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**Rule of Law Institutional
Strengthening Program (ROLISP)**

**CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS
IN THE COURTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
PRACTICAL GUIDE**

To improve the quality of public services in courts the Superior Council of Magistracy (SCM) based on decision No. 587/24 of August 11, 2015, has approved the „Customer service standards in the courts of the Republic of Moldova”.

These standards are based on the best international practices and management standards, as well as on the legislation of the Republic of Moldova, and are aimed to contribute to uniform the procedures and improving the relationship between court staff and customers. The customer service standards will enable court employees to display such a conduct which would meet the expectations of citizens, so that collaboration between courts staff and customers would be founded on a proper attitude and respect, competence and professionalism, correctness and right approach.

This leaflet is a guide designed especially for court staff in order to improve the model of conduct appropriate to such employees.

Efficient communication and relationship in organizations are based on the following principles:

- ⊘ *Credibility* (honesty, integrity, reliability and fidelity);
- ⊘ *Respect* (politeness, courtesy, dignity, tolerance and acceptance);
- ⊘ *Responsibility* (ability to be responsible for your own actions, to show certain moderation, to inspire to excellence and motivation by personal example, perseverance, taking continuous efforts in self-perfection);
- ⊘ *Equity* (equality, impartiality, proportionality, sincerity, due austerity);
- ⊘ *Empathy* (ability to be sincerely concerned about welfare of the others, altruism, good will);
- ⊘ *Civic spirits* (compliance with laws, contribution to good society functioning).

Let us show proper conduct and attitude

The main principle of good manners is a thorough analysis of interests and feelings of other people. In other words, whatever we do or say, we should prove that we care about those around us as much as we do towards ourselves. Yet, this does not mean that we should not remain firm or practical where it is necessary. It is correct on our part to demonstrate through the way we behave that we dispose of a right system of personal values, founded on respect towards the others, which is reflected in everything we do.

Let us think about the experience of our own as an applicant for some service. When we meet or talk to an employee of an institution, his behavior can change our vision of the institute he represents! If an employee makes us feel angry or disappointed, we can also feel displeased or disappointed in the institution he works for.

This thing happens because citizens do not make any difference between people providing services and the institution itself – they perceive it as one entity.

Conclusions

It turns out that we should always behave in conformity with professional conduct standards in order not to disappoint people and display loyalty towards citizens, as well as towards the institution we work for.

We should be more responsible for fulfilling our operational tasks and work hard to create a favorable atmosphere as for those who address us, so and for the whole team we belong to. Regardless of position we hold, we should come up to customers' expectations and contribute to creation of a positive image of our institution.

Standard 1 – Our court employees are polite and ready to offer information to all court users.

All of us have some definite expectations from those around. In other words, we want to feel sympathy while interacting with each other, to see people well-disposed, behaving respectfully and responsive to our wishes. At our institutions we try to respect duly people's feelings.

Several tips

- ✧ We should treat each court customer showing proper attitude and interest as it is necessary in each specific case.
- ✧ We should be open for collaboration. We shall say greeting words first and say goodbye kindly.
- ✧ We should not forget to use such expressions as “I kindly ask you” and “Thank you” where appropriate in a discussion. No one can be too busy or too important to refuse using these polite formulas.
- ✧ Talking in a friendlier manner does no do any harm. Thus, we can personalize a court customer (for example, address him officially using his name – Mister John) and tell him our name if it is opportune.
- ✧ In order to obtain more details we shall put delicate questions. We shall resort to repeating the information received (paraphrasing) with a view to demonstrate our proper comprehension of court customer's message.
- ✧ It is impolite to talk to two or more persons at a time. If someone insists on drawing our attention, we can pay it to him only after we beg permission of the person with whom we have already been engaged in the dialogue.
- ✧ We shall not interrupt when a person is speaking, but we shall use gestures and verbal expressions of support demonstrating in such a way that we listen to this person carefully.
- ✧ When a citizen come up to court to make complaints, first of all we should thank him for raising such an unpleasant issue and we shall immediately get implicated in case study.
- ✧ We shall accept criticism with dignity, keep calm and be constructive in our dialogue and avoid any conflicts by all means.
- ✧ If a mistake affecting rights or interests of a court customer is committed, we shall apologize for this situation and take every effort to correct negative effects in the best possible way. Also, we shall inform the respective person regarding his right of appeal (for example, the person can lodge a claim).
- ✧ We shall not deny court customer's words unless we are fully assured that his position is a wrong one.

- ⊘ Professional behavior should be traced in our mode of dressing and speaking and thus we will gain prevailing position in holding a dialogue.

Standard 2 - Our court employees deal with court users professionally and accord them fair and equal treatment, irrespective of gender, socio-economic status, disability and other social or political attributes.

