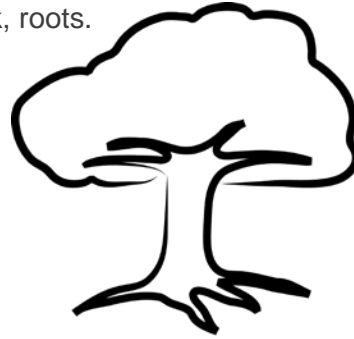
- Introduce goal and objectives of the module to the participants.

### Activity Goal:

- Participants are introduced to the Customer Service vision statement and Participants will get a visual of the customer service values and will discover how each value is interrelated with each other.

### Instructions:

- Draw a tree with branches on the flipchart page. Make sure you include branches, leaves, tree trunk, roots.



- Ask the participants, “What is the VISION of customer service in New York City?” Encourage a discussion from their responses and write them on a flipchart.
- Share the actual Vision statement with the participants.
- Ask the participants “Are there similarities between your responses and the actual Vision statement?”

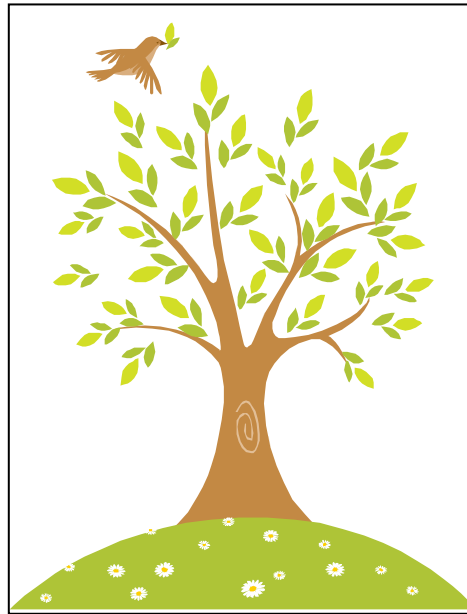
### Discussion:

Ask the participants to identify possible conflicts and what they can do as supervisors to bridge the gap.

**Materials:** Flipchart, Customer Service Tree (Flipchart), Markers, Post-it Notes

## Values Tree

What are customer service values?



**Exercise:** Complete the Tree. Use the space below to write the values that you feel are important for customer service excellence.




## Facilitator Guide #5

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### Activity Goal:

- Participants will get a visual of the customer service values and will discover how each value is interrelated with the other values.

### Facilitator Introduction:

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

### Instructions:

- **Ask** participants, “What are some of the values we would have to instill to support New York City’s vision for excellent customer service?”
- **Distribute** six post-it notes and have participants write responses on post-it notes.
- **Have participants** place post-it notes on the customer service tree. After sharing responses, present and discuss the three values, and the importance of each.
- **Acknowledge** that in times of need, NYC residents and businesses depend on us as government employees to deliver essential services.
- **Present** the slogan and provide an introduction. While it can be sometimes difficult to live up to these values, New Yorkers have come to expect it, in the thick of it all, we still provide great service, “Great City, Great Service.”
- **Relate back** any discussions to specific items in the Business Owner’s Bill of Rights. Where possible and appropriate, connect items taught back to the Rights.

### Discussion:

- Optional. To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

**Materials:** Flipchart, Customer Service Tree (Flipchart), Markers, Post-it Notes

## NYC Vision, Values, Slogan

### VISION

*“New York City provides great customer service no matter where you come from or what you need. We deliver for New Yorkers with patience, professionalism and expertise.”*

### VALUES

**Respect:** Treat our customers fairly and with courtesy. Be accessible to all individuals, regardless of their language preference, gender, country of origin, skin color, disability, sexual orientation, or any other factor.

**Timeliness:** Address issues quickly and effectively. Be clear in the steps you are taking to resolve a customer’s inquiry.

**Quality:** Our customers’ concerns are our concerns. Assume responsibility for their needs and give answers that are accurate and complete. Provide the same great service over the phone, by letter or e-mail, or in person.



## Facilitator Guide #6

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### Activity Goal:

- Participants will define who their customers are. They will also be able to identify their internal customers.

### Facilitator Introduction:

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

### Instructions:

- **Begin** the word association exercise.
- **Use** a flipchart to create a visual of participants' responses. The key here is the first word that "pops" into participants minds.
- **Review** the compiled list and try to narrow down differences.
- **Use** the process of elimination.
- **Write** a definition for customer using the remaining responses.
- **Instruct** participants to write the definition also.
- **Assure** that the common definition is applicable to all agencies represented.
- **Write** a list of internal and external customers.

### Discussion:

- Discuss differences.
- *Special Note: You may face various definitions of internal and external customer as customers vary from agency to agency.*

**Materials:** Participant's Workbook, Flipchart

**Defining Internal and External Customers**

Write on the line below the very first word that comes to mind when you hear “**Customer.**”

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Write your definition for “**customer**” on the lines below:

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## Facilitator Guide #7

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### Activity Goal:

- Participants will link the customer service values with their customers.

### Facilitator Introduction:

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

### Instructions:

- **Have participants** create a short list of their internal and external customers. List the values required to service the internal and external customers they have listed. *These values can be different from NYC's values as previously stated.*
- **Review** the list to discuss the differences in the services provided to internal and external customers.
- *The Instructor is constantly trying to correlate the participants' values to those of New York City and to the Business Owner's Bill of Rights.*

**Materials:** Participant's Workbook

## Who are our Customers?

In the spaces below, list your internal and external customers. Your instructor will guide you through this process.

Internal Customers	External Customers
List the values for successful internal customer service	List the values for successful external customer service

## Facilitator Guide #8

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### Activity Goal:

- Use the inspectors' real life experience to identify top 3 customer service "Do's" and "Don'ts".

### Facilitator Introduction:

- Tell the participants that you now want to take what they've learned up to this point and use their real life experience to create a list of "Do's" and "Don'ts".

### Instructions:

- **Have participants** think of what they would tell a new inspector about the 3 things they should absolutely do and the 3 things they should avoid doing when conducting an inspection.
- **List** all items and have the group vote on the top 3 for each do and each don't. Encourage participants to discuss why they think some choices are more important than others.

**Materials:** *Participant's Workbook*

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## **Customer Service Do's and Don'ts – Keeping it Real**

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On flipchart paper, list the Do's and Don'ts named by the inspectors.

<b>Customer Service Do's</b>	<b>Customer Service Don'ts</b>



## Facilitator Guide #9

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**Activity Goal:**

- Inspectors apply what they've learned to inspections using role play.

**Facilitator Introduction:**

- Tell the participants that you now want to take what they've learned up to this point and apply it to a role play scenario of their choosing. Not the three possible scenarios.

