

# Telephone and Voice Mail Policy

**MAP No. 30-15**

**Effective Date: July 15, 1996**

## **State of Alaska**

**Department of Health & Social Services**

**Division of Public Assistance**

**FIELD SERVICES**

**MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

Approved by:

*Rebecca Eames*

Chief of Field Services

Date: July 15, 1996

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## PURPOSE

*To institute instructions and expectations for employees' use of the telephone and voice mail.*

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## BACKGROUND

Our division depends on the telephone as an indispensable tool that helps us serve our customers. The enhancements introduced with voice mail now allow us to work even more efficiently. Unfortunately this new technology, if not used properly, can have negative consequences on our mission effectiveness and tarnish our image with the public.

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## GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

All employees should be friendly, courteous, and professional when answering the phone. Surveys show more than 80 percent of people say the way their phone call is answered and handled influences their opinion of that organization. We can all reflect on a personal example of dreadful telephone service received from a business or agency and how that experience formed an unfavorable impression. As we focus more on self-sufficiency, case management, and partnering we need to commit ourselves to modeling a positive, professional attitude toward our customers.

In order to properly and effectively accomplish our work we must be accessible by phone. **We will not use voice mail to screen our telephone calls.** The fundamental rule is:

**ALL EMPLOYEES WILL ANSWER ALL INCOMING CALLS UNLESS INTERVIEWING, PARTICIPATING IN A MEETING, OR OTHERWISE EXCUSED FROM CALLS WITH MANAGEMENT APPROVAL.**

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## BASIC PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

1. Caseworkers should give their direct line telephone number to clients, fee agents, employers, and other collaterals.
2. All calls should be answered by the third ring if possible. If you are interviewing or blocked from the phone you should either forward your calls to a designated staff person or allow calls to go to voice mail.
3. Voice mail announcements should be brief, no longer than 15 seconds; shorter if possible. Assure callers you will respond

to their messages and state when you expect to return their call.

4. Update your voice mail announcement often in order to reflect current circumstances, i.e., "I will be in training until Thursday.," or "I must attend a meeting from one until three this afternoon."
5. At a minimum transcribe your messages twice a day. Calls should be returned no later than end of the next workday. If you are off from work for more than one day, arrangements should be made for another worker to clear and return your calls.
6. Do not place a call on hold without the caller's permission. After a minute or two you should ask if you could call them back if the hold will last longer.
7. Managers and supervisors should periodically check and monitor employees' phone practices. When deviations from expectations are noted, feedback and possible coaching should be provided.
8. The topics of this MAP should be discussed periodically in unit meetings and all new employees should be made aware of these policies and procedures.