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An act relating to state government; creating the "Florida Customer Service Standards Act"; providing definitions; specifying measures that state departments are directed to implement with respect to interaction with their customers; providing requirements regarding operating hours; providing that failure to comply with the act does not constitute a cause of action; providing exceptions; providing an effective date.

WHEREAS, confidence in the government's ability to solve problems has been deteriorating for the past three decades; in 1963, the national public's confidence level rated 75 percent, compared to 1993, when confidence levels rated as low as 17 percent, and

WHEREAS, there is a need for customers to be treated with courtesy and respect, to have simplified access to services, to have services that are efficient, to have communications that are clear and easily understood, and to save money, and

WHEREAS, the State of Florida is dedicated to improving the service standards practiced by state departments, NOW, THEREFORE,

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Florida Customer Service Standards Act.--  
(1) SHORT TITLE.--This section may be cited as the  
"Florida Customer Service Standards Act."

1           (2) PURPOSE.--It is the purpose of this section to  
2 direct state departments to practice and employ all the  
3 measures set forth in this section.

4           (3) DEFINITIONS.--As used in this section:

5           (a) "Customer" means any member of the public who uses  
6 or requests services or information provided by a state  
7 department or who is required by statute to interact with the  
8 department.

9           (b) "Department" means a principal administrative unit  
10 within the executive branch of state government, as set forth  
11 in chapter 20, Florida Statutes, and also includes the Public  
12 Service Commission.

13           (4) MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED.--State departments  
14 shall:

15           (a) Designate an employee or employees in the  
16 department who shall be responsible for facilitating the  
17 resolution of customer complaints, including any customer  
18 complaints regarding unsatisfactory treatment by department  
19 employees.

20           (b) Provide available information, except information  
21 which is confidential pursuant to any other state or federal  
22 law, and accurate responses to questions and requests for  
23 assistance in a prompt manner.

24           (c) Acknowledge receipt of a telephonic or electronic  
25 question or request by the end of the next business day.

26           (d) Provide local or toll-free telephonic or  
27 electronic access either through a centralized  
28 complaint-intake call center or directly to a department  
29 employee or employees designated to resolve customer  
30 complaints.

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1           (e) Develop a process for review by upper-level  
2 management of any customer complaints not resolved by the  
3 department employee or employees designated to resolve  
4 customer complaints. In evaluating the appropriateness of  
5 response time, management may consider periodic, high volume  
6 inquiries as a justifiable cause of delay.

7           (f) Develop customer satisfaction measures as part of  
8 the department's performance measurement system.

9           (g) Employ a system by which customer complaints and  
10 resolutions of those complaints are tracked.

11           (h) Provide statistical data on customer complaints  
12 and resolutions of those complaints, and on customer  
13 satisfaction measures in annual reports or other performance  
14 publications, and use this data when conducting management and  
15 budget planning activities.

16           (i) Provide training to employees on improving  
17 customer service and on the role of the department employee or  
18 employees designated to resolve customer complaints.

19           (j) Include in the departmental strategic plan a  
20 program outline or goal regarding customer service.

21           (k) Conduct interdepartmental discussions on methods  
22 of providing and improving customer service.

23           (5) OPERATING HOURS.--Departments shall be staffed and  
24 open to the public for business on all regular business days.

25           (6) FUNDING.--Departments shall use available  
26 resources to achieve the purposes of this section.

27           (7) FAILURE TO COMPLY.--No cause of action shall arise  
28 in favor of any person due to a department's failure to comply  
29 with any provision of this section.

30           (8) EXCEPTIONS.--This section does not apply to a  
31 person who uses or requests services or information from a

1 department when such service or information is related to that  
2 person's:  
3       (a) Pending or current criminal prosecution;  
4       (b) Current incarceration;  
5       (c) Pending administrative action; or  
6       (d) Current lawful state or local government custody.

7       Section 2. This act shall take effect October 1, 2001.  
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