**Instructions:**

- Have participants volunteer to play the role of inspector or business owner. Explain each scenario quickly and give them a few minutes to run through the role play.
- Have the participants who observe the role play comment on the role players' performance, specifically what they would have done differently. Ask the participant role playing the business owner how they felt during the role play.

**Materials:** *Participant's Workbook*

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## **Role Play**

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Have the inspectors conduct a role play of a segment of an inspection. Ask to apply the skills and information they learned to their role play. One inspector plays an inspector, another inspector plays a business owner.

Scenario 1:

Inspector enters the premises, introduces themselves and explains the purpose of the inspection.

Scenario 2:

Inspector conducts the inspection. Participants suggest specific inspection topic – e.g. food temperature; hood range, etc.

Scenario 3:

Inspector identifies a violation and explains the reason for the violation to the inspector as well as next steps for the business owner.

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Great Service, Great City – Cultural Appreciation

Great Service Great City Part II  
Cultural Appreciation



## Facilitator Guide #10

### Facilitator Introduction:

- **Explain** to participants that the purpose is to introduce and define culture, and limited English proficiency, and relate these to the customer service vision and values and to the Business Owner's Bill of Rights. Access to government services and information for all customers, regardless of their background, is particularly important in a city as diverse as NYC.
- While the ultimate goal is for a cultural aware and sensitive staff, this activity aims to lay a foundation by emphasizing the participant's self-awareness, and linking it to empathy and customer service.

### Instructions:

- **Ask** participants to review the definition of culture. Discuss the impact of culture and its effect on excellent customer service.
- **Ask** participants to individually answer the workbook question.
- **Discussion:**
  - Answer the following questions in a small group. Depending on time, you may ask participants to report their findings back to the large group. Questions may include:
    - What challenges do customers from different cultures face in obtaining high quality customer service?
    - What challenges have you seen customers face, either in your agency, or at another NYC agency, in accessing services?
    - How does this relate to the customer service vision & values?
  - The emphasis here is on limited English proficiency and using positive body language to overcome the language barrier.
- **Ask** participants to define limited English proficiency. Provide the correct definition, (if not provided by participants) and discuss the impact of limited

# Facilitator Guide

English proficiency and its effect on excellent customer service.

- LEP Definition: **Limited English Proficient (LEP)** customers are customers who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English. These customers have the right to interpretation (verbal) or translation (written) services from English to their primary language.

**Materials:** *Participant's Workbook*

## Cultural Awareness

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When considering our customers' expectations, we need to consider another very important aspect of effective customer service.

### CULTURE

The word 'culture' includes thought, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups. Culture is often referred to as all that is passed on from generation to generation. The term culture also includes ways in which people with disabilities, or people from various religious backgrounds, or people who are gay, lesbian, or transgender experience the world around them.

*Adapted from the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) indicators for Cultural Competence (2007)*

**Reflect about a time when without intending to do so, you were culturally insensitive, someone was culturally insensitive towards you, or you witnessed someone being insensitive. Briefly describe the situation.**

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## Cultural Competency

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The culturally competent organization:

- Values diversity
- Conducts cultural self-assessments
- Is conscious of and manages the dynamics of difference
- Offers institutionalized cultural knowledge
- Adapts service to fit the cultural diversity of the community served

The culturally competent individual:

- Has the ability to effectively interact with people of different cultures.
- Makes an effort to develop an understanding of cultural differences in order to develop cross-cultural skills
- Does not impose his/her values on others

The City makes a considerable effort to accommodate customer diversity.

How do you feel your division meets the diverse needs of the communities that we serve?

What are some things that can be done?

What are some things that you can do to provide service excellence to our diverse customers?

## Accepting Differences

Language is sometimes one of our biggest barriers in providing customer service excellence. In New York City we speak 182 languages and 362 dialects.

To assure effective communication in this diverse environment:

- Utilize the translation services offered by our agency
- Each bureau should have a process in place to provide translation and hearing impaired services for our customers
- We should all learn to adapt to our environments, whether our differences are cultural, personal or social

### Limited English Proficient Population: By Language

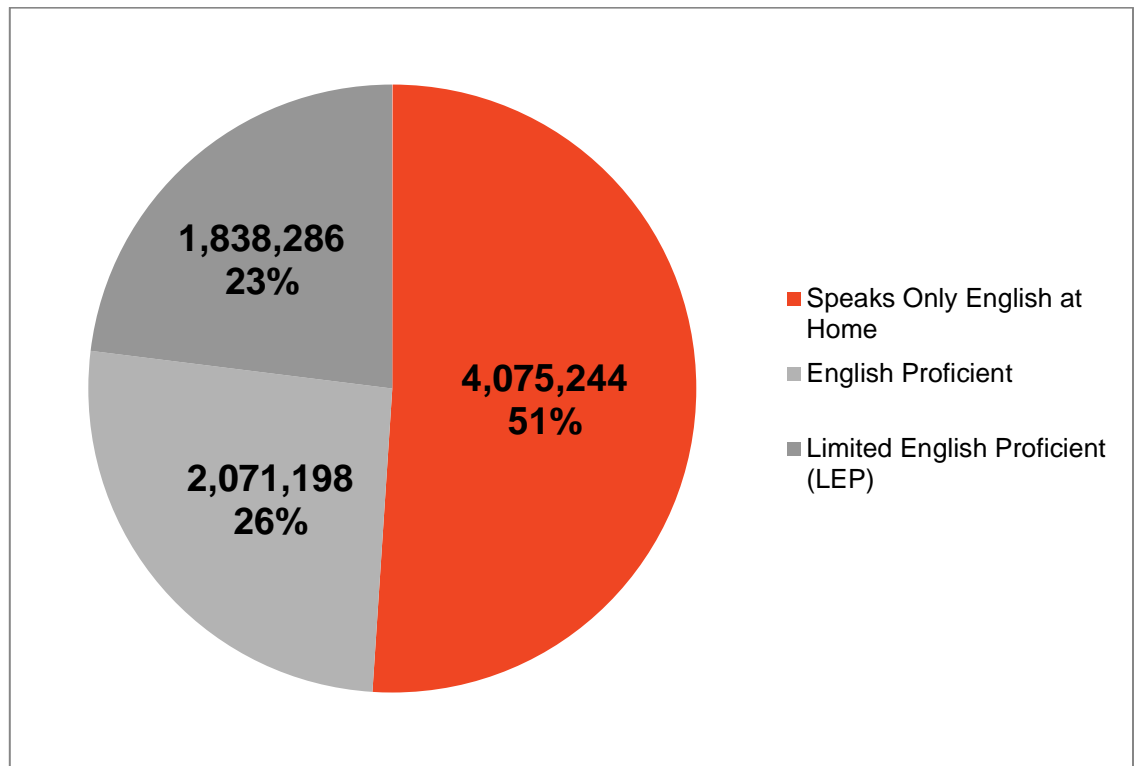
		Number	Percent
<b>Total LEP</b>		1,838,286	100%
<b>Top LEP</b>	Spanish	878,677	47.8%
	Chinese (Cantonese/Mandarin)	347,143	18.9%
	Russian	100,286	5.5%
	Bengali	58,006	3.2%
	Korean	47,351	2.6%
	Haitian	41,550	2.3%
	Yiddish	36,059	2.0%
	Arabic	35,528	1.9%
	Polish	27,491	1.5%
	Italian	25,260	1.4%



**Understanding the demographics of NYC**

- Immigrants and their children make up over 60% of the population of NYC
- 37% of NYC residents are foreign born
- The New York City Department of City Planning estimates that the City will gain a million new residents over the next 25 years, most of whom will be immigrants.

