



Response to Council Bill 19-0163 R

“Closed Means Closed” - Clarifying 311 Services’ approach to resolving requests

Submitted by 3-1-1 One Call Center

311 was originally implemented in the City of Baltimore in conjunction with the Department of Justice in 1996 to determine if instituting a non-emergency number would reduce calls and free up 911 to take “true” emergencies.

In 2001 the city created a professional call center expanding 311 to city service request to increase customer satisfaction and use the data from 311 to measure the performance and the successfulness of service delivery from the agencies.

311 is the intake center for requests. The call center monitors call center and customer service metrics to ensure the call center is providing **excellent customer service**. These metrics include but are not limited to the average hold time, the average answer times as well as the abandonment rate. Along with a stringent monitoring program, 311 delivers excellent customer service to all callers.

The partnership between 311 and city agencies require the agencies to follow a process to track **customer responsiveness** by utilizing our CRM tool (Salesforce) to track the progress of every request. Once the service request is entered in the system by 311 the agency is then responsible for providing the service and closing the service request in the system. The service level is tracked to determine if the service requests was completed by the agency in accordance with the service level agreement (SLA) specified by the agency.

311 has always used the phrase “closed means closed” to indicate that the service requested is complete and the customer’s request has been totally resolved. It is imperative regardless of the agency process to get the request done, that they do not close the request before it is done. 311 does not close requests, it is the responsibility of the agency to determine what needs to be done, how the work will be done, inspect the work to ensure it is done and then close the request.

Is 311 working?

311 provides customer service – agencies provide service delivery

Your telephone call is answered professionally in a timely fashion providing excellent customer service

Your request is recorded and tracked by a neutral agency

311’s answer rate is well above industry standards

Our goal is to answer 90% of our calls under 30 seconds which is measured in real time and reviewed daily

311 works by providing exceptional customer service



When service requests are referred to other city agencies are customers connected to the proper people at those agencies to follow up on their request?

The system was configured in partnership with every agency. During this process we met with each agency and walked through the SOP for each service request. From this exercise we developed scripts for 311. After intake the service requests are routed to the appropriate agency queue to be worked and closed by the agency.

Does 311 services make repeated efforts, if necessary, to determine whether agencies have fulfilled service requests?

Given 311 agents are not in the field we are unable to monitor the progress or completion of the service request. Our processes rely on the agencies for this information. Service requests that require more than one step, should be updated by the agency to allow 311 to communicate any notes or progress until the job is complete.

If 311 service directs a service request to the wrong agency, does it have a system in place so that similar service requests will be reported to the correct agency in the future?

The 311 Customer Service Agent interprets what the customer is requesting from the description given. It is very rare that a 311 agent will put the incorrect service request in the system. However, if an agency determines that the service request belongs with another agency, they should use the proper process to transfer the request to the appropriate agency. If a service request needs attention from two or more separate agencies, the proper process would be to link the original service request to the next agency that has to perform that task. The service request should not be closed by the first agency it should either be transferred or linked to prevent a premature closing and to prevent the customer from receiving an email indicating the work was complete.

How many service requests are satisfactorily resolved and how many instead go unanswered or are closed by them system but then require follow up request by residents who aren't satisfied by the initial response?

For the period January 1, 2019 – October 3, 2019 83% of service request across all agencies were entered as closed on time. We cannot track if service requests were closed improperly or before the work was completed.

For additional information or questions, please contact Lisa Allen at Lisan.Allen@baltimorecity.gov.