

## MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING FAMILY PLANNING SERVICE DELIVERY

### In this Issue

<i>Understanding the Critical Role of Good Customer Service</i> .....	2
<i>Defining Customer Service</i> .....	3
<i>Initiating the Customer Service Approach</i> .....	4
<i>Gaining Staff Commitment</i> .....	4
<i>Working Solutions—Bolivia</i> .....	5
<i>Developing Customer Service Procedures</i> .....	6
<i>Understanding the Manager's Role in Developing Procedures</i> .....	8
<i>What You Do Matters: COPE and Customer Service</i> .....	8
<i>Training Staff in Customer Service</i> ...	10
<i>Creating Effective Customer Service Attitudes</i> .....	11
<i>Using Good Communication Skills</i> ..	11
<i>How to... Use Active Listening Skills</i> ..	12
<i>How to... Calm a Dissatisfied Client</i> ..	12
<i>Obtaining and Using Client Feedback</i> .....	13
<i>Closing the Feedback Loop: Taking Action</i> .....	14
<i>Evaluating the Results</i> .....	14
<i>Sample Customer Service Indicators</i> ..	15
<i>Maintaining the Customer Service Focus</i> .....	16
<i>Reviewers' Corner</i> .....	16
<i>Working Solutions from Our Reviewers</i> .....	17
<i>References</i> .....	17
<i>Poster for Customer Service</i> .....	18

### Case Scenario

FAMSAN Places Client Needs First

## Focusing on Customer Service

### Editors' Note

Customer service is a powerful tool that helps managers focus their services on what customers, or clients, want and need. Family planning programs, like commercial businesses, have found that offering their clients courteous, efficient, high-quality services, and a mix of services that their clients want, not only benefits the clients but also greatly benefits the program.

In the family planning context, good customer service is crucial at the service delivery site. The customer service concept maintains that by understanding and meeting the needs of clients and potential clients, a clinic can improve the quality of its services, increase demand for services, and build its reputation—all of which contribute significantly to the sustainability of the program.

This first issue of Volume V of *The Family Planning Manager* discusses the benefits derived from providing good customer service and proposes specific actions that clinic managers and staff can take to initiate and maintain a customer service focus. The issue provides guidelines for training staff in customer service and using valuable client feedback to support service improvements. Above all, it emphasizes the need for managers and clinic staff to work together to guarantee client-oriented services.

—The Editors

## The Family Planning Manager

### Editorial Review Board

**Teresita Marie Bagasao**, Kabalikat Foundation, Philippines

**Med Bouzidi**, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Tunisia

**Alfredo Fort**, CARE, Peru

**Ascobat Gani**, Kampus Baru Universitas, Indonesia

**Dr. Peter Mokaya**, Seventh Day Adventist/Rural Health Services, Kenya

**Godwin Mzenge**, Family Planning Association of Kenya

**Dr. Emmanuel Nkodo Nkodo**, Ministry of Public Health, Cameroon

**Maria Isabel Plata**, PROFAMILIA, Colombia

**Jewel Quallo Rosberg**, Belize Family Life Assoc.

**Dr. Enrique Suárez**, The Mexican Federation of Private Health and Community Development Associations

**Dr. A.B. Sulaiman**, Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria

**Sixte Zigirumugabe**, CARE, Togo

**Dr. Alex Zinanga**, Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council

### Field Advisors

**Abu Sayeed**, FPMD/Bangladesh

**Dr. Eléonore Rabelahasa**, MSH/Madagascar

Subscriptions to *The Family Planning Manager* are \$15/year in North America and Western Europe; in all other areas the publication is distributed free of charge. Second-class postage application pending at Boston, MA. Postmaster: Send address changes to: *The Family Planning Manager*, Management Sciences for Health, 400 Centre Street, Newton, MA, 02158-2084 USA.

### Editorial Directors

**James Wolff**  
**Janice Miller**

### Editor

**Janice Miller**

### Associate Editors

**Claire Bahamon**  
**Ann Buxbaum**

### Case Scenarios

**Linda Suttentfield**  
**Judy Seltzer**

### Consulting Editors

**Saul Helfenbein**  
**Susanna Binzen**

### Internet Editions

**Kim Austin**

### Desktop Publishing

**Jacki Forbes**  
**Ceallaigh Reddy**

### Distribution

**William Antebi**  
**Thuy Nguyen**

*The Family Planning Manager* (ISSN 1060-9172) is published quarterly in English, French, and Spanish by Family Planning Management Development (FPMD), a project of Management Sciences for Health. This publication does not represent official statements of policy by MSH or USAID.

Recommended citation: Management Sciences for Health. "Focusing on Customer Service." *The Manager* (Boston), vol. 5, no. 1 (1996): pp. 1-18.

Family Planning Management Development  
Management Sciences for Health  
400 Centre Street  
Newton, Massachusetts 02158-2084 USA

Phone: (617) 527-9202

Fax: (617) 965-2208

E-mail: [fpmdpubs@msh.org](mailto:fpmdpubs@msh.org)

URL: <http://www.msh.org>



Published with support  
from the U.S. Agency for  
International Development.

# Understanding the Critical Role of Good Customer Service

The concept of customer service is easy to grasp. You can recognize customer service when you think of the kind of service you receive from a receptionist at an office, a good waiter in a restaurant, or a driver who makes an extra effort to help you reach your destination. Customer service is people serving you in a way that meets your needs, makes you feel they care about your well-being, and makes you want to recommend their services to your family and friends.

Businesses have found that providing excellent service to their customers yields many benefits to both the business and the customer. Providing good customer service:

- **Generates new demand for products and services.** Businesses that rely on word of mouth to bring in new customers benefit from the positive feedback that satisfied customers give their friends and relatives. Surveys have shown that a satisfied customer may tell only six people about a good service, but a dissatisfied customer will tell at least eleven people about a bad service. A large number of dissatisfied customers can seriously damage the reputation of a business and keep new customers away.
- **Brings customers back.** Research reveals that nearly 70 percent of all sales in businesses come from purchases by return customers.
- **Can reduce per-customer costs.** When employees communicate well with customers and provide the high-quality services they want, there is rarely a need to redo procedures to please customers.

