

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
PERSONNEL MANUAL INSTRUCTION

PMI: 735-1

DATE: May 29, 1981

APPROVED:

Marsha Scialdo  
DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL

06/02

SUBJECT: COURTESY POLICY

I. AUTHORITY

The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, (Public Law 95-454 October 13, 1978, 92 Stat. 1111) provides the basic authority for courtesy in the Federal Service.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Department of Education that courtesy will be required of employees in all of their dealings with the general public, Members of Congress and employees of their own agency and of other agencies to the extent that this requirement does not infringe upon the employee's legal rights. It is the responsibility of agency heads to make that fact known to all employees; to provide appropriate training and to supervise and review the conduct of employees for courtesy and good manners.

Employees must be informed about these procedures and provided appropriate supervision and/or training.

III. BACKGROUND

During the hearings on Civil Service Reform, resulting in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, Members of Congress and others repeatedly emphasized the importance of good manners, courtesy, and prompt service which are essential for Federal employees. The presence of rude and offensive behavior of employees, whatever form of expression that behavior may take, becomes an unnecessary obstacle to agencies in achieving their missions. The Congress expressed its concerns with this matter in the Civil Service Reform

Act, directly in U.S.C. 4302 (b) (1), and indirectly in at least two other sections of the Act.

OPM's own concern for the comprehensive problem of courtesy in government is reflected by Federal Personnel Bulletin 735-7, a two day course, multiple awards of special recognition, and a series of articles to be published in OPM periodicals and other journals. Because the elements of courtesy are related to the specific work of the agency, the Department of Education must establish its own appropriate initiatives to ensure the smooth and courteous operation or educational services.

IV. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this issuance, courtesy means the practice of good manners. Good manners is an informal common-sense term meaning a standard of behavior among Federal employees that is polite and considerate of others. Courtesy must be reflected in the direct dealings between Federal employees and the public and in indirect communications through correspondence and publications.

V. RESPONSIBILITY

- A. The Secretary will assure that all policy initiatives on courtesy are upheld.
- B. All Federal employees are responsible for their own good behavior, in official capacity, including courtesy to the public.
- C. Supervisors and managers are responsible for creating and maintaining a positive and courteous service to the public. As part of this responsibility, supervisors and managers will take action to:
  - o eliminate discourteous behavior and poor service to the public;

**PMI 735-1**

---

- o bring to the attention of their subordinate supervisors and employees the policy stated in this Instruction; and
- o counsel subordinates and initiate appropriate efforts to correct a subordinate's discourteous behavior.

Supervisors and managers are required to actively pursue a positive approach through:

- A. A requirement of prompt response to mail and telephone calls; similarly a requirement that the employee receiving an initial inquiry make every effort to assure the individual is referred to the correct person for a response.
- B. A requirement that responses be in language which can be reasonably understood by the recipient(s).
- C. An expectation that the tone of voice, phraseology of correspondence, and language will strive to communicate a helpful, responsive attitude.
- D. Individual performance agreements include courtesy and good manners as an important element for employee evaluation.