

Customer Service Skills for Food Distributions

September 14, 2022



**On this sheep-scale,
how do you feel today?**



In the Chat: What's Your "Sheep"-Number?

Agenda

1. Welcome & Agenda
2. Customer-Centered Food Distributions
3. Regulation
4. Reframing Behavior
5. De-Escalation
6. Pantry Best Practices
7. Closing

(Slides and resources available in Whova)

Customer Centered Food Distributions



Environment



Nutrition Education



Inventory & Purchasing



I'm nourished. I'm seen.
I'm heard. I matter.



Cultural & Dietary
Accommodations



Pantry Policies & Procedures



Community Connections

What can we do to...

- Connect with clients in a meaningful way?
- Reduce stigma, shame, confusion, and tension?
- Promote confidence, dignity, and joy?
- Create positive experiences for ourselves and others?

What can we do to...



Regulation

**De-Escalation
Tactics**

**Reframing
Behavior**

**Pantry
Best
Practices**

Customer Service Strategies

- How am I feeling? What is my own emotional state? How might my feelings affect how I interact with customers?
- Incorporate easy regulation and self-care activities into your distribution.



Regulation

Based on this cat scale....how do you feel today?



Regulation Activity 1: Status Check



STOP

Sit/Stand

Take a Breath

Observe

Presence

Adapted from Rhonda McGee, USF

Regulation Activity 2: STOP



Regulation Activity 3:

Coconut Stretch

- Approach a difficult situation with a client with curiosity and compassion
- Examine your own assumptions and perhaps biases you may be bringing to your work, examine those a little
- Try to see what may be another explanation for the behavior that you are seeing.

