



Department of Education Announces Improved Outcomes through the Certification and Licensure Customer Service Call Center

For Immediate Release

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Trenton, NJ - Commissioner of Education Chris Cerf announced today markedly improved service outcomes through the Department's Licensing Customer Service operations. In order to ensure the Department is providing a high level of customer service to educators to empower them to be successful, Commissioner Cerf last year directed the Division of Teacher and Leader Excellence to undertake a review of the current processes and procedures in order to improve all service areas.

The Customer Service section in the Office of Certification and Induction represents one of the main avenues of public interaction with the Department as the staff provides direct assistance to individuals seeking information regarding their certifications, as well as information concerning required mentoring and residencies for novice educators. In total, the office answered more than 34,000 calls in all of 2011 and has answered more than 34,000 calls in just the first seven months of 2012.

"We need to be continually focused on supporting great educators and empowering them to be successful," said Commissioner Cerf. "These improvements are just one way that we are focusing on customer service and results, while enabling educators to do what they do best - teach."

The enhancements resulted in the following improvements to the services provided by the call center representatives:

- Wait times:
 - A 93 percent **decrease** in the average wait time experienced in 2012 as compared to the same time period in 2011: 1 minutes 24 seconds in 2012 versus 22 minutes 58 seconds in 2011.
 - A 59 percentage point **increase** in the number of calls answered in 3 minutes or less in 2012 as compared to the same time period in 2011: 86 percent in 2012 versus 27 percent in 2011.
- Numbers of calls serviced:
 - A 126 percent **increase** in number of calls answered in 2012 as compared to the same time period in 2011: 34,183 calls in 2012 vs. 15,116 calls in 2011.
 - A 41 percent percentage point **increase** in the number of calls that reached a customer service representative in 2012 as compared to the same time period in 2011: 84.5% in 2012 versus 43.4% in 2011.
 - A 90 percent **decrease** in the number of calls customers abandoned in 2012 as compared to the same time period in 2011: 1,508 calls abandoned in 2012 versus 16,579 calls abandoned in 2011.

The Licensing Customer Service Office implemented the following changes in order to reduce wait time, increase the number of calls answered, and increase customer satisfaction:

- Added additional temporary staff to handle an increase in volume during the spring and summer;
- Created a process to call a customer back within 2 days when calls were not considered of the routine variety and needed additional information;
- Employed an 'auto answer' system wherein calls are directed to the next available representative;
- Dedicated resource experts who were considered 'on call' to provide information in a timely fashion and reduce wait time;
- Instituted ongoing, live monitoring and evaluation of calls by managers and supervisors in order to ensure high quality service; and
- Articulated the expected qualitative and quantitative goals representatives are expected to meet and provided daily feedback to team members on the group and individual performance.

Over the next year the Department plans to undertake additional improvements in order to continually upgrade the customer service experience. Anticipated changes include enhancing the menu of options available to callers, upgrading the licensing webpage, switching to a more advanced platform to allow for better data collection, more high quality call record and increased call center time.