



ADMINISTRATIVE
COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENTAL DIRECTIVE

OM:1-105

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Distribution:
All Department of Education employees

Approved by: _____/s/_____
Michell Clark
Assistant Secretary for Management

Routing Public Requests to Other Agencies

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For policy and procedure questions regarding information in this directive, please contact the Management Services Group, ED Pubs, ED-to-GSA Liaison for USA Services, via email at edpubs@inet.ed.gov or call 301-519-5230.

Supersedes OM:1-105 "Routing Public Requests to Other Agencies" dated 03/21/2005.

I. Purpose

In support of the E-Government component of the President's Management Agenda (PMA), the U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the General Services Administration (GSA) have established an automated method to handle e-mail and phone inquiries from the general public that do not pertain to ED through GSA's USA Services initiative.

The new citizen-centric service will allow ED employees and contractor staff to forward misdirected e-mail and phone inquiries to a government-wide program led by GSA and receive an appropriate response within a pledged two business days.

II. Policy

If your program or office has an established relationship with another federal, state or local agency, grantee or partnership program, then please continue that relationship. USA Services does not need to be involved.

To the fullest extent possible, ED employees and contractors should forward misdirected e-mail and phone inquiries to USA Services, a government-wide program led by GSA to provide an appropriate response to a citizen for a misdirected inquiry received at federal agencies that should be handled by another federal agency or government-sponsored program.

In doing so, ED will fully support the PMA, a comprehensive plan to improve the performance of the federal government. This policy supports the PMA Executive Branch Management Scorecard Criterion #1: Expanding E-Government, specifically the Government-to-Citizen (G2C) initiative that provides for:

"Citizen one-stop service delivery integrated through Firstgov.gov, cross-agency call centers, and offices or service centers."

In addition, this policy is consistent with ED Strategic Plan 2002-2007, Strategic Goal 6, Establish management excellence throughout ED, via Objective 6.3, Manage information technology resources, using e-gov, to improve services for our customers and partners.

III. Authorization

This directive is being issued under the general authority of the Secretary to administer and manage the functions of ED, as provided for in Section 414 of the Department of Education Organization Act (20 U.S.C. 3474) and Section 410 of the General Education Provisions Act (20 U.S.C. 1221e-3). In addition, this policy is consistent with:

- E-Government Act of 2002 [Public Law No: 107-347, 44 USC Ch. 36] [[link](#)]
- Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-03-18, "OMB Guidance for Implementing the Privacy Provisions of the E-Government Act of 2002" [[link](#)]
- Government Paperwork Elimination Act of 1998 (GPEA) [Public Law No: 105-277] [[link](#)]
- Government Performance Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) [Public Law No: 103-62] [[link](#)]
- ED Personnel Manual Instruction (PMI) 735-1, Courtesy Policy [[link](#)]

IV. Applicability

This directive applies to all ED employees as defined in Section V. Definitions.

V. Definitions

A. *Employee*

For the purposes of this directive, *employee* refers to any federal employee, contractor, temporary employee, intern, or political appointee that may represent ED programs and services via a direct phone call, call center connection, or e-mail received from the general public.

B. *Misdirected Inquiry*

An issue or question that is received via e-mail or phone call from the general public to an ED employee or contractor and does not pertain to an ED program or service. Upon consideration, the employee/contractor (or supervisor) clearly determines that the inquiry would be better handled by another federal agency or government-sponsored program.

C. *USA Services*

GSA's Office of Citizen Services and Communications manages the *USA Services* initiative and offers agencies a wide variety of services to help them deliver information and transact business with the general public. These services include a call center, e-mail management, and publication order fulfillment in a privacy-protected environment.

With *USA Services*, the general public can get information from federal agencies in both English and Spanish via the Internet, publications, telephone, and e-mail. The USA Services' Federal Consumer Information Center (FCIC) manages a toll-free National Contact Center with specially trained staff to answer questions in English and Spanish about all aspects of the federal government. In addition, FCIC provides accessible information using a variety of online and print formats.

USA Services personnel are trained to answer general questions related to the functions of the federal government and assists in providing "self-help" services to the general public by directing citizens to the appropriate government website, toll-free number or contact point to better handle the specifics of the request for information or service.

USA Services can assist in delivering information to the public and in transacting business with the public, thereby helping to achieve the goals of the President's E-Government Initiative. USA Services is one of the President's 24 cross-agency initiatives.

See <http://www.info.gov/> for details on the quality and level of information provided.

VI. Responsibilities

A. Assistant Secretary for Management

Leads and manages the implementation of major management reform initiatives such as those mandated by the PMA and the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993.

