

PHASES

CHANNELS/
ARTIFACTS

STEPS

HIGHLIGHTS/
DETAILS

PAIN POINTS

OPPORTUNITY
AREAS

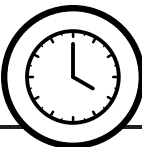
Customer Service Representative

Error Resolution Journey Map

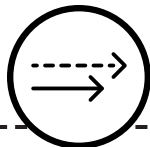
The error resolution journey of the **Customer Service Representative (CSR)** highlights the actions taken when assisting callers over the phone. This map includes eleven steps which are grouped into six phases: *Verify*, *Assess*, *Research*, *Close Out*, *Locate*, and *Notify*.

In the *Caller Assistance* phase, CSRs work to understand the concerns of callers, utilizing tools to conduct research as outlined in the Internal Revenue Manual (IRM). If they are unable to determine the issue, a CSR may need to submit a referral to the Error Resolution department as listed in the optional phase, *ERS Inquiry Referral*.

This journey begins with an incoming call from a taxpayer who is inquiring about the status of their tax return.

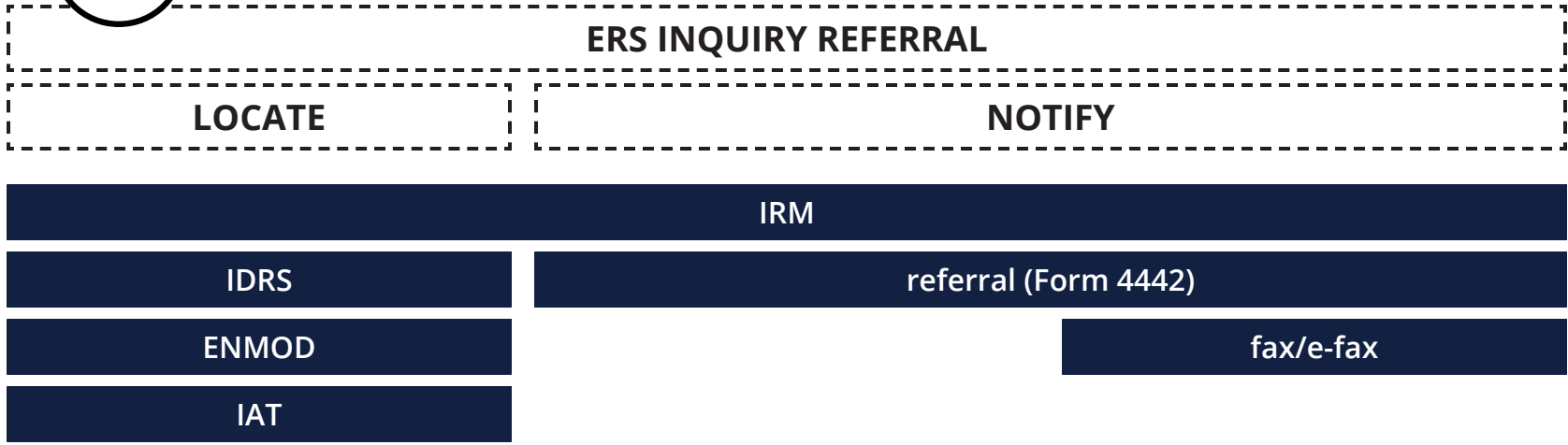
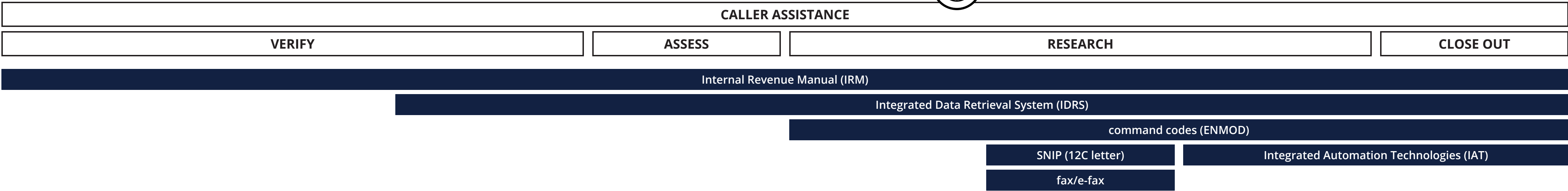
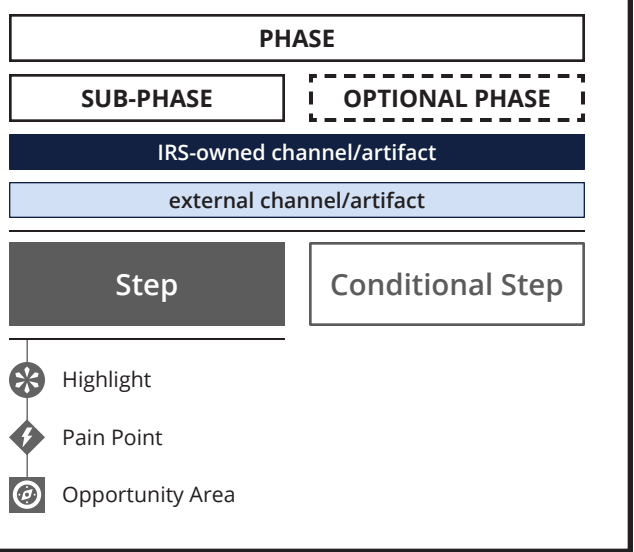


In FY22, the Average Handle Time (AHT) was **18 minutes** for Application 20 (IMF Accounts - English) and **25 minutes** for Application 21 (IMF Accounts - Spanish).



