

TO: Ed McLaughlin, Assistant Director

DATE: 12/31/02

**FROM: Michelle W. Allison,
Program Manager**

- For Action
- For Information
- Meeting Notes

SUBJECT: Secret Shopper

PROPOSED MOTION(S): None

DISCUSSION: The results of "Secret Shopper", Miss Kathleen Lowry, provided several "opportunities for improvement". Based on the information provided a Corrective Action Plan was developed to address areas of concern.

a. Miss Lowry pointed out that she encountered several staff members without name badges.

Corrective Action: All staff is required to wear name badges upon entering the building. Staff is monitored for compliance.

b. Miss Lowry pointed out that she was not greeted with "a smile, or a warm feeling".

Corrective Action: We are working with both the receptionist and other staff who work in the area to be more "engaging" of customers when they enter, and to monitor their conversations so their focus can remain on the "external customer".

c. Miss Lowry stated that in the Computer Lab she did not see any staff, but they could have been there.

Corrective Action: Staff Accessibility--The wearing of name badges will allow customers to better identify staff when they are working with customers.

d. Miss Lowry was in a wheel chair, and was unable to find a Handicapped/Disabled parking space.

Corrective Action: We have two ADA issues--1) Parking--we have two handicap parking spaces. A staff member uses one of the spaces, and the other is available for customers. Unfortunately, on the day she was here both spaces were in use. In our space/lease contract negotiations scheduled for April 2003, we plan to request additional handicap/disabled parking spaces;

2) Restrooms--installation of rails for our handicap/disabled customers in the restrooms will also be a part of the negotiations.

ATTACHMENT(S): Worknet Response

WorkNet
Employment Resource Center

1200 W. 16th
Street Merced,
Ca 95340
(209) 724-2100

To: Ed McLaughlin, Assistant Director
From: Michelle W. Allison, Program Manager
Subject: Secret Shopper Response

This is in response to the comments made by the "The Secret Shopper", Miss Kathleen Lowry, dated Wednesday, November 20, 2002.

Sign: Miss Lowry was visiting during daylight hours, and fog. The sign is large enough to see from the street; however, quite a few people miss the sign. Possibly we can add a sign closer to the street similar to what is displayed by other businesses in the complex.

Parking: Miss Lowry indicated that she is disabled and uses a wheelchair. We have two Handicapped/Disabled parking spaces. When first assigned to the One-Stop in August, I addressed my concerns with the limited Handicapped/Disabled parking. In addition, I spoke with the landlord, Mr. Brawley, and was informed there are two spots for this building.

The Handicapped/Disabled parking for the Employment Resource Center was increased from one space to two, in 2000, as a result of a visit and assessment by a representative from The American with Disabilities State Office. One of the spaces is on the side of the building. Unfortunately, this area is also directly in front of the complex's trash container, and was found to be in noncompliance with state policies. As a result of that visit another parking space was installed directly in front of the building.

On the day Miss Lowry came we had two other people visiting the facility in wheelchairs. In addition, we have a staff member that has special needs, and requires the use of one of the parking spaces.

Knowing that the parking space on the side of the building is not appropriate, I have spoken with the landlord, Mr. Brawley, as well as our Operations Manager to see what can be done when the lease is renegotiated to address the parking issue, and the restroom in the Annex.

Miss Lowry pointed out that the restrooms in the Annex were not “too accessible” because they lacked “bars”. In my initial conversations I pointed this out to both our Operations Manager and Mr. Brawley. Our Operations Manager, Ms. Jackie Walter-Parnell, has assured me these items will be discussed in the renewal of our contract with Mr. Brawley.

Greeter: Unfortunately Miss Lowry is very accurate in her assessment of her greeting and the “greeter”. The young lady who was covering the front desk is very polite, respectful, but not a very “cheery” person. Due to the recent cuts in the CalWORKs budget we had to reduce the hours of our “Extra Help” staff. Three of the four people had their hours reduced from 40 hours to 20, to being laid off.

The “greeter” was also a casualty of this, and was on loan from our Main Office. She had nothing to fall back on, and with her final week approaching her focus was not fully on the “external customer”, as one might expect in this situation. In addition, we did not have time to train her in all aspects of our operation. She had the basic receptionist skills and appropriate phone skills. However, the CalWORKs cuts and their rippling effects were in every conversation, almost every hour of the day, and impacted her ability to fully demonstrate the skills she did have. The uncertainty for some, and the certainty of unemployment were, I am certain, the conversations Miss Lowry encountered that morning.

Name Badges: Each staff member is given a name badge, with the expectation that they will wear it daily to work in the One-Stop. However, we have found that people forget them at home, leave them in the car, and on their desk. We are now monitoring this more closely, and sending out reminders.

It is the expectation that if the person is new, the receptionist will introduce themselves and welcome the customer on behalf of the One-Stop staff. While the person is completing paperwork, a Specialist is contacted and the customer’s name is given to them. The Specialist is observing the person while they are working, so it is possible they would just go up to them without any further contact with the receptionists.

Completion of Forms: Miss Lowry completed the forms at the table to the right of the counter (when you enter the front door, and are directly facing the counter), this allowed her easy access to a table in her wheelchair. The form is something we are still looking at and working on. We want to make it more universal and less intrusive. It still looks and feels like a Dept of Workforce Investment activity, and it should not. We are working on changing the form to a universal form, and that information may not be required except when a person is “enrolled” into a Department of Workforce Investment activity. However, when a person indicates they would like training, this information is used for a quick preeligibility screening.

Staff Accessibility: On the day Miss Lowry visited we had staff in and around the facility. Unable to see name badges, she may not have been able to determine who was

and was not staff. Depending on the time of day, we can have up to 3 staff members working in the Computer Lab. Other times, depending on the number of people, we might only have one or two staff. Up front staff usually goes through to see if all is okay, and if anyone needs assistance.

I frequently walk through the building just to see how things are going, and do remember Miss Lowry. I was the one who spoke with her about the “new equipment” in the computer lab. Unfortunately, that was a day I did not have my name badge on. In the Plato Lab she spoke with Ed Sousa the instructor from Merced College, and he does not wear a badge.

In the Resource Area she may not have spotted a “Staff Person”; however, they were there. The two Up Front people, if they can, return to their desk in the back area, and were there.

Training Options: I spoke with Mrs. Janie Melin, and she said as a normal practice she provides customers with information about training if they indicate an interest. Miss Lowry told her she was only interested in employment. Provided that information, Mrs. Melin gave her information for the Job Seeker.

Miss Lowry indicated that after leaving our office, she was not sure how to contact anyone if she wanted training or additional information. Mrs. Melin gave her a pamphlet with information on Self-Directed Job Search, Career Track, and Self-Directed Work Search. In that document it states more than once, “If you’re interested in attending any of these workshops”, “If you need assistance, or if you decide to enter one of the other track, please speak to one of the Worknet Employment & Training Specialist”.

Given the information she provided Mrs. Melin, she gave her the information she felt was most appropriate for her needs. However, she did leave her with options for additional service if she so desired.

In Summary: Thank you for the opportunity to address Miss Lowry’s comments. While overall the evaluation was favorable there are always areas for improvement. From her visit we are all more cognizant of wearing our name badges, and the correct ones. We found there were some staff who were still wearing the blue and gray PITD badge, or none at all.

In addition, we have increased our awareness at the front counter to be more engaging of people when they come in and exit the building. As with anything it requires practice, and as we are working to become better at what we do, we appreciate this “opportunity for improvement”.