Managers of family planning programs and clinics, whether they work in the public or private sector, will find that they can increase demand for their services and further the sustainability of their programs by learning from the successes of customer-oriented businesses. As family planning clinics move toward providing high-quality clinical services backed by a strong customer service approach, they will become increasingly valued by their clients and their communities. They will increase their ability to:

- Retain clients who need to return for follow-up family planning services;
- Attract new clients;
- Build a good public reputation by word of mouth;
- Dispel false rumors about methods and services;
- Recover costs for services more fully by increasing fees for clients who can pay;
- Raise staff morale and performance by working together to fulfill clients needs and getting positive feedback from clients about the services.

This issue of *The Family Planning Manager* discusses how clinic managers can introduce a customer service approach in their clinics and gain the participation and commitment of staff in institutionalizing customer service. It provides guidelines for training staff so that they can incorporate customer service attitudes and skills in their interactions with clients. Finally, it discusses ways to collect and use information about clients' preferences to improve services, and presents a list of useful indicators for evaluating the effectiveness of your customer service program.

This issue was researched and written by Claire Bahamon and Ann Buxbaum in collaboration with Joan Littlefield. Claire Bahamon is Senior Publications Officer of the FPMD project, Ann Buxbaum is a Senior Associate in MSH's Population Program, and Joan Littlefield is Deputy Director of FPMD's Technical Unit. The issue reflects their experience, and that of their FPMD colleagues, in developing customer service initiatives in hospital and clinic settings.

### Defining Customer Service

Customer service is a philosophy that goes beyond "client responsiveness" and "client focus." Client focus is often incorporated only into counseling and clinical services. Customer service expands client focus to include everything that happens within and around the clinic, from the way staff greet clients, to the atmosphere in the waiting room, to the manner in which clients' complaints are handled. It is used to help each person benefit, not just from the immediate services she came for, but from the full range of services the clinic offers. It can even lead to the introduction of new services to meet clients' expressed needs.

*Customer service means providing assistance to clients in a way that increases their satisfaction with your program. It is based on the continuous concern for client preferences, both in staff interactions with clients and in the design of services. It maintains that staff are accountable to clients for their decisions and that clients have rights that staff need to respect.*

A commitment to customer service can revolutionize the way a clinic operates. It involves every staff member, in establishing appropriate procedures and developing positive attitudes that allow them to:

- Create a welcoming atmosphere for their clients;
- Maintain a smooth client flow;
- Deliver personalized services;
- Communicate effectively and courteously with clients;
- Address clients' complaints to the satisfaction of the client;
- Gather information about clients' preferences in order to address their concerns.

## Initiating the Customer Service Approach

Developing a customer service focus is an important and challenging task that requires the participation and commitment of all staff. Receptionists, nursing and medical staff and their assistants, clinic and program managers and supervisors, clerks who take payments for services, housekeepers, guards, and gatekeepers all need to understand that they have a role in making each client's visit efficient and pleasant and that they must work as a team to achieve this goal.

### CQI and Customer Service

Using Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) techniques can help to develop and institutionalize customer service practices. Based on a team concept, CQI is a management approach that encourages staff members from all levels to draw on their collective experience and skills to analyze systems and processes for the purpose of continually improving services.

Developing a team that leads the customer service effort and uses CQI methods will help to bring a clinic-wide focus to customer service. The team can solicit input and ideas from staff in identifying areas for improvement, designing and implementing activities that will result in better services, developing customer service skills among all staff, and maintaining strong staff commitment to the customer service program. This team-based process is a particularly powerful way for clinic staff to work together to improve key systems and procedures that affect client satisfaction and use feedback from clients to improve services.

For more information on CQI, please refer to Volume II, Number 1 of *The Family Planning Manager*, "Using CQI to Strengthen Family Planning Programs."

## Gaining Staff Commitment

Managers should introduce the customer service concept by modeling good customer service and by setting a few ground rules to get started.

### Introduce the customer service concept.

Managers should introduce staff to the customer service concept early in the process. This can be done in a routine staff meeting, which will allow staff to know ahead of time that your clinic will be making some changes, and also allow them to discuss some of their concerns and ideas so that they become involved in the initiative from the start. You should review the anticipated benefits of customer service in terms of both the clinic and the population the clinic serves. You could arrange for staff to visit or read about other organizations that have a strong client focus and discuss their practices. You should also encourage staff to think about their own experiences as clients in health facilities and customers of local businesses so that they can identify good and bad examples of customer service and determine how those experiences have affected where they decide to go for services.

**Model a customer service approach.** Managers should take the lead in modeling desired customer service behavior. Speaking with clients who are waiting to be seen or have just received services can help you better understand what clients need and want. At every opportunity, you should discuss with the clinic staff what you have learned about clients' concerns. Role modeling customer service also helps to show staff the kind of respect, consideration, and attentiveness that you expect them to extend to your clients.

### Set up ground rules for customer service.

Managers should work with their staff to establish a few ground rules even before the customer service procedures have been fully developed. This will help to establish the customer service effort and symbolize a shift in tone for dealing with clients. *For example, in a large clinic in Latin America, a manager and the head nurse decided that all employees from then on would address clients as "Miss," "Mrs.," or "Mr." rather than the customary "Grandmother" or "Uncle." This simple rule helped the staff to view their clients with more respect and paved the way for a stronger clinic-wide emphasis on showing respect to the clients.*

## Institutionalizing Customer Service

PROSALUD is a private-sector organization that provides health services to underserved citizens of Bolivia through a network of clinics in several regions. Because PROSALUD health centers rely on raising between 67% and 97% of their costs through user fees, they place a high priority on providing services that clients recognize as high quality and are willing to pay for. The success of their customer service program lies in four main areas: recruiting staff, supervising staff, soliciting client feedback, and marketing their services.

**Recruiting staff.** PROSALUD actively seeks staff who are “friendly and socially-minded.” Once hired, all operational and management staff, from cleaners to physicians, are taught during their orientation that PROSALUD depends on the continued satisfaction of clients for its survival. A key organizational objective is “to develop and implement innovative techniques for providing client-oriented health care services,” and staff at all levels are encouraged to contribute their suggestions in weekly meetings. In-service training for all staff reinforces the client focus and includes sessions on human relations and the psychology of the client.

**Supervising staff.** Quarterly supervisory meetings bring together the staff of the health centers and the regional Management Support Unit to monitor progress, set new goals, and share ideas for the enhancing client satisfaction. In addition, rigorous individual performance reviews are used to evaluate and give constructive feedback to staff on their performance in modeling customer service attitudes and on their contribution to achieving customer service objectives.