Referrals are dependent upon the number of days remaining in ERS suspense. CSRs submit inquiry referrals to ERS only when there are fewer than 30 days remaining.

VISUAL KEY



	Inquire about self-help tools/online resources	Confirm processing time frame has elapsed	Verify caller's identity	Identify caller's concern(s)/ask clarifying questions	Determine if caller received a letter from the IRS	Utilize resources to address caller's concern(s)	Check ERS status	Provide instructions for next steps	Determine which service center has the caller's return	Fill out referral (Form 4442)	Submit referral to ERS
	<p>✳️ CSRs first inquire if the taxpayer checked the status of their return using online resources such as IRS.gov, 'Where's My Refund?' or the IRS2Go app.</p> <p><i>"...first ask them if they checked our online services. That's the first thing we do. And if they haven't, we direct them there because really, it's the same information that we have at our fingertips."</i> -Lead Contact Representative</p>	<p>✳️ CSRs ask callers how long it's been since they submitted their tax return to ensure a sufficient amount of time has passed for normal processing.</p> <p><i>"I make sure that the processing time frame has passed before I provide any information. I don't really wanna provide any information earlier than the end of the processing time frame because it may be something that we can work through before that time and they'll already have their refund."</i>-CSR</p>	<p>✳️ CSRs confirm social security number, name, date of birth and address to verify the identities of taxpayers before disclosing personal information over the phone.</p> <p><i>"Once disclosure is met, I go into the account. If it's a high-risk situation, I go ahead into additional probes."</i>-Tax Law Specialist</p>	<p>✳️ Following IRM processes, CSRs work to get a clearer picture of the caller's issue, asking questions to assess the situation at hand.</p> <p><i>"We try to figure out what it is... and depending on the type of return it is, a lot of times we can figure out what it is. 'Cause we'll get to ask [taxpayers] different questions [about] how they filed, [and which] forms they used."</i> -Lead Contact Representative</p>	<p>✳️ If the caller has a copy of the 12C letter with them during the call, they can relay that information to the CSR, helping them to provide proper guidance.</p> <p><i>"If [taxpayers] have that letter, that makes the difference, 'cause we can... identify exactly what it is that they're missin', and then we can explain what they need to do to get their return processed."</i>-Lead Contact Representative</p>	<p>✳️ If CSRs are able to view information that was sent to the taxpayer in a 12C letter, they can provide guidance about which steps should be taken to resolve the issue(s).</p> <p><i>"A lot of times the taxpayer has not received the letter, but most of the time, we can see the letter and we can tell 'em what that information is."</i> -Lead Contact Representative</p> <p>✳️ CSRs may be able to obtain supporting documents via fax (or e-fax) while on the phone with the taxpayer.</p> <p><i>"We are to address that issue while the taxpayer is on the phone... the taxpayer will go ahead and fax it to us and then we can just put them on hold and we can correct their account."</i> -Lead Contact Representative</p>	<p>✳️ CSRs are able to determine whether an inquiry referral (Form 4442) has been sent or should be submitted to ERS based upon the time remaining in suspense.</p> <p><i>"So, if the taxpayer did not receive correspondence and you cannot determine the cause, you do check to see if the time frame has expired. So [when] it's greater than 30 days, we advise them to wait another six weeks. If it shows that it's less than 30 days remaining... then we would just send [ERS] a 4442."</i>-Lead, CER</p>	<p>✳️ CSRs may provide an IRS mailing address and fax number for taxpayers to send missing documents directly to ERS.</p> <p>✳️ CSRs provide peace of mind to callers, reassuring them that the issue with their return will be addressed in due time.</p> <p><i>"I think it's a good thing that we submit the Form [4442]. It tends to give the taxpayer assurance that we are taking steps to resolve the processing of the return, or whatever issue we're having getting the return processed."</i>-CSR</p>	<p>✳️ CSR resources, such as the Results tool in IAT, allow them to search for information across all service centers, reducing their reliance upon command codes.</p> <p><i>"I actually like the Result tool quite a bit... it's always been very useful. Simply because it brings in a lot of different sources of information... it's searching through the individual service centers."</i> -Lead, CER</p>	<p>✳️ CSRs utilize inquiry referrals (Form 4442) to share pertinent information about the taxpayer's intentions to help ERS address outstanding issues with the return.</p>	<p>✳️ Leads or Managers must review and approve all 4442s before they are sent to ERS.</p> <p><i>"Usually it goes through the Lead. The Contact Representative will send the 4442 [and] the Lead needs to approve it. And once the Lead approves it, [they] will either have to manually fax that, or send that electronically to the function or department that's gonna receive it."</i>-CER Specialist</p> <p>✳️ CSRs receive fax confirmations upon delivery to ERS.</p> <p><i>"With the faxing, usually we can see [on] the confirmation sheet that the fax has been received. But that can take some time. In fact, I have one I sent yesterday and I just got the confirmation today that they got it."</i>-CSR</p>
