



## Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Customer Service Annual Report



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## FY17 Highlights

- Developed first virtual, streamlined online directory, resulting in the most popular page visited by constituents - other than the home page.
- Proactively used social media to provide citizens and businesses with relevant and significant information about services, events, and news. Compared with FY16, the number of constituents who follow the office Facebook and Twitter grew by 17% and 19%, respectively.
- Maximized use of a live newsfeed on website, featuring social media posts to ensure availability of information to all constituents, especially those who do not utilize social media.
- Hosted six town hall meetings using innovative captioning technology.
- Hired highly-skilled staff to lead communications efforts.

## Leadership Analysis of FY17 and Summary of FY18 Approach

In FY17, the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing engaged in various innovative strategies to maximize efficiency in providing customer service to Maryland's 1.2 million Deaf and hard of hearing constituents.

The office utilized multiple social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to more efficiently communicate information to a wider audience and to reflect the public's increasing use of social media as the primary way to receive news and updates. Compared with FY16, the number of Facebook and Twitter followers increased by 17% and 19%, respectively. In FY18, the office plans to maintain these positive trends. For constituents who do not use social media, the office maximized the use of a live newsfeed on the website featuring all social media posts.

The office also developed a virtual, streamlined online directory that includes public, private, and non-profit entities that serve Deaf and hard of hearing individuals in different fields. Previously, many directories were created in PDF format and posted in different places on the website, which posed a barrier for constituents to easily find information and for office staff to update the directories on a consistent basis. In FY18, the office plans to continue to improve and refine the directory, as well as improve search engine optimization of the office website to increase visibility and accessibility of the website and online resources.

The office also established internal protocols and practices to help reduce inefficiencies and systematize redundant tasks. For example, to enhance customer service, the office developed a manual with standardized responses/resources for constituent correspondence. In doing so, information is streamlined and consistent, and the process is more efficient for office staff. In FY18, the office plans to review and update the manual along with other internal protocols to ensure currency of the information.

Additionally, the office hired highly-skilled staff to spearhead communications; in FY16, the office did not have a designated individual to manage and promote communications efforts.

The office continues to explore new and innovative strategies to help improve customer service and communications.

## Detailed FY17 Results and FY18 Plans

### Customer Service Survey Results

In FY17, the office received very few responses from the customer service survey, likely because the office primarily interfaces with Deaf and hard of hearing constituents via videophone rather than e-mail. Therefore, it is likely that constituents may have not seen the customer service survey link. The office has proactively posted a link to the customer service survey on all e-mail signatures as well as the office website, and are currently exploring different ways to increase visibility to the survey. The office will continue to monitor results.

### Status of Customer Service Training

In FY17, all three staff members of the office received training on customer service, which will be standard protocol for new incoming employees. To enhance customer service, the office developed a manual with standardized responses and resources for constituent correspondences. In doing so, information is streamlined and the process is more efficient for office staff. In FY18, the manual will continue to be refined on an ongoing basis.

### Customer Inquiry Response Times and Overall Time-to-Resolution

#### Timeliness of Responding to Customer Inquiries

In FY17, 66% of inquiries were responded to within five business days and 34% of customer inquiries were responded within two business days. The office's policy is to respond to all inquiries in a timely fashion.

#### Best Practices

When staff is unable to answer a constituent's question immediately, office staff strives to still respond to the constituent within 48 hours, even to simply indicate that staff is still working on the case. The goal is for constituents to know they are being taken care of.

#### Plans for Improvement

In FY18, the office plans on improving its internal tracking system of constituent inquiries to ensure a more streamlined process.

## Improving the Customer Experience from Multiple Perspectives

### Making Agency Services Available Online

In FY17, the office launched its first virtual directory so that visitors can easily find contact information and resources pertaining to a specific field or area (<http://odhh.maryland.gov/directory/>). Previously, the office website had many directories that were created in PDF format and posted in different places on the website, which posed a barrier for constituents to easily find information and for office staff to update information on a consistent basis. The new virtual directory is now a single webpage, allowing staff to easily update the directory without causing changes in the directory hyperlinks and enabling constituents to access information with the same hyperlink at any time. If constituents want to add new information to the directory, the office set up an automated form that constituents can easily fill out. In FY17, the office website had 20,496 views. While the directory was launched in the middle of FY17, the directory experienced 2,113 views, resulting in the most popular page visited by constituents, other than the home page.

In FY18, the office plans to continue to improve and refine the virtual directory. The office also hopes to improve search engine optimization of the office website, such as adding tags to specific webpages to help search engines identify specific content.

The office plans to launch its first virtual phone tree that is compatible with videophones. In FY17, the office started a dialogue with Sorenson Communications on creating a phone tree that is accessible in American Sign Language. The phone tree would allow a streamlined process, including automated options if a constituent wishes to access specific resources and services within the state. For example, the phone tree would automatically connect the caller to the Maryland Commission on Civil Rights if the constituent wishes to file a complaint. In addition to increasing efficiency, the phone tree would also help coordinate available resources/services from other state agencies.

On a consistent basis, the office strives to work with other state agencies to ensure that agency services are accessible online for Deaf and hard of hearing constituents, such as ensuring videos are captioned and available in American Sign Language. In general, adding captions and subtitles result in increased view time and user engagement. As well, American Sign Language, not English, is often the native and primary language of many Deaf and hard of hearing individuals.

### Social Media Usage to Improve the Customer Experience

Previously, the office distributed weekly e-mails with open rates ranging from 25% to 30%. In FY17, the office focused on sending specific, targeted e-mail announcements on important events, projects, reminders, and visits related to the office and the state. In both FY16 and FY17, the e-mail open rate ranged consistently from 35% to 45%. In FY18, the office plans to increase its e-mail subscription base through various initiatives, including consistent reminders at both public events and online to join the office's mailing list. The office will also transition to a new vendor, GovDelivery, for an e-mail distribution platform. This new vendor is available to serve state entities at no extra cost.

Constituents are increasingly using social media as the primary way to receive news and updates, therefore the office increased its use of social media in FY17. Moreover, the office ensured that messages are accessible to those not using social media. The office website has a live newsfeed featuring social media posts. In FY15, the average Facebook post reached approximately 10 people. In FY16, the average Facebook post reached 769 people. In FY17, the number of constituents who follow Facebook and Twitter grew by 17% and 19%, respectively. In FY18, the office plans to maintain these positive trends.

The office recognizes that not all individuals use social media or e-mail, and may not have the opportunity to interact with the office. As required by the office's enacting statute, the office must host at least two public town hall meetings each year. Instead, the office now has a goal of hosting a minimum of four meetings each year. In particular, the office now hosts a town hall meeting after each Maryland Advisory Council on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing meeting to help promote engagement among council members and constituents, and for the office and council members to gather feedback and gain a better understanding of the community's needs and concerns related to state issues and the Governor's priorities. In FY17, six town hall meetings were held.

Recently, the office has adopted an innovative technology for captioning at town hall meetings and public events (<http://odhh.maryland.gov/resource-guide-wireless-streamlined-real-time-captioning/>). The technology uses wireless, streamlined, real-time captioning that eliminates the need for a second screen to project the captions and standardizes captioning technologies used across different industries. By using such technology, Deaf and hard of hearing constituents have full access to the presentation and captions, all in one place. While many Deaf and hard of hearing individuals benefit from captioning, the captioning feature has increased usability for everyone (i.e. improved comprehension of dialogue that is often missed). In FY18, the office will re-assess and determine how town hall meetings can be improved.