B. Employees

1. Follow any internal procedures your supervisory official or Principal Office has established for review of phone and e-mail inquiries prior to forwarding to USA Services.

If your program or office has an established relationship with another federal, state or local agency, grantee or partnership program, then please continue that relationship. USA Services does not need to be involved.

2. Forward e-mail-based inquiries from the general public that do not pertain to ED through GSA's USA Services initiative via Not.Education@ed.gov.
3. Direct phone-based inquiries from the general public that do not pertain to ED to 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636) or TTY: 1-800-326-2996.

C. ED-to-GSA Liaison for USA Services

1. Receives from USA Services any e-mail-based public inquiry that was mistakenly forwarded to USA Services that does pertain to ED.
2. Determines and forwards to appropriate principal office or ED official those public inquiries that were mistakenly sent to USA Services and were returned to ED for final resolution.
3. Receives monthly summary-level reports from GSA. Reports may include, but not limited to: number of inquiries received; number of responses to customers; number forwarded to agencies (by agency); number of outstanding inquiries; number of requests mistakenly forwarded to USA Services; and average response time.

VII. Procedures and Requirements

A. *How can you route e-mail or telephone inquiries from the public to another federal agency?*

NOTE: Your supervisory official or Principal Office may create additional procedures for internal review of e-mail or phone inquiries to be followed before directing such inquiries to USA Services.

For a listing of ED programs and services focused on the general public, please use the ED.gov frequently asked questions portal at <http://answers.ed.gov/>.

If you receive an unusual inquiry focused on a program or service that is not related to ED or an established partnership agency, grantee or program, then instead of responding with “*Sorry, I can’t help you with that,*” you should redirect the request to USA Services, the government-wide program for handling general inquiries from citizens via e-mail and phone call.

If your program or office has established a relationship with another federal, state or local agency, grantee or partnership program, then please continue that relationship.

To use this new service for an e-mail inquiry: Simply send e-mail messages that you feel another agency could best answer, to the new ED mailbox at Not.Education@ed.gov.

This e-mail box automatically forwards messages to the USA Services staff, which will immediately determine the appropriate agency to respond and route them accordingly within the pledged two business days. Please do not forward spam (i.e., unsolicited e-mails sent to a large number of addresses) to the misdirected e-mail box.

To use this new service for a phone inquiry: Please be courteous to the caller and mention that the inquiry is not covered under an ED program or service, then transfer the call or ask the caller to contact the Federal Citizen Information Center at 1-800-FED-INFO (1-800-333-4636) or TTY 1-800-326-2996.

If during the inquiry, the customer asks about an Internet site for government information, please inform them of the FirstGov.gov, the official Web portal of the federal government, at <http://www.usagov.gov/>.

B. *How do I handle compound or complex inquiries?*

USA Services designed the following procedures for handling e-mails that are both misdirects, as well as, accurately directed to an agency because they involve multiple or complex issues.

For example, USA Services will handle an inquiry if the issue does involve ED, but the customer must contact another agency. This also applies if the customer asks two questions, one for ED and one pertaining to another agency.

If an e-mail sent to ED, for example, contains a question about the ED as well as a question about something completely unrelated (Random Topic):

- ED employee responds to the customer with the information pertaining to ED programs. He/she also mentions that they are forwarding the customer's inquiry to USA Services for a response regarding the other (non-ED) issue. There is no need to inform the customer about our internal-use-only e-mail address, Not.Education@ed.gov.
- ED employee forwards the inquiry to the Not.Education@ed.gov mailbox, which forwards to USA Services, and in doing so, includes a note to USA Services telling them which part of the message they need to address.
- USA Services, in answering, start out by saying they are addressing the portion of the request that pertains to (Random Topic). The USA Services representative removes all the intermediate information (the note, the ED employee's contact information, etc.) before sending a response to the customer and includes a note that the inquiry had been forwarded to USA Services by ED.

This approach would also help USA Services in cases where the reason why ED is forwarding something is not immediately apparent — for example, the customer asked about procurement at ED, and the representative thinks it might be helpful for the customer to also have information about procurement throughout the government. Having a note to that effect would keep USA Services from thinking that it was faced with a "misdirected misdirect," or something that should not have come to them.

C. How do I get more information?

If you would like to find out more about ED programs and services (including education programs sponsored by external organizations) for the general public, please visit the ED.gov's frequently asked questions portal at <http://answers.ed.gov/>.

For policy and procedural information on USA Services at ED, please contact the ED-to-GSA Liaison for USA Services listed on this directive's cover page. For technical assistance, call the OCIO Help Desk at (202) 708-HELP (202-708-4357), toll-free at 1-877-603-4188 or through e-mail at helpdesk@ed.gov.