

# Archived Information

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Objective 4.1: Our customers receive fast, seamless service and dissemination of high-quality information and products.

**Our Role.** Although the Education Department continues to serve the majority of its customers through state and local intermediaries, technology has allowed the Education Department to engage in more direct customer contact. Through the Internet and the front-line call centers, the Education Department is able to reach and serve more customers than ever before.

Information call centers such as the Education Department's general information call center (1-800-USA-LEARN), publications ordering call center (1-877-4ED-Pubs), and student financial aid information call center (1-800-4FED-AID) continue to respond to numerous customer inquiries each year. The Education Department strives to provide useful and accurate information on demand, answer questions, and provide useful publications. The Education Department provides Braille and large-print publications, Spanish-speaking agents, TTY access for individuals unable to use a phone, and videotapes of the Secretary of Education's town meetings. The regional offices represent the Education Department to communities and at local meetings and communicate to the Education Department information about issues of local and regional interest.

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## Our Performance

**How We Measure.** The four indicators for customer service describe the Education Department's customer service activities, focusing on Web resources, call centers, and customer satisfaction. One of the most important aspects of this objective is the need to integrate customer service, not only into the most popular and used services, but also throughout all of the Education Department's activities. The indicators in this objective seek to track specific performance in increasing public access to information and increasing customer satisfaction with the Education Department's products, services, information, and assistance.

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### **Indicator 4.1.a. The Department continues to increase public access to information, as measured by website visits and number of customer inquiries at major front-line call centers.**

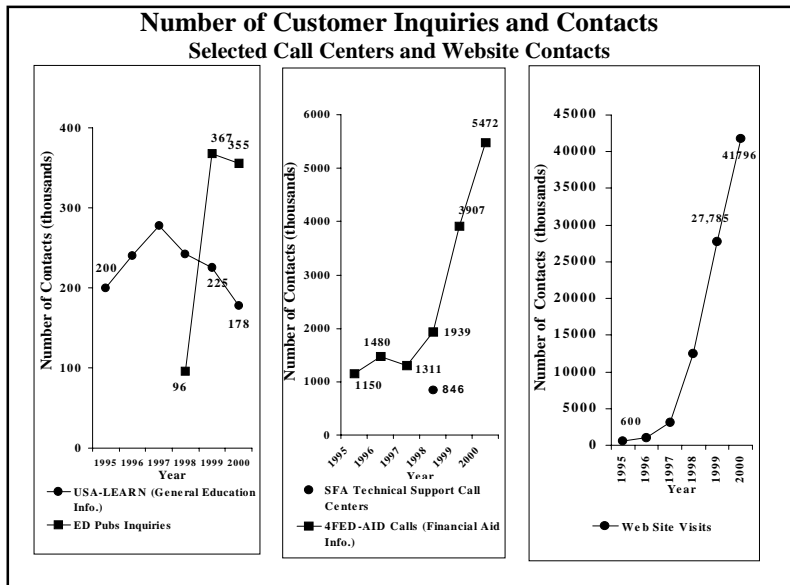
**Assessment of Progress.** There was mixed progress towards the 1999 goal. Figure 4.1.a.1 shows that public access to the Education Department's information is increasing, and the volume of visits to the Education Department's website increases approximately two-fold each year.

EDPubs inquiries decreased from 367 to 355 thousand from 1999 to 2000. Despite the fact that EDPubs inquiries decreased from 367,000 to 355,000 from 1999 to 2000 (perhaps, due to a reduced number of Department-wide promotional initiatives), EDPubs customer service base has doubled from 207,000 to 514,000 customers. The center also experienced an increase in the volume of telephone contacts. In 2000, 4FED-AID experienced a 40 percent increase in customer contacts, which included 1,462,170 callers assisted by the center's automated response system. For calendar year 2000, INet's public access services totaled 904,522,041 hits, 159,093,130 page views, and an estimated 41,795,954 visits. The growth curve leveled somewhat as annual traffic grew approximately 50 percent after doubling every year since the website went public in early 1994 (precise comparison is not possible because of changes in the web log analysis software used).

To address an increased number of inquiries from its Spanish-speaking customers, many of the Education Department's major call centers now have bilingual staff capability.

As expected, the USA-LEARN phone line has had a decrease in call volume since 1997 as publication requests have moved from USA-LEARN to the EDPubs Center. Fewer mass-marketing information campaigns conducted by the Education Department also contributed to the drop in call volume at USA-LEARN.

Figure 4.1.a.1



**Source:** System-generated data. *Frequency:* Continuous. *Next Update:* MIS Reporting Cycle. **Validation procedure:** System reports cross-referenced and fixed to billing records for review. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** Web visits do not distinguish between repeat visitors and new visitors. The Education Department plans to increase capacity to keep up with growth in customer demand. The numbers of contacts for EDPubs appearing in the FY1999 report were incorrectly presented as 380 thousand. The correct number (367) appears here.

