TO: Ken Burke, CPA
    Clerk of the Circuit Court
    Ex Officio County Auditor

FROM: Hector Collazo, Jr., Director
       Division of Inspector General

SUBJECT: Follow-Up Audit of Clerk of the Circuit Court Call Center

DATE: December 29, 2011

I am enclosing a copy of the follow-up audit dated December 29, 2011 on the above-referenced audit.

cc: Myriam Irizarry, Chief Deputy Director, Court and Operational Services Division
    David J. Bateman, Director, Court and Operational Services Division
    Jim Bennett, County Attorney
    Claretha N. Harris, Chief Deputy Director, Finance Division
    Ernst & Young
FOLLOW – UP AUDIT OF CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT CALL CENTER

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DECEMBER 29, 2011
REPORT NO. 2011-22

*Regulated by the State of Florida
**Accredited Office of Inspector General
By the Commission of Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation
December 29, 2011

The Honorable Ken Burke
Clerk of the Circuit Court

We have conducted a Follow-Up Audit of the Clerk of the Circuit Court Call Center. The objectives of our review were to determine the implementation status of our previous recommendations.

Of the three recommendations contained in the original audit report, we determined that all have been implemented. The status of each recommendation is presented in this follow-up review.

We appreciate the cooperation shown by the staff of the Call Center during the course of this review.

Respectfully Submitted,

Hector Collazo, Jr., Director
Division of Inspector General
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INTRODUCTION

Scope and Methodology

We conducted a follow-up audit of the Clerk of the Circuit Court Call Center. The purpose of our follow-up review was to determine the status of previous recommendations for improvement.

The purpose of the original audit was to:

1) Determine if staff plans provided that customer calls were answered timely, and that the information provided was accurate and consistent.
2) Determine if the systems in place provide effective and efficient customer service.

To determine the current status of our previous recommendations, we surveyed and/or interviewed management to determine the actual actions taken to implement recommendations for improvement. We performed limited testing to verify the process of the recommendations for improvement.

Our follow-up audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing and the Standards for Offices of Inspector General, and, accordingly, included such tests of records and other auditing procedures, as we considered necessary in the circumstances. Our follow-up testing was performed during the month of September 2011. The original audit period was October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008. However, transactions and processes reviewed were not limited by the audit period.

Overall Conclusion

Of the three recommendations in the original report, we determined that all three were implemented. We commend management for implementation of all of our recommendations.
# Status

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<td>improvements. Management should know if customers are experiencing busy phone lines and long wait times.</td>
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Background

The Criminal Justice Center (CJC) Call Center was started from a management directive in October 2006 to consolidate department phone banks. Clerk's employees in each department originally accepted phone calls in small phone banks in rotating shifts of 1 ½ hours to answer incoming phone calls, taking them away from their work processes. The focus was to centralize all incoming calls at a combined phone bank by employees who enjoyed this type of work, thus eliminating mandated times on phones for employees who were processing a high volume of desk work. To improve customer service, the phone banks were consolidated into one call center with staff devoted to answering phone calls. The Call Center started with a small staff created by employees from County Criminal Court Records and Circuit Criminal Court Records. Since that time, the staff has grown and expanded to handle all phone calls relating to civil, family, child support, traffic, juvenile, misdemeanor, felony, marriage licenses, passports, and official records. The Call Center answers over 48,800 calls each month (September 2009 - February 2010). Staff is trained in multiple areas of the Clerk's Office and is staffed by employees specialized in customer service in a call center environment.
STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section reports our follow-up on actions taken by management on the Recommendations for Improvement in our original audit of the Clerk of the Circuit Court Call Center. The recommendations contained herein are those of the original audit, followed by the current status of the recommendations.

1. Management Reporting Should Be Enhanced To Effectively Monitor Call Center Performance.

Management reporting does not focus on benchmarks or key performance indicators to improve performance, but relies instead on historical data. Management knows whether they are doing better than last year, but not how they rate in the call center industry. The call center focus has generally been on the employee or agent's performance and a few historical activities. The agent's performance measures are used to rate the employee's performance for annual merit raises. The historical activity is a comparison against prior periods to determine if performance is improving, but is not compared to any industry standards.

The current management reporting methodology does not allow comparison of its performance against selected key performance indicators (benchmarks) that are common to the call center industry. Key performance indicators can be combined to translate into a level of service. A common service level statement would be to answer a large percentage of calls within a given number of seconds, with only a small percentage of the persons hanging up. The benefit of using key performance measurements is that management can select performance measures that are tied to the mission of the call center and be compared to industry averages.