**Persons by English Language Ability  
New York City - 2016 American Community Survey**



Source for LEP data: US Census Bureau, 2016 American Community Survey—Public Use Microdata Sample

## **NYC's Language Access Policy**

Executive Order 120 of 2008 requires that all public-facing City agencies:

- Designate a Language Access Coordinator
- Develop a Language Access Policy and Implementation Plan
- Provide services in the top six non-English languages spoken by its customers
- Translate essential public documents
- Monitor and track the provision of agency language services

The goal of the City's Language Access Policy is to ensure that a person's inability to speak English proficiently does not interfere with their ability to receive services.

Agencies should use as their primary resources:

- A telephonic translation service
- Front line staff who speak another language
- The Volunteer Language Bank
- Translated documents and signage
- Aides in identifying the language of preference, including "I Speak" cards and the Free Interpretation Services poster
- The Language Gateway

Agencies should not:

- Ask relatives or other customers to interpret or translate
- Use Google translator
- Turn LEP customers away

The Mayor's Office of Operations Language Access Secret Shopper (LASS) program checks to see if service centers are in compliance.

## **Local Law 132 of 2013 - Language Preference for Inspections**

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Local law 132 of 2013 requires agencies to provide business owners the opportunity, when submitting a new license or renewing their license, to request the language in which they prefer their inspection to be conducted.

Agencies need to have a protocol and procedures in place to provide business owners an interpreter when conducting an inspection.

- Usually the interpreted inspection will occur with the use of telephonic interpreter services
- Occasionally, if an inspector speaks the requested language, interpretation can be provided by the inspector
- Agencies should also put in place a procedure to formally track these requests and the provision of services

## Understanding Gestures

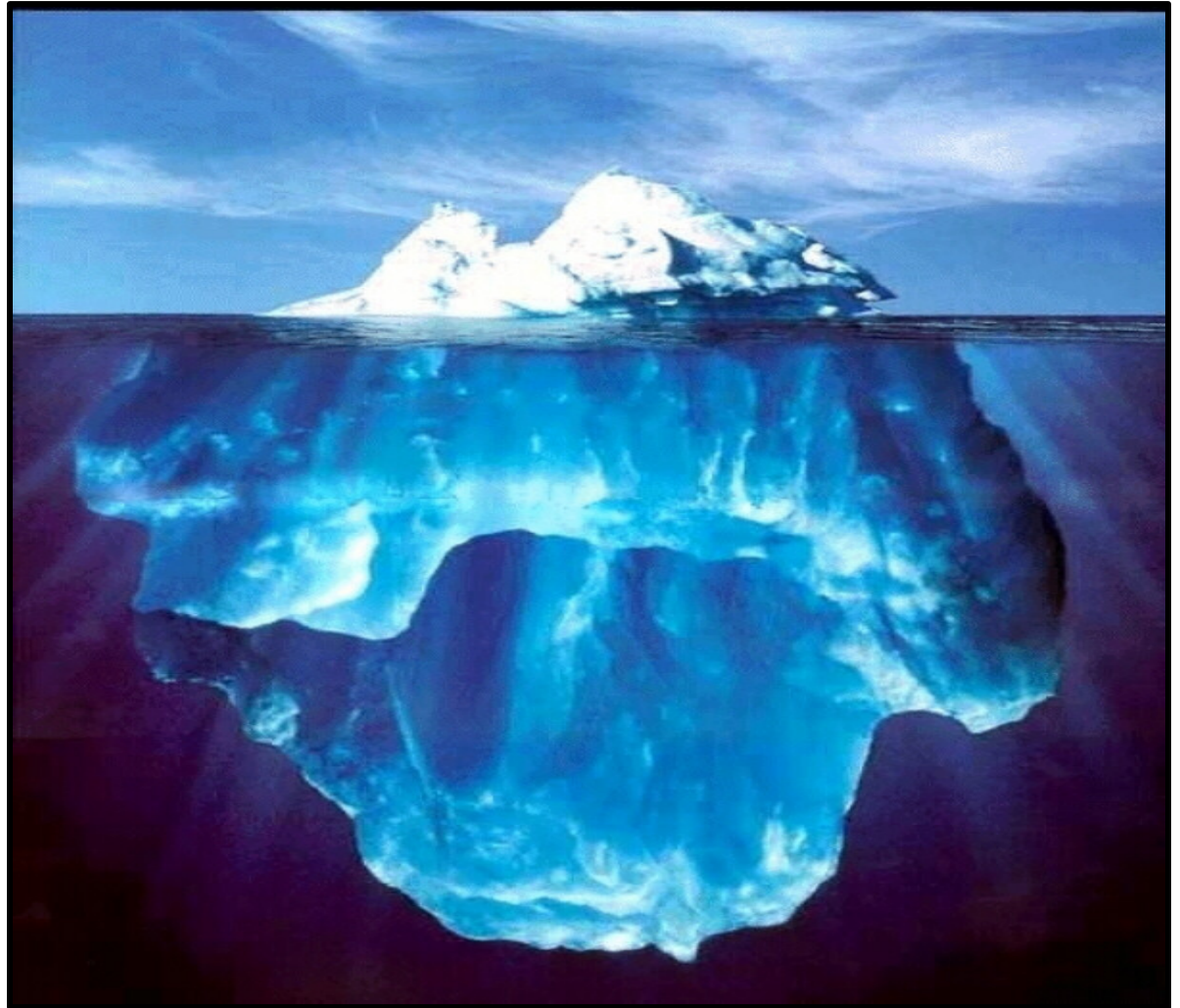
Gesture	U.S. Interpretation	Interpretation in Other Parts of the World
Thumbs Up	Approval, Agreement, same as "OK" gesture	Insult, same as using middle finger  Considered the worst insult in the Middle East especially when both thumbs are up!
Beckon with Index Finger	"Come Here"	Insult or obscene gesture
Raising your hand up in front of someone's face.	"Talk to the Hand" Gesture	Extremely insulting especially when coupling the gesture with a brash "na"!
Point at something in the room with the index finger	Address attention to something	Insulting
Make a "V" sign.	Sign of victory or peace.	Facing the palm towards you, means "Shove it!"
Smile	Is universally generally understood as approval, or happiness.	Smile when they are confused or angry.  Many smile when they are embarrassed.  Smiles are reserved for friends.