**Soliciting client feedback.** PROSALUD uses a number of different techniques for gathering feedback on clients’ satisfaction and identifying unmet client needs. These include:

- Focus groups;
- Marketing studies;
- Client satisfaction studies;
- Client exit interviews;
- Home visits;
- Meetings with community groups and leaders;
- Face-to-face approach for responding to complaints.

Health center staff handle all but the most serious of complaints from clients, which are handled by visiting the client’s home in the company of a supervisor.

**Marketing services.** The health centers let the community know about their services through health fairs, promotional flyers, outreach activities in schools and other local institutions, TV and radio spots, posters, and calendars. Each health center also has a full-time health promoter whose job is to go door to door informing people of the center’s services, providing health education and counseling, identifying health problems, and referring people to the health center where these problems can be addressed.

By embracing customer service, PROSALUD has successfully attracted lower-middle-class clients who are willing to pay for services because they perceive PROSALUD’s services to be more valuable than other free services that are available to them.

---

## Developing Customer Service Procedures

One of the most important activities is for managers to work with staff to establish new procedures or modify existing ones that incorporate the customer service approach. Once developed, the procedures should be put into writing and made easily accessible so that staff can refer to them as needed. These procedures or guidelines will help to make each client's visit to the clinic the smoothest, most welcoming, and productive visit possible. They can also prevent service problems before they arise.

In developing the guidelines, you must engage the staff in the process by asking them to identify areas for improvement and to suggest changes that would improve clinic procedures. Staff at all levels know well the difficult situations they face in serving clients, and usually have ideas for changes that would improve these situations. By engaging staff in this process of identifying problem areas and proposing solutions, you can increase staff commitment to carrying out the customer service procedures in their daily work.

To provide structure to the process, you should first identify the primary functions that you and your staff want your customer service initiative to address. Four key customer service functions are:

- Establishing a welcoming atmosphere for every client;
- Streamlining client flow;
- Personalizing client services;
- Organizing and providing clear information to clients.

**Establishing a welcoming atmosphere.** Most clients judge a clinic by the quality of the overall service they receive—how they are treated, what they see and hear, and what they experience during their visit. It is the responsibility of each and every staff member and volunteer to help create and maintain an atmosphere where clients feel respected and welcome. Developing written guidelines for welcoming clients can help remind staff to:

- Use words that make clients feel important and valued;
- Ask the client why she came before asking her other questions;
- Assist the client through each step of her visit;
- Close the visit, being sure to answer any lingering questions the client may have;
- Inform the client of when she should return for her next visit.

Clinic staff can also contribute to the comfort, appearance, and cleanliness of the clinic by:

- Providing comfortable places for clients to sit;
- Decorating the waiting area and the exam rooms so they are pleasant and inviting;
- Setting standards for cleanliness;
- Developing checklists for carrying out daily, weekly, and monthly cleaning tasks;
- Training housekeeping staff;
- Instituting a spot-checking and spot-cleaning procedure for waiting rooms, toilets, and exam rooms as part of the daily housekeeping schedule;
- Developing procedures for dealing with situations when the standards for cleanliness and hygiene are not met.

## Sample Cue Card: Greeting the Client

The Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria (PPFN) recently instituted new procedures for greeting clients. Cue cards remind staff of PPFN's expectations for providing high-quality services to their clients. The following points were drawn from a cue card for greeting clients.

- Greet each client warmly.
- If a group of clients arrive at the same time, seat them comfortably until you can meet each client individually.
- Pass out educational materials and turn on video or cassette player if available, so that clients can learn about family planning while they wait.
- Invite the client who arrived first to the registration desk.
- Ask how you can help the client today.
- Direct the client to the right place where her needs can be met.
- Communicate information about each client's needs to other staff in a confidential manner.

*Source: Planned Parenthood Federation of Nigeria Clinic Procedures Manual*

**Streamlining client flow.** Long waits and other inconveniences can convey to clients that their time is not valuable or that your clinic services are not well planned and organized. A number of procedures can reduce client waiting time, streamline visits, and shorten steps that clients may currently go through during their visit. Many clinics have instituted procedures such as: providing a separate window for clients who are returning for additional contraceptive supplies, moving clients up in the queue who are not feeling well so that they can receive services without waiting, instituting evening and weekend hours, and introducing small block appointments to stagger the arrival of groups of clients during each hour.

It is always useful to analyze the process that clients must go through in order to receive services and identify and make improvements that will increase their satisfaction with and use of the services. *In Morocco, studies of the voluntary surgical contraception (VSC) program showed that some clients had to make long trips to a referral center located in the provincial capital just to schedule their surgery. Initially, both counseling and scheduling for VSC surgery was done at the referral center. As demand for VSC grew, the program was decentralized so that clients could go to local health centers for VSC counseling; but they still had to go to the referral center in the provincial capital to make their appointment for the surgery. Recognizing that this*

*had a discouraging effect on prospective candidates for VSC, managers in the province of Safi developed a system that allowed clients to schedule their surgery at the local health center where they received their initial counseling, thus eliminating a long trip to the provincial capital. This change greatly encouraged clients to use VSC services and reduced an unnecessary barrier to the services.*

For more techniques to streamline services, please refer to Volume I, Number 1 of *The Family Planning Manager*, "Reducing Client Waiting Times."

**Personalizing services.** Service providers should attempt to provide services in a way that suits the client's emotional needs as well as her clinical needs. They should clarify what the client expects out of the visit and what concerns the client has about the visit. Getting this information from the client will help staff to check their perception of the client's complex wants and needs with the client before they provide a service or a contraceptive method that may be clinically suitable for the client, but does not meet her other needs or expectations.

**Organizing information for clients.** To make certain that clients can take full advantage of clinic services, you and your staff should identify optimal times for clients to receive information, and you should take advantage of every opportunity to provide necessary and important information to the clients.

Some opportune times are: before a visit (in the community), in the waiting room, and after the client has selected a method. *For example, in some communities, outreach workers or CBD agents offer important information to new clients before a visit to the clinic about the hours and days that the clinic is open, the types of services offered by the clinic, and services that cannot be provided when the client is having her menses. This provides clients with helpful information so they do not go to the clinic at a time when they cannot be served.*

## Understanding the Manager's Role in Developing Procedures

Developing and instituting customer service procedures is a process that unfolds over time. As staff gain more experience, you may want to revise and upgrade the procedures until they fully reflect the desired level of customer service. It is important, however, to maintain a balance between establishing individual responsibilities for customer service functions, and using a team approach that allows staff to share tasks and responsibilities as they deem appropriate.