To summarize the standards used by the CJC Call Center and determine if the standards used to measure call center performance were adequate, we obtained the Call Center's monthly reports. In addition, we obtained other documentation where performance measures were established by management (i.e., the call center's agent performance evaluation document and the Clerk's Call Center Intranet site). We identified management's standards and compared them to industry performance benchmarks.
In our analysis of performance standards, we determined that the CJC Call Center is using six performance measures, but they did not always correspond to popular benchmarks used in the industry. We used the industry standards as reported by the International Customer Management Institute (ICMI) in Call Center Industry Statistics related to Performance Measures/Metrics. Of the six benchmarks, two were not reported in monthly management reports, Average Rings Per Call, which was monitored by the call center supervisor on a daily basis, and Monthly Call Processing Time, which was part of the agents' performance evaluation. The reason for selecting these performance standards was based on evaluating employee performance, rather than evaluating call center performance. The effect of monitoring mostly agent performance is that it does not afford management with appropriate information to make decisions to improve the call center's operations.

Most of the other call center statistics in the monthly management reports only have comparisons to prior periods, using a percentage change format. While this shows how well they did historically, it does not reflect how well they planned to do or how we compare to others. To illustrate this, we reviewed abandoned calls. In the “CJC Call Center Comparison Report,” we found that the abandoned calls decreased 57.2% from last year, showing a dramatic reduction in callers hanging up. To perform a comparison against an industry standard, abandoned calls need to be stated as a percentage rate of the calls received. We calculated the abandoned call rate for March 2008 and determined the rate was 3.4%. In addition, we calculated an abandoned call rate of 6.3% for the civil department section, which was incorporated into the CJC Call Center this year. Information from ICMI showed industry averages at 4.9% for government. The benefit of using the performance measurements, such as the abandoned call rate, is that management can target standards that are compatible with the mission of the call center.

Since we found that performance measures used by the CJC Call Center did not align with many key performance indicators, we researched information on the most popular benchmarks used. Below is a listing of commonly used key performance indicators:
COMMON CALL CENTER METRICS

<table>
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<tr>
<th>COST</th>
<th>QUALITY</th>
<th>PRODUCTIVITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Cost/contact</td>
<td>Call quality</td>
<td>Contacts/agent-month</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cost/minute of handle time</td>
<td>Customer satisfaction</td>
<td>Agent utilization</td>
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<td>% Calls requiring rework</td>
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<tr>
<th>AGENT</th>
<th>SERVICE LEVEL</th>
<th>CALL HANDLING</th>
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<tr>
<td>Agent Occupancy</td>
<td>Average speed of answer (ASA)</td>
<td>Call handle time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agent Turnover</td>
<td>Call abandonment rate</td>
<td>Talk time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Absenteeism</td>
<td>% answered within 30 sec</td>
<td>After Call Work Time</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training hours</td>
<td>Average queue time</td>
<td>First contact resolution rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agents as % of Total FTE's</td>
<td>Average hold time</td>
<td>IVR completion rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedule Adherence</td>
<td>Average time to abandon</td>
<td>Percent of calls transferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agent tenure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agent Satisfaction</td>
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We also located a report that aggregated data on popular key performance indicators. The Centerserve 2007 Benchmarks in Call Center Operations report, the key performance indicators (KPIs) driving call center operations as reported by participants were ranked as follows by percent of respondents:

1. Service level        16%
2. Abandon rate          10%
3. Average speed of answer 9%
4. Call volume           8%
5. Customer service quality 7%
6. Average handle time   7%

The average Service Level benchmark used by the 14 Government Agencies included in the report was 83.6% of calls answered within 50.5 seconds. These KPIs were also used to report call center performance to senior management.

One of the difficulties recognized during this analysis was the different terminology used in the industry. For instance, the average speed of answering could also be described as the average wait time. We found that a glossary of terms is necessary. The performance
measures and terms used to describe them need to be defined so that everyone has the same understanding.

A further review of benchmarking was done to examine the government segment of Industry Standards. The excerpts below describe considerations for setting Key Performance Indicators for government call centers.

