



Administrative Policy

CITYWIDE SERVICE REQUEST RESPONSE STANDARDS

AP No.

AP 2-23

Effective Date:

Upon Approval

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The 311 Houston Service Helpline is a consolidated call center designed to make city government more user-friendly and responsive to city residents. When an individual requests a service or reports an issue, 311 customer service representatives document the issue and route the Service Request (“SR”) to the appropriate City department and a deadline date is assigned for investigation and resolution. City Departments are responsible for handling SRs in a fair, timely and effective manner with a high degree of customer service.

2. POLICY PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to maintain the highest level of customer service through the effective management of 311 Service Requests.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all City Departments.

4. DEFINITIONS

Service Level Agreement (SLA): A predefined target for the number of days allotted for a Department to adequately resolve a Service Request from the date an SR is created to the date it is resolved or cancelled. SLAs give customers an accurate and reasonable expectation of the time it will take to resolve their issue. SLAs vary based on SR-type and are typically established as a set number of days (either calendar days or business days, whichever best conforms to the Department’s operational schedule).

Service Request (SR): A request for city service made via the 311 Houston Service Helpline and documented in one of 311’s customer relationship management systems. There are over two-hundred (200) types of services a person may request (“SR Types”).

Department 311 Performance Manager: Each Department Director shall assign one high-level executive (pay grade 32 or higher) with cross-divisional oversight (i.e. Chief of Staff, Deputy or Assistant Director) to monitor and manage 311 performance across the department’s various service lines, and to investigate, receive and follow-up with customers based on feedback.

Department Mayor 311 Liaison: A staff member designated to receive and manage MYR-type SRs as outlined in Section 5.6 of this policy.

Citywide 311 Performance Manager: The City employee designated by the Mayor to monitor and manage 311 performance citywide.

311 System: The Customer Relationship Management System or systems the City uses to create, manage and resolve service requests made through 311.

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5. POLICY DETAILS

5.1 Establishing and Updating SLAs

- 5.1.1 The Citywide 311 Performance Manager shall establish an SLA for SR-types at a level that departments can achieve 90% of the time, with efficient processing, based on historical data for periods that accurately reflect demand and resource levels. It is recommended that the historical data used to set the SLA contain data for at least one full year, to reflect seasonal changes in demand.
- 5.1.2 If a Department responds to SRs on business days only, the SLAs are calculated using the number of business days; otherwise, SLAs are calculated using the number of calendar days from SR Create Date to SR Closure Date.
- 5.1.3 Departments may request that the Citywide 311 Performance Manager adjust the SLA to better reflect department response times. Requests to adjust SLAs must be submitted to and approved by the Citywide 311 Performance Manager.
- 5.1.4 SLAs that exceed 30 (thirty) calendar days require a detailed explanation of the process that outlines the reasons a SR may remain open for such a duration. This standard explanation by SR-type will be automatically included in the email confirmation to customers when a SR is opened.

5.2 Department Performance Standards

- 5.2.1 Performance Report Review: Department 311 Performance Managers shall review the Mayor's 311 Executive Report each month to monitor on-time performance, customer satisfaction and other key performance indicators.
- 5.2.2 On-time Performance: Departments should strive to resolve 311 SRs within the established SLA time periods.
 - 5.2.2.1 On-time Performance Target: SR-types with an average on-time performance rate of less than 90% in a given month require a Performance Review as outlined in Section 5.2.4 of this policy to determine the underlying cause(s) for delay.
- 5.2.3 Customer Satisfaction and Comments: Customers with a valid email address and an applicable SR are emailed a survey upon SR closure to rate their satisfaction with the City's response on a rating scale of 1 (unsatisfactory) – 3 (satisfactory); customers may also provide comments to explain their rating.
 - 5.2.3.1 Customer Satisfaction Performance Target: SR-types that have an average monthly customer satisfaction rating of less than 2 out of 3 require a Performance Review as outlined in Section 5.2.4 of this policy to determine the underlying cause(s) of negative feedback.
 - 5.2.3.2 Department 311 Performance Manager shall receive, investigate and (when necessary) respond to comments. Where customers are unsatisfied with the quality or level of action taken by the City, Department 311 Performance Managers should conduct a thorough review to understand the concern and take appropriate action (e.g. contacting the customer, reopening or rerouting the SR, etc.). The results of this review should be sent to the Citywide 311 Performance Manager.
- 5.2.4 Performance Review: Department 311 Performance Manager shall conduct a review of all SR types that failed to achieve the performance standards described herein to determine the reasons for such issues and a course of action to remedy. The Department 311 Performance Manager shall send the results of their review by email to the Citywide 311 Performance