Once customer service procedures have been agreed on, you will need to provide support by:

- Creating a supportive atmosphere for the staff in their work as a customer service team, in a way that allows them to evaluate their efforts honestly and non-defensively and to learn from mistakes or misunderstandings;
- Helping staff to reorganize tasks where necessary to allow time to carry out the procedures and providing cross-training so that staff can fill in for one another as needed;
- Building the customer service procedures into job descriptions and recruitment requirements;
- Holding staff accountable for carrying out the procedures they have developed, creating incentives for staff to promote customer service, and ensuring that supervisors are involved in supporting their efforts;
- Continuing to model the customer service approach in dealings with clients, staff, and the outside community.

By being involved in developing procedures for customer service, staff will feel confident in their abilities to make decisions that the organization will support and be encouraged to work as a team to provide the highest quality services possible.

## What You Do Matters: COPE and Customer Service

When managers and staff consider their clients' experience in the clinic, they can often initiate changes that make client visits more effective, efficient, and pleasant. The COPE process (Client-Oriented Provider-Efficient Services) is a good way to get started in making customer service improvements. COPE was developed by AVSC International to help family planning clinic staff to determine how they can make their services more efficient and responsive to clients' needs. Developed in Africa in 1988, and designed to be used with locally available resources, COPE has been implemented in over 20 countries by over 100 public- and private-sector organizations.

For example, The Family Planning Association of Kenya, The Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council, and the Madagascar Ministry of Health have all used the COPE process in their clinics to collect customer service information through:

- Client self-assessments;
- Client interviews;
- Analyses of client-flow;
- Client suggestion boxes.

*~ continued on next page*

Using information provided by their clients, these organizations developed action plans to address problems clients have identified, and implemented solutions to improve clinic systems. The examples described below indicate the range of client-focused interventions developed by these organizations.

	<b>Problem Area</b>	<b>Customer Service Improvement</b>
<b>Atmosphere</b>	Impersonal service	Name tags were provided for all clinic staff.
	Uncomfortable waiting area	Comfortable benches and flower pots were installed in the waiting area. IEC materials, radio, and television spots were made available for clients to look at while waiting.
<b>Client Flow</b>	Long waits	Waiting times were sharply reduced—in one clinic, from an average of two hours to twelve minutes.
	High number of revisits required	Medical services were provided in one annual visit instead of the four visits previously required.
		Thirteen cycles of oral contraceptives were provided to pill users instead of only three cycles per visit.
	Difficult service hours	Hours were extended and Saturday clinics were added for clients who work every weekday.
	Interrupted services	Staff tea and lunch breaks were staggered so services were provided without interruption.
	Inefficient revisits	A separate service window was opened for providing clients with a resupply of contraceptives.
<b>Information Given</b>	Lack of contraceptive information provided	Staff received training in counseling and communications.
	Lack of directions	Clear sign posts were put up to direct clients.
<b>Service Mix</b>	Essential services missing	Treatment of sexually-transmitted diseases and HIV counseling were added to existing services.

As these examples show, different kinds of improvements can make a significant difference in providing personalized, accessible, and efficient clinic services.

## Training Staff in Customer Service

Once standard operating procedures have been developed that incorporate customer service approaches, staff and supervisors can be trained to use customer service in their work.

Training will provide time for staff to review basic concepts of customer service, including a definition of customer service, a discussion of their clients' rights to receive services, staff accountability, and benefits that can result from implementing customer service. In the early training sessions, staff can share information about

the client groups they serve, what clients say they need, and what sorts of services they seem to prefer. Later training sessions can cover information about the new client-oriented procedures and provide opportunities to practice customer service techniques. By the end of the training, staff should feel comfortable in:

- Incorporating customer service attitudes in their day-to-day work;
- Using good communication and listening skills;
- Handling dissatisfied clients;
- Using recovery skills to smooth out difficult situations.

### Techniques for Training Staff in Customer Service

**Brainstorming.** Allow staff to contribute their ideas about customer service without any interruption, criticism, or censorship from others. Record all ideas in the words of the speaker, asking questions only for clarification. Once all the ideas have been recorded, staff can then discuss, analyze, prioritize, and accept, modify, or reject them. *For example, brainstorm about what a client should experience in an ideal clinic as she walks in, registers, has her consultation, obtains her contraceptive, pays for the service (if appropriate), and leaves the clinic.*

**Role plays.** Have staff act out scenarios which are either written in advance or improvised on the spot. The rest of the staff observe, listen, and analyze the behavior of the actors and the implications of the scenarios for customer service in their clinic. *For example, act out different scenarios in which a staff person provides good customer service and contrast that with a situation in which the client is not treated well.*

**Case studies.** Provide staff with a fictional case study or an example drawn from clinic experience that describes a series of customer service issues. Ask them to analyze the situation in the case, identify the problems, come up with recommendations for resolving the problem(s), and explore the implications of their solutions. *For example, in a case in which clients are failing to return for follow-up care, staff can discuss conditions in the clinic that are driving clients away, possible solutions, steps the staff will have to take to implement these solutions, the effects these changes will have on the staff, and ways in which the case can be applied to the staff's own clinic.*

**Practice sessions.** Use practice sessions to give staff the opportunity to practice customer service attitudes and skills in pairs or small groups. *For example, you can practice asking open-ended questions, calming an angry client, and providing appropriate restitution for a client who has had a bad experience in the clinic.*

## Creating Effective Customer Service Attitudes

The attitudes that distinguish a customer service approach are often quite different from the attitudes commonly held by staff in family planning programs. Although most staff always try to be hospitable and respectful, providing training in customer service can

reinforce the kind of attitudes you would like staff to have. Training will give them an opportunity to identify and acknowledge any concerns or biases they have about serving clients.

The following chart shows the differences between attitudes focused on the organization or staff, and attitudes that are focused on the client.