We performed some call monitoring testing to determine that the information provided by staff sufficiently answered citizen's inquiries. Overall, the call monitoring found that the staff were very helpful and patient and often offered citizens additional information. We also observed a high percentage of limited inquiries made by knowledgeable people, which indicates the majority of customer inquiries are not from the general public. A limited inquiry is when the caller asks a specific question, then ends the call, like a legal assistant checking on the status of a filing or a lawyer asking what judge was handling his case. In our call monitoring, we found that 37 of the 60 calls, or 62%, were a limited inquiry. Our testing observations support the need for an assessment.

The Federal Government has already established the framework for call centers through the Citizen Service Levels Interagency Committee (CSLIC), Proposed Performance Measures, Practices and Approaches For Government-wide Citizen Contact Activities, October 2005. The following outlines their ideas:

"Despite the growing use and potential of other methods to interact with Government, recent studies indicate that the telephone is still the most preferred communication channel for all age groups; especially if the inquiry is complex or urgent. Problems cited by citizens in using the telephone channel to access Government include busy phone lines, transfers from person to person within and between agencies, problems with automated answering systems, unreturned voice mail, long hold times, and the need to make repeat calls regarding the same issue."

These key performance indicators and guidelines were suggested:

- **Abandonment Rate** - 4%, measured on an annual basis.
- **Answer Speed** - Agencies should answer 80% or more of incoming calls within sixty seconds, measured on a monthly basis. This applies to situations where the customer has asked for live help.
- **Audio on Hold** - Agencies should offer solutions to frequently asked questions (first preference) or music to callers on hold, in order to expand customer self-help opportunities and confirm for customers that there is a continuing connection, respectively.
- **Expected Wait** - Callers who will be waiting for more than 30 seconds to speak to a customer service representative should be informed of the expected duration of their wait.
Another Federal Government Report, GSA's National Contact Center March 28, 2007, showed which measures they selected and their targets:

Performance Indicators:

- Phone Abandonment Rate: 3% or lower
- Average Speed of Answer: 30 seconds or less
- Phone Service Level: 80%/20 sec.
- Phone Quality of Service: 94% or better
- Service Availability: 99.9%

This survey information clearly shows the need to establish key performance indicators to monitor call center performance. The selection, definition and the values of the key performance indicators need to be determined by management for their call center. The key performance indicators will set the level of service that we want, and can afford to offer. The selection of key performance indicators to set a level of service will also form the basis for management to consider, developing from a call center to a contact center. Improving existing technologies, like web sites and interactive voice response, may offer better service without adding personnel.

The current management reporting methodology does not allow management to accurately compare its performance to benchmarks set by the call center industry.

We Recommended:

Management revise its approach for monitoring call center operations. Management should consider moving beyond strictly historical comparisons and add key performance indicators. The level of service should be targeted through the selection and benchmark of the key performance indicators.

Status:

Implemented. Our review indicates that the following key performance indicators are now included in the report and available for benchmarking on a monthly or yearly basis:

- "Calls Received"
- "Calls Abandoned"
- "Average Wait Time"
- "Xfer/Park Calls"
- "Average Talk Time"
- "Contacts Handled," and
- "Calls per Hour."
2. The Accuracy Of Management Reports Needs Improvement.

Some of the statistics calculated in the management reports were not always accurate or clear. Our review of the management reports found that Unknown/Other calls were mislabeled, and the average daily call statistics had calculation errors. Information from monthly telephone system reports is used to create management reports for monitoring the Call Center operations. The Call Center manually creates three reports each month for management's review:

- CJC Call Center Statistics Report.
- CJC Call Center Comparison Report.
- Combined Call Centers Report (including Civil).

We found errors when we verified and recalculated the CJC Call Center Statistics Report for March 2008.

The CJC Call Center Statistics Report includes a summary of statistical data of call center monthly activity and agent performance. In the statistical summary is a breakdown of total calls received by the Call Center. When we checked the information back to the telephone system Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) reports, we found that the Unknown/Other calls were shown as none, but were added into Total Calls Transferred instead. For the March 2008 report, the correct information would show 3 Unknown/Other Calls and 310 Total Calls Transferred. The ACD manual explains that the Unknown/Other calls' category of calls received happen because the "subcategories of these don't add up." Correctly showing the Unknown/Other calls' category is necessary to alert management if the number of calls becomes significant.