Gesture	U.S. Interpretation	Interpretation in Other Parts of the World
Sit with the bottom of your soles showing.	In the US it is not unusual to place one leg across the lap, resting the ankle on the opposite knee.	Disrespect. You are exposing the lowest and dirtiest part of your body. It is considered insulting.
Form a circle with thumb and index finger, with the other fingers splayed	Agreement, Approval, O.K.	Obscene gesture. Money Zero, Worthless
Passing an item to someone with one hand.  Passing Item with left hand	No impact.  No impact	Rude  Rude – The left hand is considered unclean
Wave hand with palm facing outward to greet someone	Greeting	Means “No.”  Insult if too close to the face
Nod head up and down.	Yes.	Means “No.”

## Cultural Iceberg



What percentage of the iceberg  
can you actually see?



## The Iceberg Concept of Culture

Like an iceberg, the majority of culture is below the surface.

### Surface Culture

Above sea level

Emotional load: relatively low

food ▪ dress ▪ music ▪  
visual arts ▪ drama ▪ crafts  
dance ▪ literature ▪ language  
celebrations ▪ games



### Deep Culture

#### Unspoken Rules

Partially below sea level

Emotional load: very high

courtesy ▪ contextual conversational patterns ▪ concept of time  
personal space ▪ rules of conduct ▪ facial expressions  
nonverbal communication ▪ body language ▪ touching ▪ eye contact  
patterns of handling emotions ▪ notions of modesty ▪ concept of beauty  
courtship practices ▪ relationships to animals ▪ notions of leadership  
tempo of work ▪ concepts of food ▪ ideals of childrearing  
theory of disease ▪ social interaction rate ▪ nature of friendships  
tone of voice ▪ attitudes toward elders ▪ concept of cleanliness  
notions of adolescence ▪ patterns of group decision-making  
definition of insanity ▪ preference for competition or cooperation  
tolerance of physical pain ▪ concept of "self" ▪ concept of past and future  
definition of obscenity ▪ attitudes toward dependents ▪ problem-solving  
roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and so forth

#### Unconscious Rules

Completely below sea level

Emotional load: intense





## Cultural Differences - Role Play

Instructions: Your group has 15 minutes to develop a scenario using the skills and strategies discussed during the training.

Sample role-play topics:

- **Power Dynamics:** Please demonstrate appropriate and inappropriate use of authority while serving customers
- **Accents:** Please demonstrate appropriate and inappropriate ways of dealing with a customer with an accent
- **Language:** Please demonstrate several techniques of serving a customer who is limited in English
- **Difficult Customers:** Please demonstrate several techniques for dealing with a customer who is culturally insensitive, inappropriate or difficult.

### SCENARIO

Your group's role-play scenario:

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The scenario demonstrated:

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## **Communicating and Managing Conflict**

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In this section:

### **1. Communicating**

- a. First Impressions
- b. Effective Communication
- c. Empathy
- d. Negative Words and Phrases
- e. Body Language
- f. Communicating with Difficult People

### **2. Managing Conflict**

- a. Difficult Personality Types
- b. The De-escalation Process
- c. Conflict Resolution Styles
- d. Giving Bad News

## Facilitator Guide #11

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**Activity Goal:**

- To educate inspectors on the importance of first impressions in establishing a good relationship with a business owner and how this can set the foundation for effective communication.

**Facilitator Introduction:**

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

**Instructions:**

- Have inspectors discuss how first impressions affect them in their personal lives.
- Have them recall incidents where a first impression made a difference in how they related to someone or how they perceived someone.

**Discussion:**

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

**Materials:** *Paper, tape, glue sticks, markers, scissors, tape, other craft items*

## First Impressions

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- Within seconds a customer will form an opinion about you based on the appearance of your workplace, your body language, your demeanor, your greeting and how you are dressed.
- Making first encounters positive is extremely important in setting the tone for the interaction that follows. Consider some of the things that you can do to influence a positive first impression.
- Answering the telephone in a timely manner, acknowledging someone who walks in (even when you are already involved in a conversation) starting an appointment on time, will influence a positive first impression.
- Calm, cool and collected. When you are at ease, confident, and demonstrate interest in what an individual has to say, you set the tone for a better interaction.
- Demonstrate courtesy and respect.

### EYE CONTACT

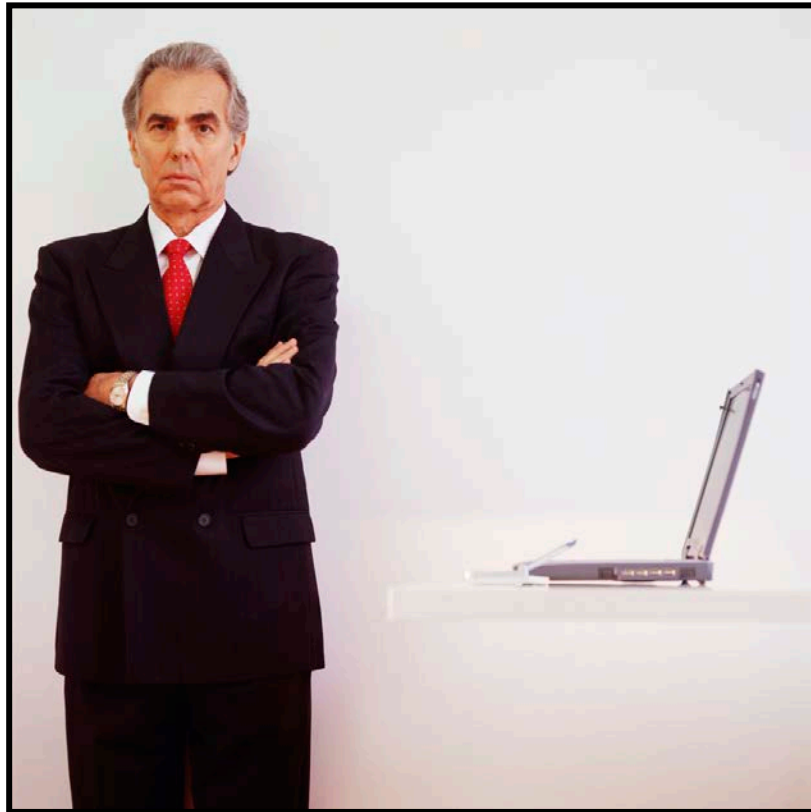
Why is eye contact important? When engaged in face to face communication, eye contact may demonstrate that:

- The listener is making an effort to listen.
- The speaker wants you to feel that it is important that you understand the message.

