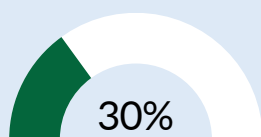


CUSTOMER SERVICE QUALITY CONCERNS

Consistent with the 2013 Barriers to Benefits report, this report exposes systemic flaws in the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (PA DHS) customer service model.

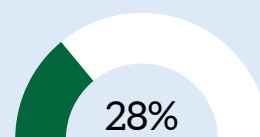
Challenges with communicating with County Assistance Offices (CAO)

Long Wait Times



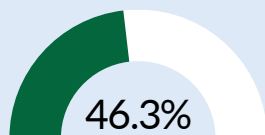
experienced wait times of an hour or more at CAOs.

Spotty communication



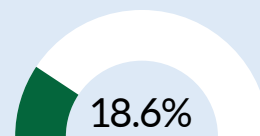
reported a challenge with reaching a worker over the phone.

Delayed Mail



do not receive paperwork with enough time to complete it before deadlines

Disrespect, rudeness, and even racism from caseworkers and CAO staff:



feel they are not treated with dignity or respect by workers.

They [caseworkers] are overwhelmed. I'm not sure what the actual solution may be... but, I hope they find it. For us, and them."

"They [local CAO caseworkers] always are so ignorant, expect [you] to know everything, and just very rude. It makes me feel so embarrassed and put down to be there!"

"It is important to speak with people respectfully and communicate in an effective manner. I feel I was bullied, cut off and had to ask a lot of questions that honestly I think wasn't necessary just to receive a straight answer. If I would have accepted what was said, my SNAP would have been cut off."

RECOMMENDATIONS

Collect and publicly publish customer service related data such as office wait times, call wait times, and disconnects

Re-evaluate staffing and training needs

- Evaluate case compliments and time expectations, to ensure that a full compliment enables workers to accurately manage their caseload and take time to answer questions, provide information, make referrals, and provide quality service.
- Provide staff with on-going trauma-informed care training so they can recognize trauma responses in clients as well as gain skills for dealing with vicarious trauma from their daily work.
- Evaluate pay scales to retain skilled, high-performing staff.

On all forms, notify clients of how to contact their caseworker and how to report maltreatment, if necessary

Improve accountability structures for CAO employees' conduct toward clients

- Expand the after-call survey options that exist for the Customer Service Center to all calls within DHS. Develop a survey that individuals may choose to complete following a CAO visit.
- Create a process for clients to anonymously report any maltreatment they experience from specific CAO employees during an in-person or telephone interaction.
- Publish survey results, as well as anonymized complaints and their resolutions publicly.