

A Professional Growth Module:

CUSTOMER SERVICE IN HEALTH CARE

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Developing Top-Notch CNAs, One Inservice at a Time



A Professional Growth Module:

CUSTOMER SERVICE IN HEALTH CARE

We hope you enjoy this inservice, prepared by registered nurses especially for nursing assistants like you!

Instructions for the Learner

If you are studying the inservice on your own, please do the following:

- Read through **all** the material. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.
- If you have questions about anything you read, please ask _____.
- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and pick the best answer.
- Check with your supervisor for the right answers. You need **8 correct** to pass!
- Print your name, write in the date, and then sign your name.
- Keep the inservice information for yourself and turn in the quiz page to _____ no later than _____.
Show your Inservice Club Membership Card to _____ so that it can be initialed.
- Email In the Know at feedback@knowingmore.com with your comments and/or suggestions for improving this inservice.

After finishing this inservice, you will be able to:

Discuss the importance of customer service to the healthcare business.



State the difference between internal and external customers.



Describe how customers decide if their needs have been met.



Discuss how to handle customer complaints.



Demonstrate excellent customer service in your daily work.

THANK YOU!



Developing Top-Notch CNAs, One Inservice at a Time

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A Professional Growth Module: Customer Service in Health Care

YOU MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE!

Health care is a very personal business that focuses on *service*, not on things. For example, if Mrs. Lincoln spends money on a toaster, what does she get? Hopefully, she gets a toaster that works! But, if Mrs. Lincoln spends money on a nursing assistant, what does she get? She is buying the *services* of a trained health care worker.

If those services are provided to Mrs. Lincoln as ordered, on time and with a smile, then that's good customer service. Mrs. Lincoln will probably feel that she has spent her money wisely.

When people receive medical services, they may not understand all the "technical" parts of their care.

For example, Mr. Dawson may not understand why he's hooked up to a monitor or how his medicines work. But, he will understand that his nursing assistant brought him an extra pillow and helped him comb his hair before his wife's visit.

So... remember, you don't have to be a doctor or know how to operate fancy machines to help people feel better. All you have to do is give great customer service!



Customer Service Is...

- Having a fresh approach to each of your clients and your coworkers—because everyone is an individual!
- Finding new ways to do things better all the time.
- Working to solve problems as soon as they come up.
- Keeping a positive attitude, even when you're having a bad day.
- Treating your customers like you would want to be treated if you were in their shoes.

Who Are Your Customers?

A customer is anyone who *expects* something from you or who has *needs* that must be met by you. This includes two main groups of customers:

1. Internal Customers

- These are your coworkers (including every employee at your workplace).

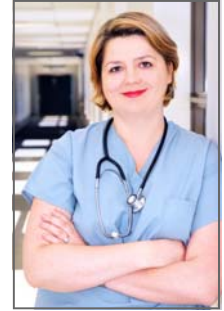
2. External Customers

- This group includes every one else you come into contact with at work...such as your clients, their family members, and visitors to your workplace. Even a neighbor who asks you about your work is a *potential* customer!

*Whether you are dealing with an internal or an external customer, your goal is the same:
To put yourself in the customer's shoes!*

Interesting Facts About Customer Service

- Poor service is the number one reason that American companies lose business. *(And when a company loses business, it has less money for things like salary raises and other employee benefits!)*
- 96% of unhappy customers don't complain to you. However, they'll tell up to twenty of their friends and family members about the problem! *(Think about it...if you have a problem at work, who are you most likely to tell? Your boss or a friend? Most of us keep quiet at work.)*
- While dissatisfied customers tell about 20 people, satisfied customers only tell five people. *(It's true. We all seem to talk about negative experiences more than positive ones.)*
- 90% of unhappy customers will move on quietly—to a new health care organization. *(For example, Susan dislikes her job. Instead of trying to talk to her coworkers and make things better at work, she'll probably just quit and find a new job.)*
- It costs up to ten times more to attract a new client than it does to keep an existing one. *(This goes for you and your coworkers, too. It costs a lot more to hire and train new employees than it does to keep "old" ones happy.)*



"When it comes to customers, if you ignore them, they will go away!"