Rolling your eyes may say that you are not in agreement, that what you heard does not make any sense, or that you don't care.

Looking away may say that you are bored or distracted.

Be aware that your facial expressions impact the *customer's perception* of how *you* may feel about what they are expressing.



Although this individual is dressed professionally, the attitude and body language seen here do not reflect that he is ready to address his customers in a helpful, courteous, or respectful manner.



It's not just about the clothes that you wear; it's the attitude you wear as well! Look at the difference putting on a smile makes. When greeting our customers our facial expressions and body language will set the tone for the interaction. A smile and eye contact, under the right circumstances, send a positive message.

## Facilitator Guide #12

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**Activity Goal:**

- To understand the foundations of effective communication and to use this knowledge in conveying information to business owners during inspections.

**Facilitator Introduction:**

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

**Instructions:**

- Inform inspectors of the primary importance of good communication.

**Discussion:**

- Have inspectors discuss incidents, personal or on the job, where miscommunication caused problems.

***Materials: Paper, tape, glue sticks, markers, scissors, tape, other craft items***

## Effective Communication

### Important Steps for Effective Communication:

- **Set Clear Expectations** – Ensure that you understand what the customer wants and that the customer is clear about what you are able to deliver.
- **Listen** – Let them express themselves without interruptions. You may ask questions when they are finished speaking.
- **Reflect Feelings** – Empathize. Let them know that you understand how they feel. Acknowledge thoughts, ideas, and feelings.
- **Paraphrase** – Restate what they said in your own words. Say it in different ways until you get an agreement from the customer that *you* understand.
- **Summarize and Clarify** - One more time, just to be sure. If you don't get it right, you may end up wasting time, working on the wrong issue or frustrating the customer.
- **Offer a Recommendation** – Provide alternative solutions. Try to get the customer to agree to something that you are able to deliver.

### Tone:

The emphasis you place on a particular word and the tone you use can drastically change the meaning of a sentence.

- *I* never said she stole my money.
- I **never** said she stole my money.
- I never **said** she stole my money.
- I never said **she** stole my money.
- I never said she **stole** my money.
- I never said she stole **my** money.
- I never said she stole my **money**.



## Facilitator Guide #13

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**Activity Goal:**

- Participants will apply empathy and share best practices.

**Facilitator Introduction:**

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

**Instructions:**

- **Review and discuss** the various ways to empathize. This discussion will be driven by the participants.
- **Provide** various examples of empathy statements. A good way to start reflective statements is with such phrases as “It sounds like . . .”; “It appears that . . .”; or “It seems like . . .” These phrases work well because they are noncommittal.
- **Optional Activity:**
  - Using the flipchart, create a “mock” wall of fame; Place the winners of the “Walk in their shoes” game on the mock “Wall of Fame”.
  - Distribute the shoe cards and follow the above instructions to being the walk in their shoes game.
  - Begin the game using the instructions displayed on the following page.

**Discussion:**

- Conclude with a discussion of words and phrases that are negative and counter-productive.

**Materials:** *Participant’s Workbook*

## Empathy

What is Empathy?

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What is Sympathy?

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Write your interpretation of the difference between the two.

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**Three ways to show Empathy are to:**

1. Recognize and identify emotions
2. Paraphrase the customer's issue or concern
3. Make non-committal responses

**Here are some tips to keep in mind:**

- Learn to put yourself in the other person's shoes by acknowledging **they in fact have DIFFERENT shoes**.
- Hear with a desire to **truly listen** rather than quietly allowing the customer to talk while you formulate your response.
- Find a point of agreement in the conversation, not in the complaint.

**“Walk in their shoes” Game**

The instructor will describe five customer engagement situations. You must provide a word or statement that accurately displays empathy for the customer's situation. To respond, you must be the first participant to raise your hand and yell “Empathy” If your response is accurate, the instructor will give you a pair of shoes. If your response is inaccurate, you will have to turn in a pair of shoes. You will receive three pair of shoes at the beginning of the game. The participant with the most pair of shoes at the end of the game will be listed in the classroom on the wall of fame.

In the event of a tie, all tied participants will be listed on the wall of fame.

## Negative Words and Phrases

<p><b>Any reference to ethnicity, race/color, religion, sexual preference, disability, gender, etc.</b></p>	<p><b>Phrases that express an opinion about the customer</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I don't like you</li> <li>• You are rude</li> <li>• You have no right to....</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other words related to unequal treatment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Racist</li> <li>• Discrimination</li> <li>• Bias</li> <li>• Bigoted</li> <li>• Race</li> </ul>	<p><b>Words or phrases that suggest disinterest</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whatever</li> <li>• I don't care</li> <li>• I don't give a dam_</li> <li>• That has nothing to do with..</li> <li>• I'm not interested in....</li> <li>• I don't want to hear about your...</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phrases that blame or imply blame or suggest ignorance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you paid attention, you would...</li> <li>• Why don't you listen?</li> <li>• You don't know anything about...</li> <li>• Obviously, you haven't.....</li> </ul>	<p><b>Phrases that suggest helplessness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There's nothing I can do</li> <li>• There's nothing you can do</li> </ul>
<p><b>Absolute words</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always</li> <li>• Never</li> </ul>	<p><b>Phrases that contain a threat</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you don't be quiet I will throw you out.</li> <li>• You aren't going to get much help if you insult me.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Phrases that challenge, dare or bait</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go ahead, try to get me fired</li> <li>• You can do whatever you like.</li> <li>• My supervisor is just going to say the same thing.</li> </ul>	

**Other tips on negative phrases**

- Phrase your comments or questions as diplomatically as possible:
  - Instead of “I need to see your basement now,” use “would you be willing to show me your basement.”
  - Instead of “I disagree with that”, use “I partially agree with you on that.”
  - Instead of “But...” use: “And at the same time...”
  
- Use “neutral observation”, which keeps recipient in a non-defensive listening mode:
  - Instead of “YOU left the hose in soapy water and you have uncovered drums all around the floor”, use: “I noticed when I walked in your business a hose on the floor in what looks like soapy water and some uncovered drums around the space.”

Think of other examples you or your team members have used or could use in field situations.

## Facilitator Guide #14

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### Activity Goal:

- To introduce the impact of nonverbal communication and body language in a customer service interaction.

### Facilitator Introduction:

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

### Instructions:

- **Use** this exercise to emphasize the ability to communicate without speaking. Instruct participants to refer to the “Body Language Glossary” if they need to.
- **Discuss** which part of the body has the most impact in non-verbal communication. We are seeking to emphasize the power of the “smile”.