**Reframing
Behavior**

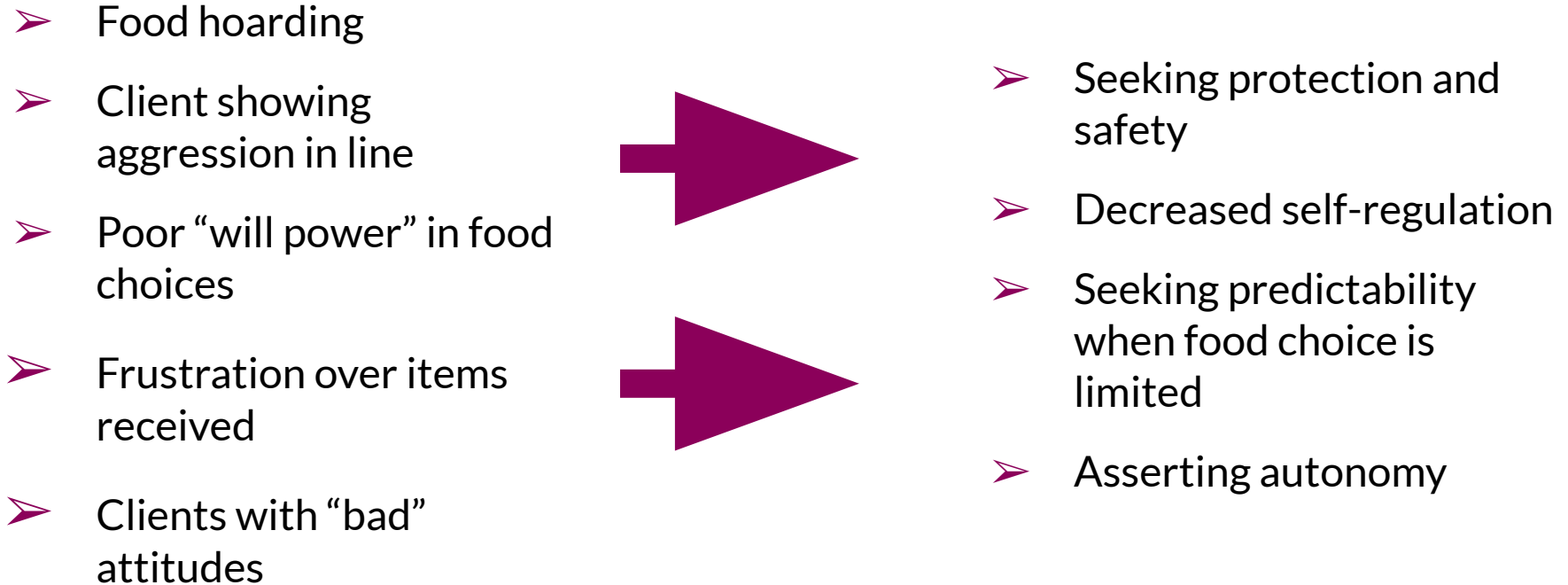


Storytime: Too Much Cake



Storytime: Hot Wheels

How might these food distribution behaviors be reframed?



Watch Video:

[Calming & De-Escalation Strategies](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2PSExM-NhU)

Source: Dartmouth Health

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2PSExM-NhU>

- Low & Slow
- Name it to Tame It
- Regulate over Educate
- **Bonus: Validation & Empathy**

An orange rounded rectangle with the text "De-Escalation" in white.

De-Escalation

De-Escalation

- “I hear that you wanted to get meat today. I get how frustrating it is not to get it, and I wish I had it to give to you.”
- “I hear that you’d like to get more corn. I wish we could give you more, but we need to make sure we have enough for everyone today.”
- “I understand that you’ve been waiting a long time. We are a little short-handed today, but there is plenty of food and we are doing our best to serve all of our guests. I appreciate your patience.”



De-Escalation Practice



Pantry Best Practices

Photo: Central City Neighborhood Partners in L.A. displays menu and food being given to customers with healthy recipe ideas.

Pantry Best Practices

A customer service policy is a written code of conduct that guides the way employees, volunteers and the organization as a whole approach customer service.

What is a Customer Service Policy?

- ❑ Values, mission, or vision statements
- ❑ Professional expectations
- ❑ Procedures on what to do when customers are unhappy
- ❑ Guidelines on how team members will act in specific circumstances
- ❑ Escalation / de-escalation matrix

Example Customer Service Policy

Pantry Values/Mission/Vision Statement

Our vision is to be the leading hunger relief provider. We strive to create a welcoming and dignified culture that will nurture and empower our customers during difficult times.

To achieve our vision, we must exceed the expectations of our customers in everything we do. This requires every member of our team to be committed to providing outstanding customer service at all times.

Professional Expectations

The following standards have been developed to ensure that we consistently deliver the high level of customer service that our customers expect and deserve:

We will always strive to:

- Be polite, professional, and courteous
- Be responsive to customer inquiries and requests
- Handle customer complaints promptly and effectively
- Continuously strive to improve our level of service
- Follow up on promised actions
- Speak positively about other employees or the company in front of customers

Complaint Procedures

If difficult situations arise with a customer, a designated lead volunteer or staff member is available during every distribution to offer assistance.

Thank you for adhering to these standards and helping us provide an exceptional level of service to our customers.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak with your manager.

Thank you.

Adapted from LiveAgent.com

What should be included in a Customer Service Policy?



Watch Video:

[Great Customer Service](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_CUSxS_Uvi4)

Source: Rhode Island
Community Food Bank

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_CUSxS_Uvi4

Photo: Foothill Unity Center
in Monrovia celebrates
holidays by decorating and
giving themed-foods and
recipes to customers.

Great Customer Service

“When we view the people we serve as guests or customers at our programs, we place more emphasis on customer service and pay attention to the guest experience.”

Katie S. Martin
Reinventing Food Banks and Pantries

Best Practices in Action

- Eye contact. Smile. Small talk.
- Designate a greeter
- Call customers by name
- Make wait comfortable (seating, water, coffee)
- Say thank you
- Redesign space for effective flow
- Ease paperwork / requirements
- Put the right volunteers in the right job
- Recruit regular customers to volunteer
- Share customer service tips at meetings / training
- Pre-designate a lead volunteer / staff to handle difficult situations
- Ask for feedback
- Post client and volunteer expectations

FINAL REFLECTIONS



One idea or
concept to take
away from this
training



One feeling from
this training



One thing you plan
to do as a result of
this training



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Closing