Organization/Staff-Focused Attitudes	Client-Focused Attitudes
It is a privilege for clients to come to the clinic and have trained staff take care of them.	Staff appreciate the opportunity to provide services to their clients.
Efficiency and technical competence are our primary concerns.	Technical competence and efficiency are important, but services must be delivered in a clinic that is hospitable, responsive, polite, respectful, and friendly to clients.
Organizational requirements and professional standards must be met before client needs can be addressed.	Meeting clients' needs is the best way to fulfill organizational requirements and meet professional standards.
Attending to each individual client's needs is too time-consuming because it increases the time it takes to provide services.	Taking time to listen and meet the client's individual needs saves staff time, reduces unnecessary return visits, and encourages the client to continue to come to the clinic for services next time.
Service providers know best what method to choose for the client.	Service providers spend time helping the client choose the most appropriate method from among those that are safe for her to use.

## Using Good Communication Skills

Customer service training can help staff to develop and enhance their skills in communicating effectively. Good communication costs nothing but can reap huge benefits for a program. All staff need to have the skills to listen carefully to what a client is telling them, answer the client's questions, and explain what the client's options are. In areas where different dialects are spoken, you should be sure to always have one or more staff in the clinic who can speak those dialects.

**Ask open-ended questions.** This is a skill that should become part of the routine interactions between staff and client. Open-ended questions allow clients to answer freely in their own way, without the staff member

putting words or ideas in their mouths; and they require more than a "Yes" or "No" answer. *For example: How are you today? What do you hope to accomplish during your visit today? What experience have you had with contraceptives? How does your spouse feel about family planning?*

**Help the client express her concerns.** By actively listening and asking for details, a counselor can encourage clients to express the concerns they may have brought with them. *For example: That's important; can you tell me more about it? When and how did that happen? Can you explain that to me?*

## How to . . .

### Use Active Listening Skills

- Stop other activities while listening, such as writing or sorting papers.
- Listen until the client stops talking. Interrupt only when necessary to clarify something she has said.
- Listen for tone of voice and words that indicate how the client feels.
- Observe body language for clues on how the client feels about what she or he is telling you. For example, is the client looking down or smiling while you are talking?
- Ask questions until you understand.
- Restate any complex information the client tells you and ask if you have understood correctly.
- Add a comment that shows that you understand how the client feels.

### Handling Difficult Situations

In order to feel confident in helping clients in difficult situations, staff will need to know what options they can offer a client when they are trying to calm an angry or frustrated client. Staff can practice handling these situations during the training program, so that they gain

experience in solving client problems in ways that are satisfactory to the client and that let the client know that the organization cares. As part of the training, the staff may work together to develop guidelines that reflect these discussions and provide a flexible approach for dealing with a variety of situations.

## How to . . .

### Calm a Dissatisfied Client

- Stay calm. Remember that the client is dissatisfied with the situation, not with you.
- Let the client express anger. Stay quiet and listen for clues about what caused the anger. Listen using non-verbal gestures: a nod of the head, an expression of concern.
- Put yourself in the client's position, acknowledge her feelings, and try to understand the situation from the client's perspective: "I can understand why you are angry/unhappy."
- Control your anger.
- Avoid negative justifications like, "We don't do that here," and "Sorry, but there is no way we can help you."
- Tell the client you want to help but can't while she is expressing her anger.
- When the client is calm, ask questions to get to the root of the problem.
- Be positive about resolving the problem. Use phrases like, "We can offer you . . ." or "What we can do is . . ."
- Identify the best option with the client.

## Recovering After Things Go Wrong

Using good recovery skills helps you and the client feel better after something goes wrong. Recovery skills are simple to define: acknowledge a service problem, apologize sincerely, and offer a suitable resolution so that the client feels adequately compensated for the inconvenience. Putting recovery skills into practice, however, requires maturity, honesty, and self-confidence.

Managers and staff should work together to develop appropriate responses that compensate clients who have experienced a major inconvenience. *For example, when a client has to make a second trip to the clinic because you did not have oral contraceptives in stock at the time of her initial visit, you could develop a policy that allows her to go to the front of the queue on her next visit. If the clinic charges for pills, the client could be given a voucher for a free cycle of pills to compensate her for the inconvenience of having to make a return trip to the clinic.* Some organizations may require that staff bring incidents to the attention of a senior staff member or manager who then offers an appropriate resolution to the problem.

## Obtaining and Using Client Feedback

Good customer service is built on soliciting and using feedback from clients. By getting client feedback you will know more about the factors that affect their satisfaction, and can use the information to improve services and increase the satisfaction of all your clients in the process.

Getting and using good customer service feedback includes four steps:

- Identifying customer service issues;
- Recording these issues;
- Discussing and taking action on the issues;
- Evaluating the results.

**Identifying and recording customer service issues.** To identify customer service problems, staff need to know what clients think of the services. As Thomas Peters, an expert on customer service, has said, “We don’t really ‘feel’ problems, especially quality and

service problems, unless we somehow . . . hear it in [our customers’] own words, with their own emotions. . .”

Feedback about customer service can be gathered in a variety of ways:

- **Creating opportunities for client-centered discussion.** Staff should discuss services that are working especially well and those that are not working well for clients. Time can be set aside in staff meetings to focus on what staff have learned from talking with clients and other staff about factors that help or hinder customer service.
- **Recording compliments and complaints** about service that staff receive. If all comments are recorded, appropriate staff can review them and look for common elements or trends that point to possible changes in clinic procedures.
- **Keeping a client suggestion box or comment book** in the waiting area and making it convenient for clients to write their ideas in the book or put them in the box. Clients are much more apt to use these feedback techniques if staff invite clients to write their comments and if there is a sign nearby that reaffirms, “We want to hear your ideas.” One staff member should have the job of following up on client or staff suggestions within a defined period of time by reporting suggestions at staff meetings and facilitating staff discussions about possible solutions to the problems.
- **Periodically conducting exit interviews with clients** as they leave the clinic. This technique is particularly useful if the clinic has made some changes and wants to follow up on clients’ reactions to those changes.
- **Interviewing individual clients from different groups.** Staff should interview discontinuers, “no show” clients, clients who have expressed dissatisfaction, satisfied clients, transfer clients, clients referred to outside services, and potential clients who have never used the clinic. An interview is the best way to find out why some clients have not made full use of the clinic’s services, what additional services they feel they need, and how the staff can serve them better.
- **Conducting focus groups.** These are planned and guided discussions among small groups of clients, focusing on specific service issues of

concern to the clinic staff. Focus groups may be more useful if they are held in a location away from the clinic, where clients may speak more freely than they would if they were meeting at the clinic.

Clients are most responsive if they are told that their opinions are crucial in helping to improve services. Then they are likely to give honest, informative answers because they feel that they are helping to improve the quality of the services they receive.