### Discussion:

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

**Materials:** *Participant’s Workbook*

## Body Language

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Pick a partner, pick an emotion. Using some of the body language signs learned earlier, recite the scenario below to your partner. Using only your body, communicate the following to the person playing the role of the customer. In this role play scenario, only the customer can talk!

Good morning Sir, How can I help you? (Customer responds).

Please have a seat while I research that information. (Customer responds).

Sir, would mind completing this form while I'm researching your service history? (Customer responds).

I really want to help resolve your concerns today; can you give me a few more minutes? (Customer responds).

Thank you, Is everything o.k. now? (Customer responds).

Have a good day! (Customer responds).

1. Did we understand what the representative was trying to convey?
2. Did the representative appear to be pleasant?

## Body Language Examples

*The following are only clues, not definitive indicators of what a person is thinking or feeling.*

**Leaning** It is quite natural to lean towards something or someone we like and lean away from something or someone we do not like.

**Turning our back.** When we turn our backs to others, denying our fronts, it may be seen as disrespectful.

**Sitting with the legs splayed out while leaning back.** This is a territorial display. Even though at home it is a relaxed posture; at work, it may say, "I am disrespecting you;" especially to a superior.

**Crossed arms.** This may be a signal that we are feeling uncomfortable. It may have the effect of distancing others. Most of us do not usually do this at home, when we are with friends, or while watching TV. In social or professional settings, we might do this to give ourselves a little comfort.

**Splayed fingers and hands, placed on a table.** It says authority and confidence. This may also be seen as a territorial display.

**Arms akimbo.** Hands on the hips with the elbows pointing out might make one seem bigger. It is a defensive posture, and it might also mean that there are some contentious issues that have the potential to develop. It is a way to get attention.

**Regal/Royal stance.** When we place our hands behind our backs, it may mean that we do not want anyone to come too close. This is often exhibited persons who are considered royalty.

**Interlaced fingers in front of us.** If we like what we are hearing, have something positive to say, or are thinking positive thoughts, our thumbs tend to



pop up and levitate. When we are less confident or we are hearing something we don't like, our thumbs tend to come down (behind the other fingers). It is a useful gesture to emphasize when we feel positive about something.

**Steepled fingertips with fingers spread apart.** People who consider themselves of high status tend to display this behavior. It may indicate confidence and precise thinking.

**Touching the neck.** This posture might convey insecurity, concern, fear, or defensiveness. A tough or stiff neck holds the head in a position to continuously observe the perceived threat.

**Wiggling the feet.** Repetitive motion like wiggling a foot or bouncing a leg may have a calming or pacifying effect. It may also mean we wish to move things along. When it transitions to a kick, for example, with one leg over the other, it may mean the brain is quite likely considering something negative.

**Crossing one leg in front of the other.** Standing or sitting, it is a sign of comfort. We rarely do this in front of people we don't like or trust.

**Toes pointing up.** Standing or sitting, it generally means we are feeling positive, comfortable and content. Feet are perhaps the most accurate indicators of how we feel about things. You most likely not see this in someone who is depressed.

**Standing "at ease."** Feet firmly planted and slightly apart, hands clasped or with one hand over the other. This is a secure stance that means that the person is ready to assume a more defensive posture if necessary. The posture can be seen when you observe police or security officers on guard.

*Extracted from an article in the Washington Post*

## Facilitator Guide #15

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### Activity Goal:

- Provide skills to working with people who express difficult behavior.

### Facilitator Introduction:

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

### Instructions:

- **Ask** participants to describe examples of the difficult behaviors listed. Provide explanations if the definitions are not clear, be certain there is a common understanding of the characteristics for each behavior.
- **Use** this opportunity to allow participants to role play the difficult behaviors. Allow the role plays to be created by the participants.
- **Instruct** the participants to use some of the difficult situations they must deal with to motivate the role play.

### Discussion:

- **Engage** the participants to discuss and resolve the issues that were revealed during the role play.
- The instructor should have time for two role plays of the most common difficult customer behavior.
- These role plays are also practice for the final role play following this module.

**Materials:** *Participant's Workbook*

## **Communicating with Difficult People**

Now that we have learned about thinking styles and learning styles, we should be able to communicate without a hitch. Right? Not necessarily! The truth of the matter is that no matter what a person's thinking style is, there are a myriad of things that contribute to how and why people communicate the way that they do.

We discussed cultural differences, the influence that tone and body language have on communication, and how thinking and learning styles contribute to perceptions and outcomes. All of this knowledge has been proven to be helpful, yet there is another factor to consider in this process. It is probably one of the most common causes of conflict. Learning to communicate effectively with difficult people is the next step in helping us to improve customer interactions.

Every once in awhile we come across an individual who believes that the only way to get what he wants is to yell, threaten, whine, complain or stomp his feet. Sometimes circumstances can cause any one of us to become the difficult person. When we feel that we have been "wronged" we can become quite irate. Realistically, this type of behavior can ignite tension, anger, frustration and even irrationality. Not everyone reacts in the same way to the same situation and there are people who use defense mechanisms that are not only hurtful but contribute to conflict.

There are a few things we can do to effectively handle difficult situations:

1. Know ourselves
2. Prepare
3. Consider your approach
4. Understand the difficult personality "types" – The Tank, Sniper, and Whiner/ Complainer
5. Learn how to communicate with each type of difficult personality

**1) Know yourself and don't judge others.** If you know what your triggers are, you can take steps in advance to prevent these triggers from provoking a difficult situation. You must make a conscious effort to seriously consider the things that people may do or say that you may find irritating. Remember that you are the professional, and it's up to you to do everything that you can to influence a successful interaction, no matter how the other person behaves. The only thing that you have complete control of is your own reaction. You can't change the other person, but you may influence *how* they will respond.

**2) Prepare.** Recognize signs that can lead to a conflict. Anticipate the things that can go wrong and prepare. Consider your past experiences with difficult people, the things that went wrong, and consider what you can do to influence better outcomes. Think about how you can convey your message while avoiding escalation.

**3) Consider your approach.** How does your behavior contribute to the other person's reaction? Are you walking in to a situation as if you have all the answers? Are you leading the interaction with a negative approach? Are you demonstrating respect by practicing the keys to effective communication? Focus on what you *can* do and not on what you *can't* do. Consider the circumstances that may influence the person's behavior, Empathize, and focus on positive results.

**4) Understand Difficult Personality Types.**

***The Tank*** – Angry, provoking cutting. The ultimate in pushiness and hostility. Their anger and hostility can paralyze you and leave you feeling crushed or trampled. They are aggressive and disrespectful. If you demonstrate weakness or fear, the verbal abuse increases.

**Approach** - Demonstrate assertiveness. Remain respectful and professional but do not back down. Let this person know that you will not be pushed around. For example, repeat directions or policy in a firm, calm and even tone.