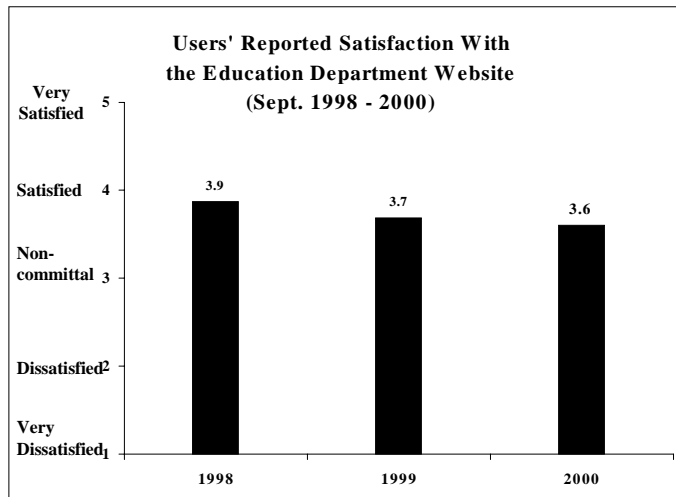
### Indicator 4.1.b. The Department will continue to increase customer satisfaction with Department products, services, and information.

**Assessment of Progress.** Progress has been mixed. While the Education Department continues to gather more qualitative data about customer needs and satisfaction, data from the Education Department's major customer points of contact (its website and front-line call centers) indicate that customers are generally satisfied with the Education Department's delivery of service, information, and products. Figure 4.1.b.1 shows that there has been a small drop in satisfaction scores of visitors to the Education Department's website. The Education Department attributes the drop in the satisfaction score to the general increase in expectations among Internet users and a shift in survey respondents from administrator-managers and researchers to students and parents. Overall satisfaction fell from 3.85 in the pre-9/99 responses to 3.60 in the post-9/99 responses (scores based on a 5-point Likert-type satisfaction scale). Satisfaction rose slightly among teachers and dropped slightly among students and administrators/managers. Satisfaction dropped most among librarians, writers, policy makers, and researchers. Teachers, administrators/managers, and researchers were among the most satisfied customers. Survey comments indicate that the drop in satisfaction reflects (a) the shift in respondents from administrators/managers and researchers to students and parents and the resulting shift in expressed needs away from the relatively mature information offerings of the Education Department website to the newer student aid services and other e-commerce type offerings that the new Government initiatives hope to address and (b) generally elevated expectations among Internet users. While there has been a shift in the expectations and the profile

of customers using the Education Department’s website, it continues to receive high ratings in the Education Department’s annual Internet survey.

The Taubman Center for Public Policy at Brown University ranked the Education Department website fourth among Federal government sites evaluated on dimensions such as service delivery, citizen responsiveness, security, privacy, foreign language translation capabilities, and disability access, in a study titled *Assessing E-Government: The Internet, Democracy, and Service Delivery by State and Federal Governments* (September 2000).

Figure 4.1.b.1

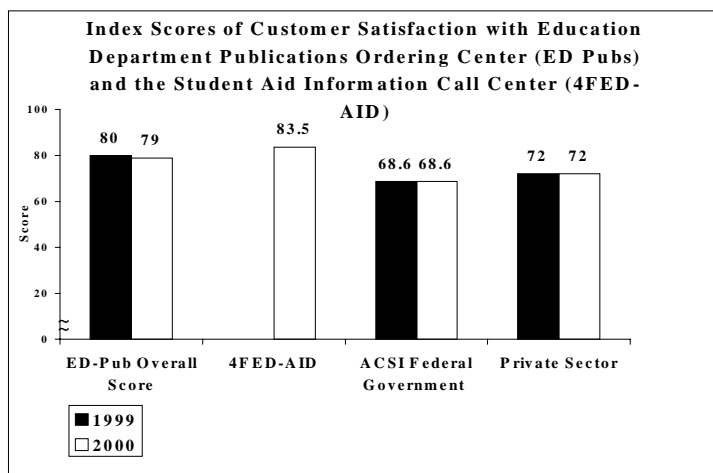


**Source:** National Library of Education. *Frequency:* Annual. *Next Update:* 2002 for 2001 data. **Validation procedure:** System-generated data. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** Data reported from self-selected respondents of visitors to the Education Department’s website.

In 2000, EDPubs and the Education Department’s student aid information call center (1-800-4FED-AID) participated in the second round of the Federal government’s participation in the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). The ACSI is a well-respected approach to measuring customer satisfaction. The survey focuses on customers’ expectations and perceived quality. Figure 4.1.b.2 shows that the Federal government received a score of 68.6. The Education Department’s EDPubs publications ordering call center received an overall satisfaction score of 79, and 4FED-AID received a score of 83.5.

The Education Department’s student aid information call center (1-800-4FED-AID) added an automated customer service survey to its phone number. The survey measures responses to questions (on a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being high) about courtesy, speed of answer, and overall services. In 2000, 91 percent of the respondents who participated in the automated customer service survey on 4FED-AID rated the overall service as either "4" or "5" in all three categories.