### Sample Exit Interview Questions

Why have you come to the clinic today?

Have you received what you came for? If not, why not?

If the client received a contraceptive method:

Did you receive instructions about the method? What were they?

Do you have any more questions about the method?

What do you like best about this clinic?

What do you like least about this clinic?

What suggestions do you have to help us improve services at this clinic?

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

*Source: AVSC International, COPE*

### Closing the Feedback Loop: Taking Action

Once you have obtained feedback from clients, you will need to develop a process for converting the information into action, letting staff and clients know about the changes, and evaluating the effects of the changes. If clients' comments and suggestions are simply allowed to gather dust on a shelf, both staff and clients will rightly feel that they have wasted their time and energy.

At least one staff member should be assigned the responsibility and have a schedule for following up on client problems. This person should assemble a group of staff members to gather information to determine how widespread and serious each problem is, and to use their findings to prioritize the problems. You and your staff should use this information to determine the highest-priority problems and propose service changes to resolve these problems.

Both staff and clients should be kept informed of the progress of key suggestions. Routine staff meetings and occasional special meetings can be used to keep all staff

aware of the key problems that clients have identified and the changes that have been proposed to solve the problems. Clients will appreciate learning about important changes that affect their visits. Some clinics have bulletin boards where they post client suggestions that are being considered and note how staff and managers are responding to them. Other clinics notify clients of important improvements through posters in the waiting room.

### Evaluating the Results

As a manager, you should work with your staff to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of your customer service improvements and determine whether you are achieving the desired results. In order to evaluate your customer service efforts, you will need to obtain client and staff feedback about the changes you have made and monitor customer service indicators. Although every clinic should develop its own indicators of progress in the customer service initiative, the following list provides examples of indicators some clinics have used.

## Sample Customer Service Indicators

The following are examples of some of the indicators you can use to evaluate the effectiveness of your customer service efforts. Achieving positive results in specific service areas cannot be attributed solely to the provision of good customer service. However, client feedback will help you to determine how customer service may have supported clinic efforts to, for example, decrease the number of discontinuers, or increase the number of new clients who come to the clinic because they heard good things about your services.

### Service Statistics

- Number of new clients and new acceptors
- Number of revisits for specific contraceptive methods
- Number of referrals to the clinic by friend, relative, or other sources
- Number of discontinuers
- Number of “no shows”
- Number of clients who came wanting a contraceptive method but left without one

### Client Feedback

- Number and types of compliments
- Number and types of complaints

### Staff Procedures

Procedures established and followed for:

- Responding to a client who has a complaint
- Offering compensation to a client for her inconvenience
- Knowing what other staff member a client should talk to about an unresolved problem
- Reporting a difficult situation
- Handling client suggestions
- Keeping the clinic clean
- Providing comfortable seating and activities for waiting clients

### Clinic Environment

- Signs that indicate where clients are to go for different services
- Privacy during each client interview and examination
- Waiting times within the range that staff have determined is acceptable
- Separate routes for quickly resupplying continuing clients

---

## Maintaining the Customer Service Focus

To be successful, a customer service initiative needs to be introduced to staff effectively, supported by well-thought-out organizational procedures, and based on thorough staff training in customer service attitudes and skills. It needs continuous client feedback to ensure that changes in services are indeed improvements from the client's perspective. And, above all, it requires that you and your clinic staff work each and every day to satisfy the needs and expectations of the clients you serve.

When you make significant improvements in customer service and receive positive feedback from your clients about your services, you will know that you have met and maybe even surpassed your clients' expectations. It is then that your clinic can become a model of excellence for the rest of the family planning program and can more effectively advocate for program-wide changes in such areas as service mix and pricing.

### Reviewers' Corner

*A forum for discussing additional applications of FPM concepts and techniques*

**On client preferences . . .** *One reviewer stresses, "Ensuring customer satisfaction requires a thorough understanding of the socio-cultural context in which the client and providers live in order to correctly interpret what the client perceives as quality services. In many rural settings, customer satisfaction can conflict with the conventional 'wisdom' about what clients want. When staff see themselves as givers and clients as receivers, they have a difficult time placing the receivers first."*

**On cost-effectiveness of customer service . . .** *One reviewer comments, "The changes in clinic practice that are essential to 'put the customer first' need not cost a great deal of money. The goal of customer service is mostly an effort to change staff attitudes towards clients and other staff. When this is achieved, procedural changes follow easily."*

**On public-sector clinics . . .** *One reviewer emphasizes, "Customer service is very important to public-sector clinics. Not only can it improve staff performance, but it can also increase clinic resources. In our country, where the Ministry of Health cannot provide service delivery sites with sufficient basic supplies, community clubs of satisfied customers provide them with pens, paper, alcohol, etc."*

**On supervisors' training . . .** *Another reviewer stresses, "Programs often fund training for staff in customer service, but sometimes fail to fund similar training for their supervisors. It is critical that supervisors be trained so that customer service can be fully institutionalized and included in supervisors' evaluations of quality of care. When supervisors don't discuss poor service attitudes with individual staff, they allow these attitudes to undermine a clinic's progress toward achieving its mission."*

**On staff placement . . .** *One reviewer advises, "I would recommend that managers be honest and realistic about their staff. Some staff simply are not welcoming by nature and should be rotated to positions where they will come in less contact with clients. Fostering customer service attitudes is much easier when one of the criteria for recruiting staff is friendliness and good communications skills."*

**On the fundamental premise of service delivery . . .** *One reviewer concludes, "Clients are the reason that justifies our existence. For them we exist, to them we owe our work."*

## Working Solutions from Our Reviewers

The following additional Working Solutions provided by several of our reviewers show the kinds of customer service improvements that can help increase clients' use of and satisfaction with clinic services.

Problem Area	Country	Customer Service Goal	Customer Service Initiative
<b>Client Demand</b>	<b>Namibia</b>	Remove client anxieties about contraception and reproductive health care.	Staff scheduled a special pelvic exam day and invited clients to bring a friend for support.
<b>Client Rights</b>	<b>Togo</b>	Allow female clients to obtain family planning services without first getting their husbands' permission.	The Ministry of Health revised service protocols to allow women to receive services without their husbands' approval. Two donors organized workshops for providers to publicize these and other protocols.
<b>Complaints</b>	<b>Colombia</b>	Handle client complaints smoothly and effectively.	At the urging of the service staff in a large urban clinic, managers' offices were moved from the sixth floor to the first floor. This gave clients easier access to managers who could handle complaints that could not easily be resolved by other staff.