Each of us wants to be respected by the staff of the institution we have to deal with. We expect service staff members to be concerned about our troubles and not to judge us by various criteria. Any person has the right to be treated by institutions impartially and fairly in reasonable terms.

Several tips

- ⊘ We shall prevent any unjustified discrimination of citizens on grounds of nationality, sex, race, color, ethnic or social origin, genetic traits, language, confession or religion, political opinions or visions of any other nature, belonging to national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation.
- ⊘ While processing claims and taking decisions we shall observe the principle of equal rights.
- ⊘ We shall not criticize or blame the person for the mode of self-expression or appearance, in other words, we should not make him feel ashamed.
- ⊘ We shall have a sound visual contact with the citizen and use gestures that would prove that he is heard and understood.
- ⊘ We shall manifest empathy and treat the others as we ourselves would like to be treated.

Conclusions

We should treat each citizen offering warm reception and much respect whether it is telephone conversation or personal discussion. We believe that we should be friendly with court customers and find time necessary for rendering the best services to them irrespective of their appearance, language spoken and position hold. This means that we can pay maximum attention and give necessary support to any person.

Standard 3 – The public counters at the court’s Procedural Tracking and Documentation Division, the Archive Division and the Monitoring and Public Relations Division are open during the working hours posted next to each counter. Citizens can receive information and services they request at the counter within the shortest time possible.

We like working and taking efforts together, building cooperative relationship with court customers. We take into consideration as customers’ needs, so and those of our own.

Several tips

- ✧ We shall come to work in time, thus upgrading work performance.
- ✧ In case when we have to leave the office for a while, we should inform court customer why we need to do it and when we are going to be back.
- ✧ We shall be always responsible for all our actions.
- ✧ We shall be honest and do our best at work.
- ✧ We shall set priorities to obtain as many good results as possible.
- ✧ We shall know to work in a team. Success of a team is more important than personal achievement.
- ✧ Whatever we do or say we should manifest that we are honest, sincere and trustworthy. Reputation of a person (or an institution) is hard to build and easy to lose.

Let us be disciplined and comply with internal regulations

Nobody likes the moment when arriving to an institution by the time working hours begin, and the staff is absent. Or, sometimes we can observe an annoying scene: someone is making coffee; others are talking about the nice evening spent with the family or about their plans for the evening.

Conclusions

We do not want anyone to gain unpleasant experience, but we admit that such things can happen being caused by various reasons. In this case, we will take every effort to make citizen feel good. We shall apologize and get involved in obviating unpleasant moments. This thing is important for citizens since it proves significance of their opinions and feelings for us.

Standard 4 – At the public counters, court employees issue copies of case materials, such as enforcement titles, certified copies of decisions, judgments and sentences, and copies of hearing audio recordings, within the shortest time possible from the moment of receiving a written request from a court user.

We shall treat people respectfully, behave ourselves responsibly, contribute to meeting applicants' needs, as well as to upholding institution's image.

Several tips

- ⊘ We should not decline people's inquiries even if giving them a reply is out of our competence, and we shall listen carefully to the person and redirect him in the right way.
- ⊘ We should be attentive to details, because if we are superficial, we can skip important things.
- ⊘ We should make notes and use them when appropriate to avoid mistakes.
- ⊘ We should ascertain that we render services promptly and do not fall behind with giving a reply to an inquiry.
- ⊘ We should not keep a person waiting without adducing any plausible ground in case if it exists.
- ⊘ We should apologize respectfully and explain to court customer why his case requires more attention, effort and takes more time.

We should be dynamic and productive and not withhold the things

Who likes to spend endless hours in lobby of an institution waiting for a response to an inquiry or obtaining a document? Unfortunately, this situation takes place in a great majority of institutions, and this is the reason why we hear remarks and accusations regarding the quality of the work fulfilled.

Conclusions

We should always believe that we are doing a good job and we can meet court customers' expectations. We should be operative, and through responsibility assumed for the work performed we should demonstrate that we act in the right way, no matter how complicated the case is.

Standard 5 - At the public counters, court employees keep the confidentiality of people's personal data, private lives and integrity.

There is no person who would like to be deceived or betrayed. Also, nobody likes when one's word is not kept. Therefore, within our institutions we trust in honesty, responsibility and we are trustworthy. We build open relationship and do the right things.

Several tips

- ✧ While processing personal data of a citizen, we should strictly observe the principle of privacy and integrity in respect of this person.
- ✧ We should particularly avoid processing data for illegal purposes or transferring these data to unauthorized persons.
- ✧ Our conduct shall never be guided by personal, familial, national interests or affected by political leverage.
- ✧ We should maintain strict confidentiality of documents or any other valuable acts, containing personal data of court customers (information about people, name/surname, address, case studies, contents of internal procedure, etc.).
- ✧ We should take account of archiving necessary documents with special accuracy. Also, we should properly exterminate ineffective documents that are not required to be kept for a long time.