Kristin Baird
author

Q & A

How would you rate your workplace right now for its customer service?

(Circle one.)

Excellent
Good
Fair
Poor



It takes \$10.00 of new business to make up for \$1.00 in lost business!

What Do Your Clients Expect?

- What do you think of when you drive by a hospital? As a health care employee, you probably think about work. You might ask yourself, “*Would that hospital be a good place to work?*” or “*I wonder if they have any job openings?*” or “*I’m glad I don’t have to work night shift anymore.*”
 - But, when non-medical people drive by a hospital, their thoughts are very different. They might think, “*I hope I never have to be a patient there.*” or “*That’s where Mom died.*” They might also imagine themselves sick, in pain or dying.
 - What has this got to do with customer service? Remember that your clients have learned what to expect from health care workers based on their past experiences. For example, last year Mrs. Brown had surgery. While she was in the hospital, a nursing assistant promised to help her to the bathroom, but never did. Mrs. Brown wet the bed. This experience means that she may not trust the next nursing assistant that takes care of her. Or, Mr. Nelson used to have a home health aide that ironed his clothes for him—even his underwear!
- Now, he’ll probably expect that every home health aide will do the same.
- Part of your job—if you want to give great customer service—is to find out what your clients expect from you.
 - Remember, most people have some basic expectations. They expect to be safe and comfortable. And, they expect you to do what you say you’re going to do.
 - The more often you meet a customer’s expectations, the more that person will come to trust you.



Don’t make promises that you can’t keep. Be sure to say what you mean and mean what you say!

The waiter asks the two gentlemen what they would like to drink. The first customer says, “*I’ll have a glass of iced tea.*” The second customer adds, “*Me, too. And be sure the glass is clean!*” The waiter comes back with the two teas and asks, “*Which one of you asked for the clean glass?*”

The Price of Poor Customer Service

- Sarah was once mistreated by a clerk in her local grocery store. Even though she had been shopping at that store for three years, she was so offended by the incident that she switched to a different supermarket.
- Twelve years later, Sarah returned to the original store and decided to tell the owner, Tom Benson, what had happened. Tom listened carefully, apologized, and thanked her for coming back.
- Then, Tom sat down with his calculator. He figured out that Sarah would have spent at least \$25.00 a week in his store. Over the past twelve years, that would have added up to \$15,600.00! Since Sarah probably told 10 of her friends *not* to shop at his grocery store, Tom lost business worth more than \$150,000.00 because of one incident of poor customer service!



Studies have shown that one dissatisfied customer will tell at least ten other people!

Remember...one bad incident can have a real impact on your workplace!

How Do Customers Decide If Their Needs Have Been Met?

Most people think about five different qualities, including:

Quality	Internal Customers (Coworkers)	External Customers (Clients)
<p>1. Reliability</p> <p>Do you deliver what you promise?</p>	<p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a coworker asks you to work for her next Friday, will you show up when you are expected? 	<p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If you tell a client that you'll be back with a bedpan in five minutes, will you be there?
<p>2. Responsiveness</p> <p>If there is a problem, how quickly do you take care of it?</p>	<p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If your supervisor tells you that your documentation is unfinished, how long will it take for you to get around to fixing it? 	<p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a client tells you that she got the wrong lunch tray, how long will it take you to get her a new lunch?
<p>3. Assurance</p> <p>Can people trust that you know what you are doing?</p>	<p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your new client needs to be moved with a mechanical lift. Can your supervisor trust you to tell her if you don't know how to use the lift? 	<p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It's the first time that your client has ever been moved using a mechanical lift. Can he trust you to move him safely and without pain?
<p>4. Empathy</p> <p>Are you able to put yourself in other people's shoes?</p>	<p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If your supervisor asks you to help train a new employee, can you remember how it felt to be a brand new nursing assistant? 	<p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If your client seems grumpy with you, do you look for reasons for her grumpiness (like pain or problems sleeping) rather than getting mad at her?
<p>5. Professionalism</p> <p>Do you look and act like a professional health care worker?</p>	<p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you show up for work every day on time, wearing appropriate clothes (or a uniform) and your name tag? 	<p><i>For example:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will you keep all your client's information confidential—including personal and medical information?