## References

- AVSC International. *COPE: Client Oriented Provider Efficient Services*. New York, NY, 1995.
- Edmunds, M., D. Strachan, and S. Vriesendorp. *Client-Responsive Family Planning: A Handbook for Providers*. Pathfinder International, Watertown, MA, 1987.
- Garrity, Joan and Sally Jo Jones. *Assuring the Quality of HIV Prevention Counseling: A Workshop for Supervisors*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention with the Academy for Educational Development, Washington DC, 1995.
- Griffin, A., G. Gleason, R. Preiss, et al. "Best Practice for Customer Satisfaction in Manufacturing Firms." *Sloan Management Review*, Cambridge, MA, Winter 1995, pp. 87-98.
- Hart, C., J. Hesdett, and W. Sasser, Jr. "The Profitable Art of Service Recovery." In *Service Management*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing Division, 1991.
- Holmgren, Norah, ed. *Customer Service and Marketing in Family Planning Centers*. Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Planned Parenthood-Western Region, San Francisco, CA.
- Peters, Thomas J. "Common Courtesy: The Ultimate Barrier to Entry." *Hospital Forum*, now known as *Healthcare Forum Journal*, San Francisco, CA, Vol. 27, No. 1, 1984, pp. 10-16; Vol. 27, No 2, 1984, pp. 51-56.
- Reichheld, F. and W. Sasser, Jr. "Zero Defections: Quality Comes to Services." In *Service Management*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Publishing Division, 1991.
- Romano, Catherine. "The Morphing of Customer Service: Are You Getting the Results You Want out of Your Customer Service Initiatives?" *Management Review*, American Management Association, New York, NY, December 1995.

# Poster for Customer Service

## *Welcome to Our Family Planning Clinic*

**At our clinic you have rights and choices.**

**You have the right to:**

- Be treated with dignity and respect.
- Know the names of the people serving you.
- Have privacy and confidentiality of your records.
- Receive explanations, education, and counseling.
- **Consent to or refuse any care or treatment.**



**In planning your family, you have the right to:**

- Decide whether or not to have children, and when.
- Know the effectiveness, possible side effects, and problems of all methods of birth control.
- Participate in choosing a birth control method.

**When you want to know  
When you have questions  
When you have problems  
When you like what happens**

**PLEASE ASK  
PLEASE SPEAK UP  
PLEASE COMPLAIN  
PLEASE TELL US**

*We want you to be satisfied with your visit to our clinic.*

*Adapted from a waiting room poster in the clinics of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, USA.*

*The Family Planning Manager* is designed to help managers develop and support the delivery of high-quality family planning services. The editors welcome any comments, queries, or requests for free subscriptions. Please send to:



*The Family Planning Manager*  
Family Planning Management Development  
Management Sciences for Health  
400 Centre Street  
Newton, Massachusetts 02158-2084 USA  
Phone number: (617) 527-9202  
Fax number: (617) 965-2208  
E-mail: [fpmpubs@msh.org](mailto:fpmpubs@msh.org)

The FPMD project is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development. This project provides management assistance to national family planning programs and organizations to improve the effectiveness of service delivery.

The

# Family Planning Manager

## CASE SCENARIOS FOR TRAINING AND GROUP DISCUSSION

### FAMSAN Places Client Needs First

Marta Arias, Director of FAMSAN's newest family planning clinic, had participated in the strategic planning meetings for FAMSAN and was very interested in developing an effective customer service program in her new clinic. As part of the strategic planning process, Mrs. Arias had visited three other family planning clinics in the area—another small non-governmental clinic very much like her own, a private clinic, and a public clinic. She looked at their clinical practices and how they were organized and managed. She wanted to begin by getting the staff together to share her observations from these visits, learn from the previous experience of her staff, and identify areas where customer service could be improved.

The clinic had been open only six weeks when Mrs. Arias held a meeting to initiate a discussion with her staff about customer service. "Welcome everyone," began Mrs. Arias. "We've been very involved in start-up activities for the clinic these past few weeks, but I asked you to come today so that we could begin to set up systems to make sure client needs have high priority at our clinic. In the recent strategic planning meetings, FAMSAN made a commitment to improving customer service systematically in all of its clinics. Since many of you have worked in other clinics, I'm sure you have some valuable experiences that we can use in addressing this extremely important area. I'm eager to hear what you think we can do to identify areas where we can increase client satisfaction, and how we might establish a system for continually evaluating and improving customer service."

"In my experience," offered Nurse Lopez, "first we must agree that we want to hear what our clients have to say and be prepared to make changes that serve their needs. As you know, I worked for a much smaller organization before I came to FAMSAN. It took a long time for staff to realize how important it is to listen to what clients have to say. For example, we routinely prescribed a six-month supply of pills for our clients who were using oral contraceptives. They were supposed to pay for the supply at the time of their visits. We discovered that not all of our clients were able to pay for six packets at once, so we started a policy of allowing them to come in and buy new packets of pills when they had the money. When they had used up five packets of the six-month prescription, they were then scheduled for a revisit. In this system, they didn't have to see a provider each time they came in. Instead the receptionist was able to take care of them in a few minutes."

"I visited that organization as part of our strategic planning process," said Mrs. Arias. "They told us that within three months of making that policy change, the return rate for clients using pills increased by ten percent."

"I am concerned about confidentiality," responded Mrs. Estrada, the receptionist. "If a client comes to me for a pill refill, then everyone in the waiting room will be able to hear what we say."

"That is very important," replied Mrs. Arias. "At the public clinic I visited they had a partitioned area where the receptionist could talk with clients privately. The receptionist said she felt it had greatly improved client confidentiality."

“Nurse Lopez, your mention of paying clients made me think of something from my last position,” said Mr. Ruiz, the financial officer. “Our cash receipts and financial information all had to be compiled on the last day of each month. Because so many people are paid on the last day of the month, the clinic was always extremely busy with extra clients. We decided that in order to allow staff to spend time with the extra clients who always came on those days, we would shift the day that we closed our monthly accounts until the end of the first week of the next month.”