Manager no later than the 15th day of the month following the month with below-target performance. Reviews should include, at a minimum, the reason for on-time performance delays and/or below-target customer satisfaction, actions taken or planned to be taken and a reasonable estimate of the timeframe it will take the department to reach the target performance rate based on anticipated improvements.

- 5.2.5 The Citywide 311 Performance Manager will conduct a monthly review and escalate to the Department Director any issues that are outstanding and/or require resolution. Department Directors are responsible for taking necessary actions to meet the various performance standards in this policy.

5.3 Service Request Closure Process

- 5.3.1 SRs can be closed as either “Resolved”, meaning the case was investigated and work was performed or determined unnecessary; or “Cancelled”, meaning the case was invalid or determined not to warrant a City response. In either case, Department staff must select from a list of closure reasons or “State Codes” provided in the applicable 311 System, the Code that most accurately reflects the reason for closure – see Sec 7 for list of State Codes.

- 5.3.2 For SRs closed as “Resolved”, Departments must include a description of the work performed in addition to selecting the appropriate State Code as outlined in Sec 5.3.1. The description of work performed must be at a level of detail that is sufficient for the customer to understand how the SR was resolved.

- 5.3.3 SRs shall remain open until no further action is required on the part of the City. If the SR is pending work or needs further investigation, it should remain open until that work has been completed unless otherwise approved by the Citywide 311 Performance Manager.

- 5.3.4 SRs shall be closed as soon as reasonable but no later than the end of next business day after the work is performed or final resolution has been reached.

- 5.4 Administrative Closures (batch closures): There are times when a physical response to an SR is not necessary because the case is no longer relevant (i.e. missed garbage over a week, old cases that no longer require action, etc.). Departments may cancel such cases administratively or request that all cases of a certain SR type expire after a defined timeframe with the approval of the Citywide 311 Performance Manager.

- 5.4.1 All cases cancelled through this method shall include the State Code, “Administrative Closure – Expired”.

- 5.5 Escalated Service Requests (“ESR”): While SRs should generally be handled on a first-in, first-out basis, there are occasions when an SR needs to be escalated for priority handling as outlined below.

- 5.5.1 To be eligible for an ESR, individuals must call 311 with a prior or outstanding service request for the same issue, and that request must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- 5.5.1.1 An open service request that has exceeded the established SLA deadline (overdue).

- 5.5.1.2 An issue that poses an imminent threat to health and safety, e.g. tree limb hanging over a busy trail or a missing stop sign.

- 5.5.1.3 A recurring issue, as defined as at least one previous request for the same SR-type within the last 6 months.

- 5.5.1.4 Prior service request was closed without action and customer is unsatisfied with the department’s response.

5.6 Mayor Service Requests (“MYR SRs”): MYR SRs are generated by the Mayor’s Office of Correspondence when a customer contacts the Mayor’s Office requesting city information or service.

5.6.1 MYR SRs shall only be created by the Mayor’s Office of Correspondence.

5.6.2 Departments shall assign a MYR 311 Liaison to receive, administer and resolve MYR SRs within the designated SLA.

5.6.3 MYR SRs sent as informational, or “FYI” do not require a departmental response.

5.6.4 MYR SRs that relate to a service request or other city activity should be responded to in a manner that appropriately resolves the issue within the SLA. Responses should be documented or included as an attachment in the SR case record. The Mayor or his designee will periodically review department responses to ensure MYR SRs are handled appropriately.

6. APPENDICES (Optional)

- 3-1-1 System State Codes

7. POLICY SPONSOR

Department: Mayor’s Office and Administration & Regulatory Affairs