



USA SERVICES

USA Services' FirstContact Contract Vehicle Helps Agencies Serve Citizens

Partner Agency: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

The Situation:

With more than 65,000 employees in 12 operating divisions, HHS is constantly exploring ways to be more efficient and reduce expenses while fulfilling its mission to ensure the health and well-being of Americans.

The Program Support Center (PSC), under the leadership of the Assistant Secretary for Administration and Management was created in 1995 with the mission to provide a full range of support services to all components of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), to enable the Department's Operating Divisions (NIH, FDA, CDC, etc.) to concentrate on their core functional and operational objectives. As a true shared-service enterprise, the PSC provides products and services on a competitive "fee-for-service" basis to customers throughout HHS and other Executive Branch Departments and Federal Agencies. Designed to reduce Government spending and duplication of efforts in administrative support services, the PSC realizes significant savings through standardization, streamlining, prudent acquisition strategies, reorganization, economies of scale, and consolidation. Today, the PSC provides more than 50 products and services ranging from payment management services to pharmaceutical repackaging, to thousands of Government customers across the Nation.

As part of its customer strategy, to provide a "one-stop shop" for superior service at a lower cost, the PSC developed and implemented plans for a multi-channel contact center to centralize and support the disparate programs and offices that need customer service through both telephone and email channels. The primary objective of the PSC multi-channel contact center is to satisfy requests for help from users of the PSC and/or Departmental programs as these programs are deployed to the HHS community. By consolidating customer service operations, the Department will realize economies of scale and service quality improvements as support practices are standardized.

The Electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF), E-Gov Travel, and Grants.gov programs are the first programs to be supported through the contact center. With these programs the Center currently draws over 10,000 contacts per month via phone and email. The Center resolves as many requests for help as possible at the point of contact. Requests that cannot be resolved immediately are transferred or referred to the appropriate program resource. Other Departmental programs are expected to be added in FY06.

In Q4 FY05 the PSC engaged Datatrac Information Services through a USA Services FirstContact task order to furnish the necessary facilities, personnel, equipment, and supplies to implement, operate, and manage the contact center for the PSC.

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How USA Services Helps:

The HHS Program Support Center worked with USA Services to develop requirements and a Statement of Work. HHS took advantage of most of the services offered through the FirstContact contract to provide a secure, scalable system that offered the following capabilities:

- Hours of operation from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm Eastern Monday through Friday
- Toll-free number – ability to use 1-888-ONE-DHHS, a phone number already in use by the client program, or setup a new toll-free number
- Live end-user telephone support guaranteed to answer 85% calls within 30 seconds
- Interactive voice response (IVR) to manage incoming calls and provide unattended services including voicemail, special announcements, and recorded messages for program-specific usage tips, and automated surveys
- A trouble-ticket system to capture, track, analyze, and report on service request details
- Knowledge management system to assist agents in quickly resolving service requests with accurate and consistent information
- Intelligent call routing to maximize productivity (find the right person, at the right time, to handle a request)
- Weekly reports describing contact performance data in summary and detail (average speed of answer, breakdown of calls and email by reason, by agency, etc.)
- Customer satisfaction survey (administered through the toll-free IVR using the telephone keypad)
- Secure environment with personnel clearances for “medium risk Public Trust positions” and IT security governed by the HHS Certification and Accreditation process

Department of Health and Human Services' Assessment:

Bob Spector, the PSC Program Manager credits the success of the program to planning, monitoring, and constant communication. “We faced some real challenges,” he continues. “We were looking for scarce programmatic skills like travel management and HR recordkeeping, and needed to get the Datatrac customer service reps up to speed in a short period of time. In order to accomplish this, we set up an “interim” contact center to build and test scripts, operating procedures, and the knowledgebase. We used our then current contractor, STG International, in this role. Subject matter experts from the HHS programs were actively involved in Datatrac's CSR training program, developing case studies and even traveled to Datatrac's Barbourville, Kentucky center, to help with CSR training.”

Once we were underway, Mr. Spector found two communication loops to be essential to the project:

1. daily communication between the PSC contact center team and Datatrac, with a continuous review of, and refresh of the knowledgebase, and
2. feedback to and from the client programs, with input about changes in the programs or the business cycle and analysis of the questions asked to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.

Datatrac began handling calls for E-OPF and E-Gov Travel in October—only 5 weeks from the contract award. Grants.gov was added in November with about 30 days notice.

Mr. Spector concludes, “We've been very pleased with the quality of the service provided by Datatrac and their ability to adjust to our changing program needs, and by the ease with which USA Services helped us put the program together.”