Figure 4.1.b.2

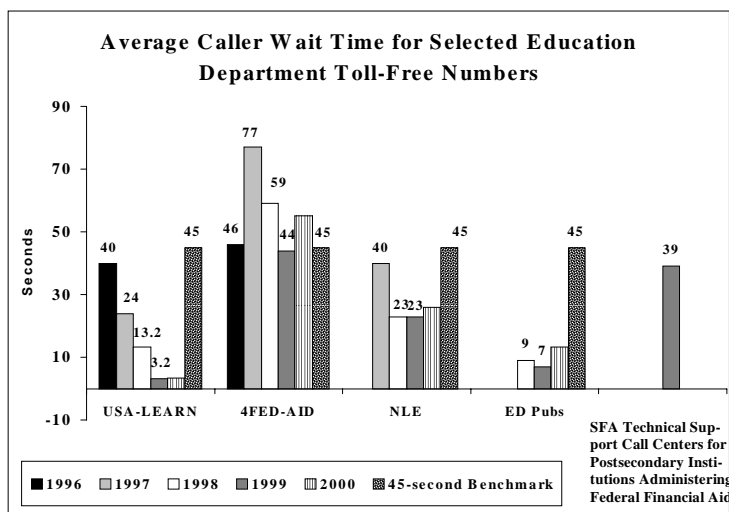


**Source:** First Annual Government-wide Customer Satisfaction Report. *Frequency:* Annual. *Next Update:* 2002 for 2001 data. **Validation procedure:** Model used by the global accounting firm Arthur Andersen, the University of Michigan, and the American Society for Quality. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** None noted.

**Indicator 4.1.c. The Department's front-line call centers will provide prompt service to customers.**

**Assessment of Progress.** The goal for 2000 was exceeded. While customer demand has increased significantly in the last 3 years at the Education Department's major call centers, the amount of time a customer waits to speak with an Education Department customer representative continues to remain well below the industry standard in most cases.

Figure 4.1.c.1



**Source:** System generated data. *Frequency:* Continuous. *Next Update:* Media and Information Services Reporting Cycle. **Validation procedure:** System reports are cross-referenced and are fixed to billing records for review. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** Call wait time definition used by all call centers portrayed in this indicator is the amount of time a customer waits to speak with a customer service assistant after the customer selects the prompt to speak with a customer service assistant.

The USA-LEARN wait time increased slightly due to increased numbers of Spanish-speaking customers (4,500 for the year) and limited bilingual staff. Some of these customers are routed to voicemail to decrease wait time. Call wait time at 4FED-AID increased from 1999 due to an additional question related to drug conviction in the application for Federal Student Financial Assistance. The complexity of the resulting calls increased the amount of time customer service representatives were required to spend with customers before they could respond to other customers waiting in the phone queue. Call wait time

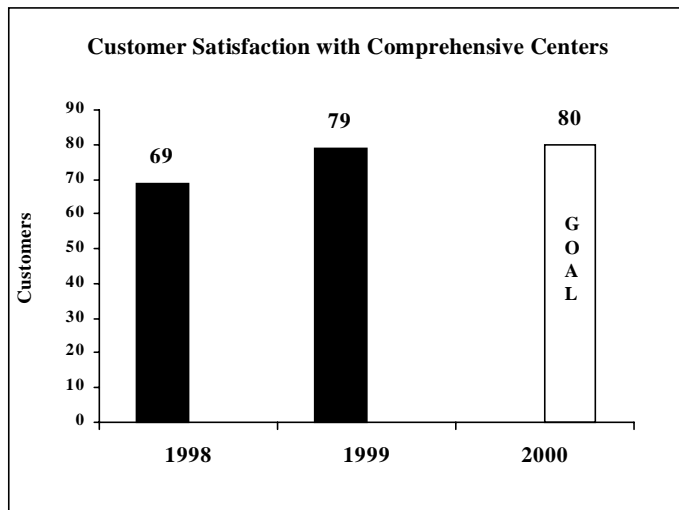
increased at EDPubs due to an increase in call volume while staffing remained fixed. Additionally, the center experienced several surges in volume resulting in increased wait time.

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**Indicator 4.1.d. Surveys of states and school districts will increasingly rate the Education Department's technical assistance, including assistance from the Comprehensive Centers and integrated reviews, as very useful in improving their performance.**

**Assessment of Progress.** The 1999 goal has been met and exceeded. Satisfaction with the usefulness of technical assistance provided by the technical assistance centers has continued to increase. In 1999, 14 integrated state reviews were conducted using a new protocol. Representatives of 13 states gave the integrated review a 4 on a scale of 1 to 5, where a 5 is most satisfactory. The new protocol appears to be a major success. See also the positive performance of the laboratory network reported in Goal 4.3. The data for 2000 are not available, as data are collected on a biennial basis.

Figure 4.1.d.1



**Source:** Report on Center evaluation 1999. *Frequency:* Biennial. *Next Update:* 2001 for 2000 data. **Validation procedure:** Data reviewed by contractor and the Education Department staff. **Limitations of data and planned improvements:** Data from 1998 are responses from state and Federal program administrators. Data from 1999 are responses from state and local program administrators.