The statistics report also lists information on each agent's performance. We noted differences in four instances related to the categories of Hours Worked, Calls Per Hour, and Average Daily Calls for two employees. Two instances included errors in Hours Worked, which impacted the Calls Per Hour calculation. The remaining two instances were because of call agents scheduling changes, which affected the Average Daily Calls calculation.

The two errors in the Calls Per Hour calculation were not significant enough to change the employee's performance rating category for that month. Since these errors affect the accuracy of the Call Center Statistics Report, which is used for employee performance evaluations, report information needs to be verified for accuracy.

The Average Daily Calls calculation accuracy is questionable since agents are hourly workers and may be gone for any part of the day. These fractional days, plus having part time workers, tend to skew the rates. It can also produce some illogical daily rates when compared to the hourly rate, Calls Per Hour. For instance, an employee may have a very good average of 14 calls per hour, but have a daily average of only 30 calls because of a significant amount of hours out of the office that month. You would logically expect that someone answering 14 calls an hour would have a daily average of 92 calls (14 calls x 8 hours). The Average Daily Calls
statistic is not very reliable when compared to the Calls Per Hour calculation. As previously noted in Opportunity for Improvement No. 1, the Average Daily Calls per person is not a common key performance indicator. Since it is expected that employees will always have hours out of the office during the month, which skews the statistic, it is not a good measure to use.

These deficiencies affect the accuracy of the Call Center Statistics Report and point out the need to have the prepared report information reviewed for accuracy. To be effective, management reports should be accurate, reliable and provide useful information to monitor performance.

**We Recommended:**

Management develop procedures to verify the integrity and accuracy of the reports. The reliability of Average Daily Calls per agent needs to be reconsidered as a measure for monitoring the operations of the call center.

**Status:**

**Implemented.** Our review indicates that new reports are accurate and reliable, providing a wealth of information to assist in monitoring of the call center operations.

### 3. The Customer Service Levels Need To Be Monitored.

The Call Center has time periods where customer waiting times are twice as long as average. The time periods fall mostly during lunch time when staffing is reduced. Customers will hang up or abandon their call when the waiting time is long or unknown. Customer service for call centers begin with reaching a call center agent. Management needs to be aware if citizens are experiencing problems with busy phone lines and long wait times.

We reviewed management’s process for planning staff levels. The Call Center uses a two month schedule for staffing. Staff scheduling includes time spent for filing during expected slow periods. Our review of the staff assignments found they adhered to the schedule. Adhering to a schedule is a common key performance indicator for the agent. We determined that filing was performed during low volume periods, and did not affect the customer waiting times. During this analysis, we found that the staff levels were low for answering calls occurring during the main lunch period from 12:00 p.m. through 1:00 p.m. Even with staggered lunch hours, there are only 8 or 9 employees out of the 15 persons available. We looked at average waiting time over a six month period, April to September 2008. The average wait time for the day was about 47 seconds, but went up to 123 seconds during lunch time. Management will need to reduce call waiting during the lunch hour to reduce overall call waiting time. Some improvements may be realized through schedule changes. Another possible solution to the staff level constraint is to use the overflow configuration to reassign staff outside the call center to answer calls during this period.
As previously noted, it is suggested that callers who will be waiting for more than 30 seconds to speak to a customer service representative should be informed of the expected duration of their wait. Key performance indicators of customer service include average speed of answer, call abandonment rate, percentage answered within 30 seconds, average queue time and average hold time.

We also determined how many callers were hanging up by reviewing abandoned call statistics. The abandoned call rates of 3.5% for February and 3.4% for March 2008 were better than the industry standard of 4.9%. In addition, the average customer waiting time for abandoned calls was 70 and 67 seconds for February and March respectively. The industry average was reported at 65 seconds by ICMI. In contrast, the April 2008 average customer waiting time was 98 seconds with an abandoned call rate of 5.58% indicating lower performance over the previous months.

Management did not focus on measurements for such areas as customer wait times and abandoned calls. The main point to monitoring service level metrics is to measure how accessible you are to serve your customers. Management can use these measures to decide what level of service they want and can afford to offer.

**We Recommended:**

Management monitor customer service levels through performance statistics to accomplish improvements. Management should know if customers are experiencing busy phone lines and long wait times.

**Status:**

**Implemented.** Our review indicates that management now has the tools necessary to achieve proper monitoring of customer service level performance and to continue to accomplish improvements as shown to date due to:

- the operational changes in the call center,
- the new Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) phone software system, and
- the Quality Assessment (QA) reports that are provided to supervisors.
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