

2008 ICMI Spirit of Service Award Nomination

Irma Mitchel InspiriTec

Irma joined InspiriTec in 2001 and has handled calls for two of our largest projects to date: Public Utility Commission (PUC) and the Office of Medical Assistance Programs for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (OMAP). Under the PUC project, Irma was part of a 40-person team that assisted more than 240,000 customers per year seeking payment arrangements with their utility bills, utility information, or emergency assistance when their power was to be or had been turned off. In 2005, Irma received additional training and HIPAA certification to join InspiriTec's OMAP operation. As an OMAP Customer Service Representative (CSR), Irma was instrumental in the effort to help educate over 275,000 dual-eligible (Medicaid/Medicare) consumers on the impact of Medicare Part-D to the mix of entitlements they already receive while ensuring continuous coverage. Today, Irma continues to serve OMAP callers by helping to answer calls regarding their coverage.

Over the seven years with InspiriTec, Irma's call handling skills have set the standard for providing world-class attentiveness and compassion, making her an outstanding choice for recognition by ICM during its Customer Service Week. She has consistently exceeded all performance measures – most importantly customer satisfaction. InspiriTec maintains a rigorous Quality Assurance program, which includes a mix of call recording/scoring and supervisor reviews. Irma has scored in the 90th percentile for all customer satisfaction scoring models. In addition, Irma is recognized as having one of the best attendance records among our CSR's.

Irma is known among her colleagues for handling difficult caller situations with the highest level of empathy and caring, while at the same time dispensing accurate information in the most efficient manner. Many of our PUC and OMAP callers come to us with difficult situations requiring CSRs to resolve complex issues and, at the same time, calm them during a time of duress so that the correct information can be exchanged and a solution identified. Irma has often helped a range of stressed callers, from those who were about to have their power shut off to others who do not know where to turn for help regarding their medical coverage. Irma prides herself on making these particular callers feel more at ease so that she can provide the best solution possible.

Perhaps one of the best examples showcasing Irma's customer service abilities involved a recent interaction with a long-term welfare client with mental health issues who was upset and confused about her medical coverage. This caller did not understand why she was being charged different fees for the same prescriptions from the same clinic. The medication was important for treating her mental health condition, but at the same time, her condition was making it difficult for Irma to assess and gather the caller's information.

Irma immediately sensed that the caller's stress level was high and began by letting her know she would stay on the phone as long as it took to fix the problem. As Irma began the initial identification steps, she discovered the caller was almost unable to identify the insurance cards in her wallet and had extreme difficulty discerning the information Irma was asking her to retrieve from the medical insurance cards. Irma had to help the woman identify each card by color. The caller had difficulty breathing and coherently reading the cards' account numbers back to Irma, having to start and stop and repeat several times – sometimes repeating a digit twice. Irma was able to narrow down the correct number of digits and help the woman give us the information to find her in the system. Irma discovered the Access Card she had been presenting at the clinic was expired. Irma then took the extra step to ask the woman to go through the other cards in her wallet. Describing each card by color and key words, the caller had finally come across a "Keystone Complete 65," which Irma immediately recognized. Irma was then able to explain that this card would allow her to obtain her prescriptions without a co-pay (or any other expense). Unfortunately, for this caller, she had previously not understood what this Keystone card was for, and furthermore, no one at the medical clinic had taken the time to help her as Irma did. As a

result, the woman had been paying various amounts to obtain the medication. However, now with the correct card identified, the caller would be able to go back to the clinic in the future and obtain the prescription using the correct medical coverage.

Irma's track record of delivering outstanding customer satisfaction is not uncommon among today's most seasoned and well-trained customer service representatives. What is truly impressive is that Irma has achieved this level of performance after overcoming significant barriers faced as a person with a severe disability. Irma is blind. As such, her on-the-job job success and personal story of perseverance serve to both challenge and inspire our colleagues to do their best and to also overcome their own personal struggles. For many, this means overcoming obstacles associated with a severe disability. (InspiriTec is a call center operation which affirmatively hires people with disabilities. Better than 75% of our call agents are people with disabilities.)

For years Irma was a stay-at-home wife with little to no professional work experience or source of income; except her husband. In 1985, she divorced her husband and was left with no other option but to move in with family members. Tragically, as she was going through this difficult period, Irma developed an eye condition that rapidly led to her complete loss of vision. Within eight months of the eye condition (Optic Neuritis) diagnosis, Irma was completely blind, separated from her husband, and confronted with the daunting challenge of supporting herself for the first time.

Realizing that she needed to quickly build a base of marketable job skills, Irma enrolled in a special computer training program for the blind and got training to improve her Braille reading.

Irma excelled in her education and was quickly identified as a top prospect for job placement opportunities. In 2001, Irma interviewed with InspiriTec and was hired as a Customer Service Representative for InspiriTec's Public Utility Commission call center. Since then, her employment has allowed her to live on her own and support herself. InspiriTec adapted the call center environment with Assistive Technologies, which allowed Irma to complete her call agent training and assume the role of a customer service representative. This technology allows Irma to navigate computer screen to retrieve and input customer information into a client's database. Irma listens through headphones which carry the caller's voice in one side and a computer voice reading screen fields in the other.