		<p>💡 Per IRM instruction, CSRs should not share account information with callers until the standard processing time frame has elapsed (21 days for e-filed returns, or four weeks for paper returns).</p>			<p>💡 If the caller does not have a copy of the 12C letter, additional research must be conducted by the CSR to determine the status of the caller's return.</p> <p><i>"So, if you don't have access to a prior year letter, you're not sure what information to provide to the taxpayer as to what they need."</i>-CSR</p>	<p>💡 If CSRs are unable to view the 12C information, they tell the taxpayer to wait for a letter to be sent, which could take six to ten weeks (depending upon current IRM instruction).</p> <p>💡 If CSRs are presented with an "open paragraph" message, they may not have adequate information to be able to assist the caller.</p> <p><i>"If [ERS sends] an open paragraph, there's nothing for us to really help the taxpayer with 'cause we can't see what they sent."</i>-CSR</p>	<p>💡 Some tax returns remain in suspense even after the time frame has passed, leaving CSRs in the dark.</p> <p><i>"A lot of times I see that the remaining days in suspense in ERS is zero, but it stays there forever. Forever and ever. I mean, it stays there for what? 30, 60 days?"</i>-Tax Law Specialist</p> <p>💡 If CSRs see that a referral has been submitted to ERS and the status has not changed, their best guidance is to tell the taxpayer to continue waiting for a letter to arrive.</p>	<p>💡 Per IRM instruction, if CSRs are unable to identify the issue with a caller's return, they may need to submit an inquiry referral to ERS.</p> <p><i>"Basically, [the CSR] would prepare the referral and give [the taxpayer] a specific amount of time for [them] to receive a response directly from ERS."</i>-CER Specialist</p> <p>💡 Because they cannot communicate directly with ERS, CSRs feel limited in their ability to help callers with error resolution over the phone.</p>		<p>💡 The inquiry system often leaves CSRs without updates about what is happening to a return.</p> <p><i>"If, for some reason, that information isn't available to the CSR, then it's a waiting game. So they'll have to wait for the normal processing time to elapse for ERS; I believe it's six weeks. And once it reaches a certain time frame, then they can issue that 4442."</i>-Lead, CER</p>	<p>💡 Submitting referrals via fax or e-fax is unreliable because ERS servers may become overloaded.</p> <p><i>"I think if the fax process could be eliminated completely, that would be ideal. Because there's a tendency for [fax] machines to not go through, or maybe the fax machine has some type of technical issue."</i>-CER Specialist</p> <p>💡 If a taxpayer calls again to check on the status of their case and no action has been taken by ERS, CSRs are left in a difficult position.</p> <p><i>"I work them, I approve them, I go ahead and send them off to their [destination], but you know, [the] taxpayer calls back and no action has been taken."</i>-Tax Law Specialist</p>
	<p>🔗 Enabling taxpayers to view details and actions needed to process their tax return through IRS online self-service tools could reduce call volume, allowing CSRs to address more complex issues over the phone.</p>					<p>🔗 The ability to view letters exactly as they are sent to taxpayers would reduce time spent on research and help CSRs to provide the most accurate information to callers.</p> <p><i>"One thing that would be nice is if they had letters from previous years [available for CSRs to] research. Because the letters that ERS sends out [seem] to change every year. They move paragraphs, which can change the information that's being requested."</i>-CSR</p>	<p>🔗 Equipping CSRs with up-to-date information about the return's status within ERS suspense (i.e., details about if and when a 12C letter was sent), allows them to better assist callers.</p>		<p>🔗 Empowering CSRs with the latest information on inquiry referrals sent/received by ERS allows them to provide updates to taxpayers who call multiple times to check the status of their tax return.</p> <p><i>"I mean... it'd be nice if they were electronic. That'd be great. 'Cause you have no way of gauging where it is. The inquiry system, in general, when it's paper, the system just cuts out.... And absolutely no follow up past that point."</i>-Lead, CER</p>	<p>🔗 Replacing faxed referrals with an efficient digital solution would reduce paper waste, ensure timely delivery to ERS, and allow CSRs to attach supporting taxpayer documentation.</p> <p><i>"...fully integrate [referrals] electronically, where a fax doesn't need to be part of the equation. Because [information] may not be getting through to ERS."</i>-CER Specialist</p>	