Conclusions

We should respect court customer and try to understand his situation and feelings, and adjust our behavior according to them to make this person feel good. Our emotional intelligence should be in continuous progress so that we could reach the highest level in communication and relationship.

Standard 6 - Our court employees use a simple language and respond to all inquiries promptly.

We know that not all court customers have legal education or relations with legal domain, but they want to comprehend the information they receive, too. That is why we should not complicate the things and we should always be at their disposal regardless of situation.

Several tips

- ⊗ We should adjust our language, rate of speech and tone of voice so that it would be suitable for the person and his needs best of all.
- ⊗ We should take real efforts to understand other people's statements and express ourselves clearly in a plain language.
- ⊗ We should not accentuate specific features, not embarrass court customers and react badly so that the customer would feel incompetent (does not know the procedure, writes bad grammar, has a low level of knowledge etc.).
- ⊗ If a court customer nevertheless committed a mistake in message transmission, we should get implicated and help him to express his inquiry properly by paraphrasing, thus giving him necessary support he needs.
- ⊗ We should use positive and friendly body language, we should not stay humpbacked and hold our hands crossed. We should use encouraging gestures when appropriate – this thing is also important when we are talking on the phone or personally.
- ⊗ We should behave citizens respectfully and impartially. We should be polite, ready to help, rapid and cooperative.
- ⊗ We should demonstrate attitude and interest to people's problems, showing this with our encouraging gestures and facial expression.
- ⊗ It is our mission to know how to give rise to positive dialogue and mitigate a negative one.
- ⊗ We should do our best to provide a response. And in case when we do not have attributions to respond to a court customer's inquiry, we should forward him to the person competent in the domain or to the team which can help him, and it is good to call back later to precise whether the case has been solved or not (we should collect all necessary data – telephone number, e-mail, beforehand).

Standard 7 - Our court employees wear name badges for identification.

Let us work on our own image

- ☞ We should obligatory wear name badge specifying name/surname and function during whole 8 working hours.
- ☞ It is recommended to assure that court customer knows who he is dealing with and give him your contact data (service telephone number, e-mail).
- ☞ Clothing is not a key characteristic of a person, but still when it is referred to one's career it can give us advantages of imposing appearance. Unfortunately, many of us do not pay attention to exterior aspect and forget that it is the first impression that draws up a general outline of our image. When we talk the about official wearing style we should ponder over the thing that the clothes we wear have a direct influence on professional relations, which are primarily reflected in our performance output.
- ☞ While exercising our job duties we should wear decent clothes, which would satisfy ethic standards and would not contain elements discrediting professional reputation of the institution. Preferentially, we should opt for an official mode of dress.
- ☞ Women are advised not to match more than three colors, to avoid wearing pinafore dresses, too low-necked blouses, off-shoulder dresses, short trousers and mini-skirts. Besides this, ladies should not put on cosmetics, perfume and jewelry to excess.
- ☞ Make-up of ladies and girls should be unostentatious; bright colors or contour line around the eyes are not accepted.
- ☞ Heels of women's shoes should be up to 7 centimeters high.
- ☞ Men are advised to wear suits with shirts, and the colors recommended are black, grey, blue and beige.
- ☞ Smell is important for both men and women. We should exclude using perfume and cream with strong odor. We should take into consideration smell of clothes, too. We should not use soap with specific flavors for personal hygiene.

Conclusions

All of us like to interact with good-looking and agreeable people dressed as the occasion requires. So we should not remain indifferent on this issue and try to be disciplined, since Dress Code provides creation of a professional and

reliable image. The way a person looks like also indicates his attitude as towards the work he performs, so and to relationship with the people around.

Standard 8 – If a citizen calls, the court employees will:

- ✓ Answer the phone courteously within the shortest time possible, identify the court and give their names.
- ✓ Be helpful and deal with people's inquiries and telephone messages promptly.
- ✓ Provide the contact information of another official, if necessary

Several tips

Under conditions when we have to communicate on the phone, we should take into account observing some obligatory rules:

- ⊗ We shall never abandon the person during the telephone talk, only in case if this thing is absolutely inevitable. Also, if the interlocutor is kept waiting we have to advise the reason.
- ⊗ In case of a telephone talk it is recommended to use such encouraging words as „Ok”, „I see”, „I agree with you”, „I'll do my best”, „Would you, please, give me one more detail”, etc. First of all, such kind of a dialogue will prove our listening and secondly will give signal that we feel empathy and are willing to help.
- ⊗ We should pay due attention to our diction and voice while talking on the phone. The pitch and tone of the voice are decisive factors in creation of a favorable atmosphere for an efficient and civilized discussion.
- ⊗ It is recommended that we speak in a moderate, not too high-pitched tone, pronouncing words clearly with the mouth open enough and close to the phone (about 2.5 cm off the mouth). People with low voice shall speak in a higher tone as low sounds are difficult to distinguish. People with sharp voice shall moderate the intensity of voice tone in order not to sound too strident.
- ⊗ We should not keep silence when our interlocutor is speaking. It is sufficient from time to time to say „yes” or „no”, etc.
- ⊗ While talking on the phone we should not eat or chew gum.
- ⊗ We should pay all our attention to interlocutor. We should not converse with other people, which turn out to be in the office. If telephone

communication was disconnected, it is for the person who requested the call to restore it.

- ☞ If a guest has come to the office, we should not answer any call, except for the case when it is really urgent and only after begging visitor's pardon. In situation when we are talking on the phone and a visitor having an appointment comes in, we should conclude our discourse in a courteous manner.

Conclusions

When replying to correspondence, telephone calls and electronic messages, we shall try to give all possible support and answer the questions as completely and exactly as possible.

By the way we answer a telephone call or we are answered we can draw some conclusions about manners of the person we are talking to. Answering telephone calls politely, with distinction and restraint, will contribute to creation of a positive image of the institution.

Standard 9 - If a citizen writes to the court, the court employees will:

- ✓ Offer a courteous and clear reply in maximum 30 days to petitions and in maximum 15 days to inquiries.
- ✓ Write a response in a plain language and, where possible, in the person's preferred language.

Any inquiry received at the counter, by the phone, e-mail or fax/mail, should not be ignored. If we admit that record-keeping and etiquette make part of methods of establishing human relations according to the role of each person, correspondence in its turn presupposes some certain rules of the same strictness: all that is written remains.

Several tips

Those who make up correspondence, should be permanently concerned about complying with some principles which form up the basis of correspondence.

- ☞ Prompt replies – imply rapidity in solving problems constituting subject of correspondence.

- ⊘ Short and clear propositions without useless words contribute to precise and complete character of information.
- ⊘ Correct and complete editing letters in order to avoid in such a way misunderstanding and returning to the same subject.
- ⊘ Formulation of text (punctuation and grammar) should be correct, a spelling mistake „tells” us about the level of professionalism of the author.
- ⊘ The text must comply with basic rules of communication ethics and should be formulated so that the addressee could perceive the message in the sense wanted by the sender.
- ⊘ If we cannot offer a positive reply, not giving an answer to this inquiry implicitly means lack of professionalism and denial in providing a reply. Not to reply is the most convenient mode to refuse, but sometimes it is worth to find time for writing a refusal. To provide a response in case of refusal is an act of politeness.

Conclusions

We should resort to an attitude which presupposes mode of thinking, feelings and positive approach in written form, too. These modalities can be mostly expressed by means of non-verbal language of written message. For example, prompt reply (element of a positive attitude) tells us about courtesy and consideration through time aspect. Therefore, positive attitude in writing is related to politeness, consideration, conciseness, organizational structure of the message. Positive expression – a positive tone – can make the sender believe that the addressee is able to solve problems. Even negative message can be communicated in a positive manner.

It is very important to say what we can do and not what we cannot do, what we have got and not what we haven't got!

Standard 10 - If the court cannot provide the requested information because of its confidential nature, the court employees will communicate the reason that prevents them from offering this information.

Several tips

Refusal in written form first of all is aimed to keep the door „open” for communication in future.

A refusal letter shall have the following structure:

- 1) Reference – contains number and date of inquiry – only such refusal can be clearly identified. „Your inquiry No. from”.
- 2) Introduction – contains acknowledgement to the person for the confidence given: “Thank you for applying to our services...”
- 3) Rejection. Giving reasons why the inquiry has not been accepted (confidential information, restrictions, etc.).
- 4) A possibility to redirect the person to another instance, which has attribution to provide reply to such an inquiry (if appropriate).
- 5) Closing – assuring the citizen that we are concerned about his problem and can show him the right way to solving it.
- 6) Closing formula and wishing best regards.
- 7) Signature.

Using customer communication and service standards in courts can essentially contribute to enhancing interaction with them, and respectively, to improving the quality of the services rendered and general image of all institutions. This can happen due to promotion of values and ethical principles, included in this leaflet.

Golden rules

I ntegrity – we act honestly and openly

M anners – we never display selfishness or lack of discipline

P ersonality – we communicate our own values, attitude and options

A ppearance – we are always at our best looks

C onsideration – we analyze from different point of view

T act – we think before we speak

Thank you!

