



National Contact Center

1 (800) FED INFO

GSA's National Contact Center (NCC), part of USA Services, a Presidential E-gov initiative, serves as a single point of contact for citizens with questions about Federal agencies, programs, and services. The NCC has brought together information from hundreds of Federal offices so citizens get the help they need right away. A single toll-free call, e-mail or chat connects the American public to this one-stop source of information about the Federal government.

Frequently Asked Questions

What can citizens expect from the NCC?

The NCC's specially trained staff can answer questions in English and Spanish, or direct citizens to an appropriate contact. The staff is eager to help and has the answers at its fingertips about the agencies, programs, and activities that make up the Federal government. The NCC answers 2 million calls, e-mails, and chat sessions a year—that's over 6,000 questions a day. The American public can call toll-free **1 (800) FED INFO** (that's 1 (800) 333-4636) between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. eastern time M-F. Recorded information on frequently requested subjects is available around the clock.

The public can e-mail any question in English or Spanish about the Federal government by going to USA.gov and clicking on "E-mail" under "Contact Your Government." The NCC will respond within two business days.

The newest NCC service is online personal assistance (live chat), which is available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET (M-F). Go to answers.usa.gov and choose the "Live Help-Web Chat" tab.

Additionally, the full database of answers used by the NCC agents is available on the web at answers.usa.gov.

How does the NCC operate?

The NCC is operated under contract by a private company. It has three main functions: (1) updating and maintaining the knowledgebase of frequently-asked-questions; (2) responding to telephone, e-mail and chat inquiries about Federal programs, benefits, and services; and (3) processing telephone requests for consumer publications. The operation has been contracted out since 1990.

What are some of the questions most frequently asked by the American public?

Trying to find an answer to a question about the Federal government can lead to a merry-go-round of referrals and can make getting an answer to a difficult question about the

Federal government seem impossible. The NCC's information specialists can answer questions directly or find the person who can. The American public frequently contacts the NCC to get answers about foreign travel, visas, passports, and immigration and naturalization. Other popular topics include Federal loans and grants, Federal jobs, Social Security, and buying surplus government property.

How do agents find the right answer?

Providing the public with timely, accurate information is what the NCC is all about. The NCC pays close attention to emerging government issues and topics. It regularly reviews new information coming from Federal agencies and organizations as a result of ongoing research, legislation and public programs. The information gathered becomes part of a comprehensive knowledgebase that is used by the NCC information agents to give the American public the most complete and up-to-date answers.

A new NCC initiative is the inclusion of other agencies' frequently-asked-questions databases into the NCC search tool. The shared FAQ service allows a citizen to search more than one Federal agencies' FAQ knowledgebase simultaneously.

How long has the NCC been in existence?

Since 1966, Americans have been contacting the NCC (previously known as GSA's Federal Information Center) to get answers to their questions about the government. Initially, the service was available only in person or via local telephone numbers in key metropolitan areas. But, since 1990, the NCC has responded to public inquiries via a nationwide toll-free telephone number; in 2003, they began responding to citizens' e-mail questions as well. The live chat service was added in 2006.

What assistance can the NCC offer Federal agencies?

The fundamental goal of the NCC is to simplify access to the Federal government and to government-related information by serving as a single, initial point of contact for the public.

The NCC works with individual Federal agencies and programs to respond to more specialized public inquiries. For example, on behalf of the Department of State, the NCC answers calls in response to public concerns about overseas travel and related issues. This service, available by calling 1 (888) 407-4747, has been of great assistance to the public.

- When the tsunami struck Southeast Asia on December 26, 2004, the NCC handled 30,000 calls in the following weeks. Many Americans were worried about relatives in the affected areas. In addition, Americans in those areas wanted to let their families know they had survived.
- After the London transit system was bombed on July 7, 2005, the NCC handled over 21,000 calls in a single day from Americans concerned about family members visiting the area.

The NCC also handles requests for the free quarterly Consumer Information Catalog, and takes phone orders at **1 (888) 8 PUEBLO** (that's 1 (888) 878-3256) for hundreds of government publications available from the Government Printing Office distribution center in Pueblo, Colorado.

The NCC can work with Federal agencies to assist in their responses to public inquiries. Sometimes agencies receive phone calls and e-mail inquiries that have nothing to do with that agency's mission. The NCC encourages these agencies to redirect "misdirected" inquiries to the NCC, who will either furnish a direct answer to the questions based on website or knowledgebase content, or will furnish the citizen with the contact information needed to secure an answer to his question (name of agency having jurisdiction over the issue, phone number, website URL, etc.). There is no cost to the agency for this service.

USA Services is a great resource for Federal agencies. This E-Gov Initiative provides a variety of services to help agencies interact with citizens and improve customer services. For more information, please visit **www.usaservices.gov**.

For More Information

If you are interested in obtaining additional information or exploring working with the National Contact Center, please call **Jerry Young** at **(202) 501-0761** or e-mail him at **jerry.young@gsa.gov**.