**The Sniper** – Sarcastic and sneaky is their M.O. They take pleasure in making other people look foolish. They are experts at making offensive comments and in using stinging sarcasm. They are usually are poor team players that take pleasure in spreading conflict and dissention and take pot shots every chance they get. A sniper may use a different approach each time or surprise attack you with everything all at once. A sniper can be:

- The playful one who disguises insults with jokes that are not funny at all.
- The grudge-holding individual who won't forgive or forget past experiences.
- A controlling person who won't allow you to help because they would rather relay the message that you are not competent enough to assist.

**Approach** – Unmask the sniper and bring them out of hiding. For example, explain that you find their comments offensive and not conducive to productive outcomes. While you are under attack, remind yourself that it is not your competence or abilities that are in question. *"Don't let 'em see you sweat."* Put yourself on check and don't react defensively. Stand by your decisions and be smart in your responses. Snipers derive **power** in their **ability to get you to react defensively**. The sniper wants to get you when you least expect it. They will find your weakness and take you down. Professionalism, assertiveness and confidence are your weapons.

**The Whiner/Complainer** – The whiner is the perpetual complainer. They may feel that that everything and everyone is against them. Nothing ever works for them, they feel that they are jinxed. They shoot down solutions you may offer and look for reasons that they won't work or reflect on "what ifs". They express powerlessness against their fatal destiny. They are willing to share their life story with anyone they encounter and will not hesitate to share their woes and life's injustices.

**Approach** – It is best not to reinforce complaints by repeating them. Focus on solutions. Ask questions or make suggestions that will help them feel more empowered. Get them to either agree or arrive at solutions on their own.

- Demonstrate patience and compassion.
- Listen and try to read between the lines.
- Lead the discussion. Interrupt tactfully and gain perspective and clarification.
- Don't go along with them. This will allow them to continue complaining and whining.
- Don't advise on personal issues or give your personal opinion when engaging with your customers (internal/external). Only advise on issues related to the job that you perform.
- Don't oppose them because they will continue to try and convince you.

Once the whiner/complainer is clear about the problems, you can begin making recommendations. Offer suggestions and ask questions to help them come to his/her own conclusions.

\* Find a way to close the issue with a resolution that the whiner complainer agrees with. If they don't agree to anything, respectfully close the issue.

**The Exploder** – This person explodes into a rage, sometimes with little or no provocation. They seem uncontrollable. They go into tantrum mode or hysterics sometimes accompanied by tears. The explosive reaction may not even be related to the current situation, but based on a feeling of threat or frustration.

**Approach** – Let them vent. The Exploder must be heard. The opportunity to intervene will present itself when the person starts to repeat himself/herself. This is when you must take charge of the situation by empathizing with emotions, and refrain from focusing on the behavior. Keep your eyes on the individual. Get their attention, call them by name as you lower your voice and speak calmly. Let them know that you take the situation seriously. Express your desire to help. Explain that you will not be able to assist unless there is a change in behavior. If this does not work and there are potential signs of danger, access your emergency response protocol. This is addressed in the Conflict Management module in this manual.

*“Don't let 'em see you sweat.”* Put yourself on check and don't react defensively. Stand by your decisions and be smart in your responses. Snipers derive **power** in their **ability to get you to react defensively**. The sniper wants to get you when you least expect it. They will find your weakness and take you down. Professionalism, assertiveness and confidence are your weapons.

## Managing Conflict

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Conflict is neither good nor bad. Well-managed conflict within an organization can help aid creativity and productivity. It is how new ideas are sometimes born. From the customer service perspective, how we manage conflict is critical to our relationships with our customers. As service providers, we must be very thoughtful about how we approach a conflict situation. It will make all the difference in ensuring a satisfactory outcome for both the customer and ourselves.

1. Do not take it personally!
2. Practice being friendly, immediately! Greet the customer, be polite and apologize.
3. Let the customer vent. Listen carefully, the message he or she wants to convey may be clouded with emotions; don't speak until they have gotten it all out.
4. Be honest and sincere; try to see the situation from the customer's point of view (empathize) even if you feel they are wrong.
5. Take ownership once you have the situation in front of you. Do not make excuses.
6. Consider all possible solutions.
7. Do not refer the customer to someone else until you have checked and made sure that they will receive the assistance they need.



## Conflict Resolution Styles

In the 1970s, Kenneth Thomas and Ralph Kilmann identified five main styles of dealing with conflict. They noted that these resolution styles are applied based on individual assertiveness and willingness to cooperate in any given situation. They argued that although people generally have preferred styles of resolving conflict, the situation should dictate the resolution style.

### Competitive

Personality Type	Appropriateness	Pitfalls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Firm, take a stand, know what they want.</li> <li>▪ Operate from a position of power - rank, expertise, persuasive ability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This style can be useful when there is an emergency and a decision needs to be made quickly; when the decision is unpopular; or when defending against someone who is trying to exploit the situation selfishly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This resolution style can leave people feeling bruised, unsatisfied and resentful when used in less-than-urgent situations.</li> </ul>

### Collaborative

Personality Type	Appropriateness	Pitfalls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tries to meet the needs of all individuals involved.</li> <li>▪ This person can be highly assertive but unlike the competitor, cooperates effectively and acknowledges that everyone's input is important.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This style is useful when you need to bring together a variety of viewpoints to achieve the best solution; when there have been previous conflicts in the group; or when the situation is too important for a simple trade-off.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Requires collaboration from everyone involved in the situation. Everyone must be willing to discuss the issues and state their individual needs.</li> </ul>

**Compromising**

Personality Type	Appropriateness	Pitfalls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Prefers a compromising strategy to find a solution that will at least partially satisfy everyone.</li> <li>▪ Everyone is expected to give up something, and the compromiser also expects to relinquish something.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Compromise is useful when the cost of conflict is higher than the cost of losing ground; when equal strength opponents are at a standstill; and when there is a deadline looming.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ If each party is not willing to give up something, there will not be a resolution.</li> </ul>

**Accommodating**

Personality Type	Appropriateness	Pitfalls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This style indicates a willingness to meet the needs of others at the expense of one's own needs.</li> <li>▪ The accommodator often knows when to give in to others, but can be persuaded to surrender a position even when it is not warranted.</li> <li>▪ This person is not assertive but is highly cooperative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Accommodation is appropriate when the issues matter more to the other party; when peace is more valuable than winning; or when you want to be in a position to collect on this "favor" you did.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ People may not return favors.</li> </ul> <p>Overall this approach is unlikely to yield the best outcomes. Someone usually relinquishes their position.</p>

**Avoiding**

<b>Personality Type</b>	<b>Appropriateness</b>	<b>Pitfalls</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ People leaning towards this style seek to evade the conflict entirely.</li><li>▪ This style is typified by delegating controversial decisions, accepting default decisions, and not wanting to hurt anyone's feelings.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ It can be appropriate when victory is impossible, when the controversy is trivial, or when someone else is in a better position to solve the problem.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Not dealing directly with the problem; delegating it to others. It may anger the customer to have to deal with yet another service provider.</li></ul>

Think about how you respond to conflict. Which of these styles reflects what you are likely to do? Consider the approaches that you have used in the past, and what you can now do differently to help you in situations where conflict exists. You can use an approach that meets the situation, resolves the problem, respects people's valid interests, and mends damaged working relationships.