To meet your client's expectations, keep learning new skills and improving old ones!

Mary was working at the concession stand at the movie theater. A man came up to the counter and ordered two bags of popcorn, three kinds of candy and several sodas. As Mary got his order ready, the man smiled and said, "You must think I'm a real pig!" "Well...", Mary said. "If you say so. The customer's always right!"



Try doing more than your clients and coworkers expect of you!

Providing Your Clients with Good Customer Service

- Make an effort to remember your clients' names. Let's face it...you've probably seen your client's back side. It would be rude not to remember their name!
- Don't be afraid to ask, "Is there anything else I can do for you today?"
- You may have a bunch of clients who need your attention, but each client deserves to feel like the only one—at least for a few minutes! When you are with a client, give that person your full attention.
- Have you ever thanked your clients for trusting you to take care of them? Or told them that you enjoy having them as a client? If not, maybe you should. People like to feel appreciated!
- Think of all the choices your clients may have given up, including when to eat, what to eat, what to wear and when to sleep. Offer your clients as many choices as possible to help them feel like they still have some control over their own lives. (They'll be more satisfied customers!)
- We've all heard the saying, "The customer is always right." Well, that's not exactly true in healthcare. For example, your client may tell you that he's supposed to have milk with every meal. But, in his chart, you see that he's allergic to dairy foods! Or, a client may want to walk to the bathroom by herself, but you know that if she does, she'll fall down. So, think of it like this... "The customer is always right—as long as it doesn't involve a health or safety issue!"



Try to make each of your clients feel like they are your *favorite* client!

What part of their personal care or their day do your clients seem to like the *least*? Can you think of some ways that you can make this easier for them? *Write them down here:*

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
-

Try Answering These Questions...

Q: If a friend asked you why she should choose your facility or agency for her sick mother, what would you say?

A: _____

Q: What do you think you have to offer that other nursing assistants don't?

A: _____



Don't forget to keep the "care" in healthcare!

Providing Your Coworkers with Good Customer Service

- Come to work with a positive attitude. Aren't you much happier to see a cheerful coworker than one who always walks around with a frown?
- Greet your coworkers by name—it's a personal touch we all enjoy.
- Show your coworkers that you are a team player. If a coworker asks you for help, try not to say "no" or "I'm too busy." Instead, give your coworker a hand or say something like "I can be there in fifteen minutes" or "I can spare five minutes. Will that help?"
- Avoid saying negative things about any of your coworkers—either to other coworkers or to clients. *For example, let's say that you dislike your coworker, Louise. While giving Mr. Smith his bath, you tell him that Louise is a "real pain"...and that she always rushes through her work. A few days later, Louise is assigned to work with Mr. Smith! How do you think he's going to feel about Louise, you and your organization?*
- Remember to respect each of your coworkers—even if you don't like them.
- Be willing to share your knowledge with your coworkers—especially ones who are new to the job. Offer to orient new nursing assistants.
- Remember that coworkers are your "internal" customers. They expect you to be:
 - Respectful
 - A good communicator
 - Responsible
 - Easy to get along with
 - Willing to work together.
- You have the right to expect the same things in return!



Have you ever heard this old saying? "Try not to bother people with your problems. 90% of them don't care and the other 10% are glad you have them!"

After being hired to work at a nursing home, David showed up for his first day of work. The administrator greeted him with a warm handshake and a smile, gave him a broom and said, "Your first job will be to sweep the dining room." David was shocked and said, "But I'm a college graduate!" "Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't know that," said the administrator. "Here...give me the broom and I'll show you how."

Try Answering These Questions...

Q: If your coworkers were asked to describe your customer service, what do you think they would say?

