

Every Month is...

Customer Service Month

In child welfare work, responsive, helpful, respectful service to all of our key partners—including current and prospective families—should be a part of our work every day and every month. These daily tips offer simple ways to infuse customer service principles into your work.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1 Ask the families you work with what “respect” means to them and how they like to have respect shown to them.	2 Schedule a time in your day each day to return phone calls and e-mails to current and prospective parents. Make it a priority!	3 Think about your favorite place to shop or your favorite restaurant. What do they do to provide great customer service? What tips could you borrow from them to apply in your work with families?	4 Ask to have time in a staff meeting to discuss the importance of providing good customer service to families and colleagues.	5 Type up detailed, clear directions (by car and public transportation) to the location(s) for your parent orientation events. Distribute these widely to all relevant staff to share with prospective parents.
8 Greet everyone today by name, and with a genuine smile.	9 Think about the terminology you use in your work that might be confusing for families. Brainstorm alternative terms to use to be more plainspoken and clear without being condescending.	10 Browse your agency’s website and test the links for important information to make sure the links are all working correctly and that families would be able to access the information they need. Report any problems to the appropriate colleagues right away.	11 Take a look at the room(s) where you hold parent orientation and training sessions. Find some ways (or solicit a local service organization) to make it more welcoming and friendly—consider adding kid artwork and photos, painting the walls and other warm touches.	12 Answer your phone right away when it rings. Answering quickly sends a message to callers that they are important and that you value them and their time.
15 Think about the questions that prospective foster and adoptive parents ask you. Develop a short document with answers to these questions to share with all prospective parents.	16 Make sure your voicemail greeting is friendly and current, updated daily, as appropriate.	17 Start a conversation with your coworkers over lunch about their best customer service experiences. Brainstorm ways that you can each incorporate those ideas into your work.	18 Try out a new customer service idea of your own!	19 Has one of your colleagues been particularly helpful to you recently? Send them a quick thank you note by e-mail and copy their supervisor. You can help create a culture that recognizes great customer service, even among colleagues!
22 When talking to foster, adoptive, or kinship parents today, ask them, “What’s something my agency could do to help you feel like you’re being served well?” Share the feedback you get with your colleagues.	23 Take a few minutes to celebrate your successes in providing good customer service and support to families.	24 Include clear directions and a map with the invitation to agency or community-based trainings and meetings. Also include parking and building entrance instructions.	25 Get a few parking spots at your agency’s parking lot designed as “Parking for Foster, Adoptive, and Kinship Families only” as a way of showing that your agency values these families.	26 To whatever extent possible, provide basic refreshments for trainings and meetings with foster, adoptive and kinship families, or solicit a local service group to do this as a community service project.
29 If your agency surveys your current foster, adoptive and kin families, take time to read the results—especially the comments—and brainstorm ways to keep the results in mind as you do your work.	30 Search online for “great customer service” and spend a little time reading about how various companies and organizations approach customer service. Take note of ideas that you could try out in your own work.	31 Move beyond the Golden Rule; think about practicing the Platinum Rule: “Do unto others as they want done unto them.” For the next level, move on to the Double Platinum Rule: “Do unto others as they would want to have done, but don’t even know to ask for or expect.”		