## The De-Escalation Process

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### Plan Ahead

Know your emotional triggers. Consider what your reaction might be, and determine the most respectful, thoughtful, courteous and professional way to respond that will not elevate the conflict.

### Anticipate

What are the customers' expectations? What is his or her perception of you? Remember that you represent not only the agency but the city of New York and you have the power to influence how customers view city government.

### Bring it down

Allow the customer to vent. Lower your voice and maintain a calm demeanor. Do not interrupt until they have finished. You will know they have finished when they start to repeat themselves.

### Intercept

Recognize changes in behavior that accompany an escalating conflict and respond appropriately.

**In the first stage of an escalation: anxiety** is marked by a **change in behavior**. A talkative person may become quiet; a calm person may begin to fidget, wring his hands, pace the floor or stare. Your response should be supportive. This means offering an empathic, non-judgmental approach such as offering your assistance, giving the person your full attention, and listening. You may also consider changing the venue, offering a seat or a glass of water. This may help the individual to calm down.

**In the second stage:** an individual may become **defensive**, meaning he or she begins to **lose rationality and becomes non-compliant**. They

might declare their intent to disregard your instructions, they might use profanity or intimidation. Your response should be **directive**, i.e., give clear rational directions that are simple, clear, and enforceable.

**In the final stage:** an individual may become **physically violent**. They have lost physical and emotional control and others around them may feel threatened. Hitting, grabbing, threatening physical harm, throwing objects, no matter how small, are examples of violence. Your response should be to remove yourself from immediate danger and summon help. Follow your **violence response protocols** to ensure safety for yourself and others.

### **Engage**

Address the customer with courtesy, call him or her by name. Re-state the issue in your own words; not only the complaint but also the solution that the customer is seeking. This demonstrates that you are actually listening. Focus on the possible solutions that fall within your program's protocols. Communicate the best resolution in a calm and respectful manner.

### **Re-Direct**

Bring in an expert or your supervisor to provide further assistance. If you feel threatened or if you feel the situation could become dangerous, inform your supervisor. You may even need to call 911.

### **BE ALERT FOR SIGNS OF VIOLENCE!**

- Know the plan.
- Discuss the de-escalation plan with your supervisor.
- Each staff member should know the steps to take and their role in a violent situation.
- The Police are available to assist with developing a plan and providing training.

## Facilitator Guide #16

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**Activity Goal:**

- Provide skills for delivering “bad news” in the inspection environment.

**Facilitator Introduction:**

- To be determined by the facilitator, if necessary.

**Instructions:**

- **Ask** participants to describe examples of reactions they had when giving bad news and what they might have done differently.

**Discussion:**

- **Engage** the participants in a role play where they deliver different levels of “bad news”.

**Materials:** *Participant’s Workbook*

## Giving Bad News

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Though giving bad news is seldom easy, for many of us it is a regular part of our jobs.

Bad news during an inspection include warnings, violations or, in the worst case, closure of a business.

Bad news can trigger conflict, anger, anxiety, agitation, or even aggression. It would be unrealistic for you to expect that the receiver of bad news will be calm and compliant. When you are the one delivering bad news, try to imagine yourself in other person's place. How would you feel? How would you prefer to have the news delivered? No matter how little time you have, you can prepare to deliver the news in a manner that is respectful, customer service oriented, and physically and emotionally safe, so that the receiver is likely to feel supported and treated fairly.

### The Integrated Experience

The behaviors and attitudes of a service provider directly influence the attitudes and behaviors of the customer. The reverse is also true. A calm, professional approach during any situation that has the potential to be hostile or contentious can reduce tension and decrease the physical and emotional energy.

Responding appropriately to each level of behavior the customer displays can prevent a bad situation from deteriorating, and improve the overall outcome. Your attitude and professionalism are reflected in your behavior.

As service providers, we have little control over why a customer is acting out. These **precipitating factors** can include past experiences, family problems, personal health, loss of power or self-esteem, fear of the unknown, fear of

failure, displaced anger, psychological/physiological causes. We also have to deal with our own personal factors. In spite of all this, we must control our own behavior and not take hostility personally. In other words, we must **rationally detach**.

### Conditions

Bad news should not be delivered in haste. Use what you know about the individual; their values, general attitude, stress level, and history. Have your facts straight, have all necessary documents ready and be prepared to justify them, anticipate questions, keep comments professional. Consider your physical location and the proximity of other people as well as items can be used as weapons. Also, make sure that your path of escape is clear.

### Key Principles

Observe these principles to effectively deliver the news and bring the conversation to a close.

- **Get to the point.** Use only a brief statement to prepare the individual before delivering the message.
- **Remain objective**, do not offer personal judgments in delivering the news.
- **Rationally detach** from the emotions that will be on display.
- **Listen empathically** to the response. Use appropriate eye contact, give undivided attention, re-state, and clarify what is said to confirm understanding. Answer questions that come up.
- **Offering something** shows the customer that you care and may provide an important next step. It may be as basic as providing some privacy and/or an explanation of available options. Even if the customer



does not show appreciation at the time, the latter may prove useful or even valuable in the future.

- **Bring the meeting to a close** with calm and clear statements. If you

are sitting, stand up and move towards the door. At this and at all times during the interaction, be prepared to summon help.

### **Summary**

1. Consider the implications of the agency's policies and protocols that are relevant to the kind of bad news you have to deliver.
2. Prepare for the delivery of bad news
3. Deliver the bad news in a manner that is respectful, customer service oriented and physically and emotionally safe.
4. Obtain support after delivering or receiving bad news.

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## **Putting It All Together – Final Role Play**

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### **Instructions**

Your group has 15 minutes to develop a scenario or you may use the scenario described below. You will need to assign someone in the group to evaluate and report the use of skills and strategies included in the role play. You may have any number of customer service representative and customers included in your role play. Your group will have 5 minutes to present their role-play.

### **Scenario Options**

Your group will role-play common work conflicts while the rest of the group evaluates the customer service skills and strategies that the players exhibit.

The role play should be one in which a customer is angry, confused or annoyed using one of the four difficult personality types described above - The Tank, The Sniper, The Whiner/Complainer, The Exploder. Provide feedback to participants on how they use the skills in the role-play situation.