“These suggestions sound excellent and fairly easy to change,” said Dr. Morales. “What about issues relating to clinical protocols? If it is our goal to make sure that clients are able to use contraception without interruption, then sometimes we will face difficult decisions regarding the stated protocols. Clients who use Depo-Provera are always told to return in three months for their next injection. Sometimes women are unable to return that week. At the private clinic where I worked before coming here, we changed the protocol so that we could give these clients their next injection up to two weeks early or a week later. Our clients using this method then had a longer interval to come for their next injection, making it less likely that they would have any interruption in method use.”

“How did the clinic determine whether this was the right decision?” asked Mrs. Arias.

“We were fortunate in that we had an excellent data collection system,” replied Dr. Morales. “We compared the Depo Provera dropout rate prior to the

policy change with the rate after the change. We found that the dropout rate for Depo Provera clients went down by 15 percent during the six months after we made this change.”

“We have heard a number of very good ideas. I would also like to make sure that we include everyone on the staff in a plan for providing good customer service,” said Nurse Lopez. “In my last position it took us a long time before we realized how important the cleaners and the guards are. Some of the clients were reluctant to use the toilets before their exams. When we looked into it we discovered that the toilets were quite dirty even though they were cleaned every morning. We realized that we needed to ask the cleaner to go in several times a day to make sure that they were still clean and well-supplied. We also realized that the guard can be helpful to clients in a number of ways, such as giving clients directions to a bus stop.”

“I’ve heard all of you talk about how client satisfaction is affected by clinical practice and clinic organization and management,” said Mrs. Arias. “Your ideas are very important, but I also want to think about how we can collect information directly from clients and establish a system for responding to the information we have gathered. We need to be able to make changes in our service delivery based on what clients are telling us. Now, I would like to focus our discussion on how we can develop good client information systems and implement other systems that will ensure that we always place the client first.”

## Case Discussion Questions: FAMSAN Places Client Needs First

1. What systems could FAMSAN develop to collect information about customer service on a regular basis?
2. Based on the FAMSAN case, identify several potential areas for improvement in the areas of service delivery, and clinic organization and management.
3. Describe how FAMSAN staff should organize themselves in order to address the customer service issues raised in the case. Discuss how staff should close the feedback loop, making sure that clients are informed of the changes staff make. Indicate how FAMSAN will determine whether their clients think the changes are helpful.

## Case Analysis: FAMSAN Places Client Needs First

### 1. What systems could FAMSAN develop to collect information about customer service on a regular basis?

FAMSAN could collect information from clients using a number of different techniques. These include:

- Recording client complaints that staff are told or overhear;
- Placing a client suggestion box in the waiting area and invite clients to use it as they finish their visit;
- Conducting exit interviews with clients periodically;
- Interviewing clients who miss appointments;
- Conducting focus group discussions with clients;
- Conducting occasional visits from “mystery clients.”

### 2. Based on the FAMSAN case, identify several potential areas for improvement in the areas of service delivery, and clinic organization and management.

Client satisfaction is directly affected by the service delivery practices of a clinic. These practices, in turn, are supported by a number of management and organizational systems intended to ensure the quality of those services. In trying to develop a process for placing the client first in each of these areas, FAMSAN staff should focus first on service delivery practices, identify specific weaknesses, and then assess the supporting organizational structures and management systems that need to be strengthened.

#### **Service Delivery:**

In terms of service delivery and clinical practices, some of the areas that the FAMSAN staff could consider are: selection and availability of methods, the quantity of contraceptives that may be dispensed at one time, or the timing of client revisits for contraceptives. In order to determine whether these areas are problems areas, they can be reviewed internally through periodic supervision and record reviews. They can also be evaluated externally by conducting local rapid assessments and by using exit interviews or focus groups to assess clients’ perspectives. All of these methods and techniques should be used to identify areas that could be improved to increase clients’ satisfaction with clinic services.

The discussion in the FAMSAN case identified several areas where service delivery could be more flexible and more responsive to client needs, such as increasing the time period in which Depo-Provera clients can return for their next injection.

#### **Clinic Organization and Management:**

FAMSAN staff should look at how changes in service delivery will affect organizational structures and management systems. Some of the areas that the FAMSAN staff could consider include payment plans and policies, client flow systems, clinic aesthetics, ways to assure confidentiality, whether there is sufficient time allotted for clients to spend with trained providers, and hours of operation. By forming a multi-functional team including a representative from the central office, FAMSAN will be able to address both the service delivery and management needs at the same time, rather than independently.

## Case Analysis: FAMSAN Places Client Needs First

The discussion in the FAMSAN case identified several areas where staff had some previous experience in changing management practices to support changes in service delivery protocols and improve customer satisfaction. These included: changing payment policies for pill clients so that they could pay for one packet at a time if they could not afford to pay for a six-month supply at one time; shifting the date that accounting closed their records to accommodate the increased number of clients who would come to the clinic to buy pills at the end of the month; and developing a system to make sure that the bathrooms remained clean at all times.

### **3. Describe how FAMSAN staff should organize themselves in order to address the customer service issues raised in the case. Discuss how staff should close the feedback loop, making sure that clients are informed of the changes staff make. Indicate how FAMSAN will determine whether their clients think the changes are helpful.**

FAMSAN staff could establish a small team composed of clinical, management, and administrative staff whose responsibility it is to review the information they have collected from clients, and look at the clinical and management practices that either the clients or the staff think should be improved. They should include at least one staff person from the central or regional office on the team as well, since some of the suggested changes may involve changes in agency policy or standards and may need approval from a higher administrative level. FAMSAN staff should then discuss the issues and decide on some priority areas for improvement in both clinical and management areas. They will need to develop a system for continually assessing the effectiveness of the changes and proposing new systems or changes for further improvement.

Closing the feedback loop involves deciding what changes should be made and taking action to increase customer satisfaction in the areas you have identified for improvement. FAMSAN staff should be sure to inform clients about the changes, so that they know that the clinic is responding to their needs. This can be done by posting a list of the major client concerns and changes in progress and mentioning the changes to clients during a counseling session.

Equally important is verifying that the changes that have been implemented have resulted in the improvements you intended. FAMSAN should verify the effectiveness of the changes both internally and externally, obtaining the information in the same ways that the original problems were identified: through periodic supervision, record reviews, exit interviews, focus groups, or local rapid assessments. In addition to receiving critical feedback from staff and clients about the changes, the team should monitor customer service indicators to determine the impact of the changes. This might include looking at continuation rates, or reductions in the number of clients having to return to the clinic due to a misunderstanding about how a method is used.