A: _____

Q: What would you *like* them to say about you?

A: _____



If you want to know how to give great customer service, find people on the job who are good at it and watch them as they work.

What About Customer Complaints?

- No matter how terrific you are at your job, some of your clients are bound to complain at times.
- Some complaints happen because of employee mistakes, but many complaints are really just misunderstandings. For example, Mary is a home health aide who is scheduled to visit Mr. Smith at 10 am Monday through Friday. On her first visit, Mary tells Mr. Smith that she'll see him at the same time every day. Mr. Smith thinks that every day means Saturday and Sunday, too. He calls to complain when Mary doesn't show up on Saturday.
- Try to be grateful for complaints! They give you an opportunity to clear up any misunderstandings and to learn from your mistakes.
- When it comes to complaints, the problem may be less important than what is done about it. For example, if nobody from the home health agency gets back to Mr. Smith about why Mary didn't show up, he may become more upset and angry. However, if the nursing supervisor calls him and explains that his family plans to help him on weekends, he'll probably relax.
- Some people are afraid to complain. Or, they don't want to seem difficult. Or, they don't know who to talk to about the problem. Make sure that your clients know *how* to make a complaint. (It's one of their basic rights!)
- If a client makes a complaint to you in person, stay calm. Don't get upset or argumentative. Just listen to the client's story—and consider that he may be right!
- People who have their complaints resolved to their satisfaction are usually more loyal than customers who have *never* complained.

A nursing assistant and her hospital were sued by a patient because of the following incident:

While being placed on a bedpan, the patient heard a crack and said to the CNA, "I think my leg just broke." The CNA ignored the patient and did nothing. Hours later, the patient told a doctor who ordered x-rays. The patient's leg was broken. She was transferred to the orthopedic unit. The nursing assistant never visited the patient or apologized for the incident. The patient said she was suing just to teach the nursing assistant a lesson.

So, remember...ignoring a problem doesn't make it go away!

Responding to Customer Complaints

- Be sure to focus on a client's problem—*not his personality*. For example, Mrs. Baldwin is often grumpy. When she complains about her food being cold, it would be easy to brush it off as her just being grumpy. That wouldn't be fair!
- Be sure to apologize to clients after they've made a complaint—even if you've done nothing wrong. For example, Mary really didn't make a big mistake with Mr. Smith. But, she should still say, "I'm sorry I didn't make it clear to you that I wouldn't be coming on Saturday."
- Follow your workplace policy for how to report, document and handle complaints. And, remember that a complaint can be a great learning experience!



People don't forget bad customer service. That includes your clients and your coworkers!

Giving Your Customers 100% Quality

Are people who give 100% to their jobs working too hard? Is it really necessary to provide “perfect” customer service all the time? Well, if you think it’s okay to give less than 100%, consider these facts:

If 99.9% was good enough for customer service in America, then...

- We’d have one hour every month when our water was unsafe to drink.
- There would be five airplane crashes every day.
- Pharmacists would give 20,000 people the wrong prescription medicine every year.
- Every week, surgeons would perform 500 operations on the wrong patients!
- The U.S. Post Office would lose over 16,000 pieces of mail every hour.
- 50 newborn babies would be dropped every day.
- Every hour, banks would make 22,000 mistakes on their customers’ bank accounts.
- 81,000 rolls of film would not be developed properly.
- Every minute, the phone company would send over 1000 telephone calls to the wrong numbers.

Think About It!

1. About how much effort do you think you give to your job every day?

(Circle one) 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

2. It can cost insurance companies up to \$35.00 an hour to provide a client with personal care assistance. Imagine that you needed help with your personal care. If you had to pay \$35.00 an hour of your own money for someone to do what you do, would it be worth it to you?

(Circle One) Yes No

When you give 100% to your job, your work has great value!



How can health care workers provide 100% customer service?

They should:

- Know their jobs.
- Be polite and helpful.
- Know how to use their equipment.
- Have a positive attitude.
- Show an interest in their clients.
- Be excited about their work.
- Work well as a team.
- Be creative.
- Be on time.
- Have a sense of responsibility.
- Look and act in a professional manner.

To Provide Great Customer Service...Listen Up!

It's important to practice your listening skills if you want to give great customer service:

- Remember to listen to what your customers are saying...and to what they're not saying! Some clients may not come right out and tell you what they need. *(And the same goes for your coworkers.)* You may have to "listen" to their nonverbal communication—such as their body language—to figure out what they expect from you.
- Listen without interrupting. Most of us have the bad habit of "butting in" when other people are talking. *(And, even if we don't interrupt, we spend the time thinking about we're going to say next rather than listening to the other person!)*
- If a client or coworker starts their sentence by saying, "I'm sorry to bother you...", let them know that you don't consider them a "bother". Try saying, "I'm never too busy for you..." or some other nice remark.
- Think about how your words will sound before you say them. Even if you don't mean to sound negative, you might. For example, if your boss asks you where a coworker is, you could say, "I have no idea." Or, you could say, "She was at the nurse's station five minutes ago." The second statement is a nicer way of saying that you don't know.
- Listen to yourself when you speak. Then ask: "Would I like it if someone spoke to me this way?"



Be quick to *listen*...and slow to *speak*!

Customer Service Strengths & Weaknesses

1. What are your strengths when it comes to customer service? *(For example, are you extremely polite? Do you smile a lot?)*

2. What are your weaknesses when it comes to customer service? *(For example, do you tend to run late? Are you grumpy in the mornings?)*

In a restaurant, a grumpy customer kept bothering her waiter. First, she asked him to turn the air conditioning up because she was too hot. Then she asked him to turn it down because she was too cold. This went on for over half an hour! Surprisingly, the waiter was very patient and pleasant with the woman. A customer at another table asked him why he didn't get angry. "Oh, I don't care," said the waiter with a smile. "We don't even have an air conditioner!"

Customer Service Tips

- Watch for nonverbal signs that a coworker needs help. (Some people aren't good at asking for help—even when they need it.) So, keep an eye out for a coworker who is struggling or who looks stressed out...and lend a hand if possible.
- It's best not to call a client or a coworker by their first name—unless they give you permission to do so. Stick to using "Mr." and "Ms." until you know how they prefer to be addressed.
- It adds a personal touch if you use your client's or coworker's name at least once during each conversation.
- Never say to a client or coworker, "I'm only a nursing assistant." Remember to give yourself the same respect that you want from everyone else!
- Try to follow your client's preferences as much as possible. For example, if you cook for Mrs. Brown and she tells you that she likes her eggs scrambled, remember to fix them that way. Or, if you know that Mr. McMillan likes to watch the news at noon, remind him when it's about to start. Or, if you know that Betty prefers two blankets on her bed, be sure to make it that way. *(If you find it hard to keep track of all the things your clients like, get a little notebook that fits in your pocket. Write down your clients' preferences.)*
- If you work as part of a health care team, try to figure out what's important to each of your coworkers. For example, let's say you work with two different nurses. One of them may like you to report problems to her in person. The other may prefer for you to write things down or leave a message on her voice mail. Do your best to meet the *main* expectations of each team member.
- First impressions are important...but so are *last* ones. Think about it. You and Mrs. Thomas have a pleasant time together all morning. You've just finished her care and are getting ready to leave. She asks you to help her move to a different chair. You tell her you don't have time and leave. What do you think Mrs. Thomas will remember? That you spent lots of time helping her with her bath and hair? No, she'll remember that you refused to help her to another seat. So, end each session with your clients on a positive note!



You never get a second chance to make a first impression!

When you feel grumpy or irritated with a client because you're having a bad day, ask yourself, "Would I want to change places with this client?" Chances are...that would make your day worse! So be patient with your clients. They deserve it!



The best way to find out what your customers are thinking is simple... **Ask them!**

Even More Customer Service Tips

- Remember that people from different cultures may have problems communicating with each other. *(For example, you may feel that people who won't look you in the eye can't be trusted. Yet, your client may come from a culture that is offended by direct eye contact.)* Be patient and open-minded when working with (or caring for) people from other cultures.
- To show respect to your coworkers, try to resolve problems *directly* before reporting them to a supervisor. For example, if you have a problem or a disagreement with another nursing assistant, try to talk it over with that person. If the two of you can't solve the problem, tell your coworker that you are going to discuss the issue with your supervisor. Then, it's no surprise.
- Health care workers tend to speak in a special language—full of abbreviations and medical “slang”. It's so familiar to us that we don't even think about it. But, your client may not understand you if you say, “I'm here to check your BP, your Foley and your total I & O.” It's probably better to say, “It's time to check your blood pressure, empty your urine bag and find out how much you've had to drink today.” So, remember to use “plain” language when talking with your clients.
- Be sure to explain to your clients what is going to happen next. Remember...you want to meet their expectations, so it helps if they know what to expect!
- Try to keep a balance between 1) staying on schedule and getting your work done on time and 2) being flexible so that you can respond to each client's needs. Sometimes, keeping this balance can be the hardest part of your job!
- When speaking to either a client or coworker, put yourself on *their* level. For example, if you're talking to a client who's resting in bed, sit next to the bed instead of standing over it.
- Be specific when telling someone you'll be back. For example, if a coworker asks for help and you say, “I'll be there soon,” you might think that 10 minutes is “soon” while your coworker expects you to show up within two minutes!
- Keep a smile on your face as you go through your day. A positive attitude can have a great effect on your workplace!



Do you have a role model at work... someone you try to be like? If so, what is it about this person that you admire?

Do you know this nursing assistant? She gives 100% to her job, but it's:

10% on Mondays,
25% on Tuesdays,
25% on Wednesdays,
25% on Thursdays,
and
15% on Fridays!



Don't be afraid to ask your clients if you've met their expectations! If the answer is “yes”, you'll feel great and if the answer is “no”, you can learn from the experience.



Developing Top-Notch CNAs, One Inservice at a Time

A Professional Growth Module: Customer Service in Health Care

***Are you "In the Know" about providing great customer service?
Circle the best choice and then check your answers with your supervisor!***

1. Mrs. Simpson fell and broke her leg while she was taking a walk with another nursing assistant. To give her great customer service, you should:

- A. Make sure she always uses a wheel chair.
- B. Give her an extra dessert at dinner.
- C. Be patient if she says she's afraid to walk with you.
- D. Keep her in bed with the side rails up.

2. True or False

Internal customers are more important than external customers.

3. If you are responsive to a client's needs, it means that you:

- A. Solve problems as quickly as you can.
- B. Are able to put yourself in the client's shoes.
- C. Know what you are doing.
- D. Always wear a clean uniform.

4. True or False

It's poor customer service to say negative things to a client about one of your coworkers.

5. If a client complains about something you did, you should:

- A. Ask your supervisor to assign the client to someone else.
- B. Ignore the situation until it blows over.
- C. Tell the client you were just following orders.
- D. Tell the client you're sorry that he is upset.

6. To improve your customer service skills, you could:

- A. Give your clients whatever they ask for.
- B. Practice listening carefully when your clients speak.
- C. Work overtime every day.
- D. Call your clients by their first name.

7. True or False

Your clients have the right to be told how to make a complaint.

8. True or False

Knowing the personal preferences of your clients and coworkers will help you provide excellent customer service.

9. True or False

It's best not to tell your clients when you'll see them next so they won't notice if you're late.

10. True or False

Telling someone you'll be there "soon" may lead to a misunderstanding.

EMPLOYEE NAME
(Please print):

DATE: _____

- ***I understand the information presented in this inservice.***
- ***I have completed this inservice and answered at least eight of the test questions correctly.***

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE: _____

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE: _____

Inservice Credit:

<input type="checkbox"/> Self Study	1 hour
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Study	1 hour

***File completed test
in employee's
personnel file.***