

Language Access Plan

Department of Health & Human Services

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DHHS Language Access Liaison
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Table of Contents

I.	Introduction.....	Page 3
II.	Meaningful Access: Four Factor Analysis.....	Page 4
III.	Language Access Plan.....	Page 5
IV.	Staff Training.....	Page 6
V.	Translation of Documents.....	Page 6
VI.	Monitoring.....	Page 6
VII.	Dissemination and Complaint Procedures.....	Page 7
VIII.	Definitions.....	Page 8
IX.	Anchorage Health Department Interpretation and Translation Services.....	Page 9

I. INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health & Human Services serves as a leader and a partner in safeguarding public health and well-being for all residents. DHHS operates a wide range of programs and services to help care and protect the most vulnerable in our society: children and infants, women, seniors, people with disabilities, families, immigrants and refugees.

This *Limited English Proficiency Plan* has been prepared to address the Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health & Human Services responsibilities as a recipient of federal financial assistance as they relate to the needs of individuals with limited English language skills. The plan has been prepared in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, et seq, and its implementing regulations, which state that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin.

Executive Order 13166, titled *Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency*, indicates that differing treatment based upon a person's inability to speak, read, write or understand English is a type of national origin discrimination. It directs each agency to publish guidance for its respective recipients clarifying their obligation to ensure that such discrimination does not take place. This order applies to all state and local agencies which receive federal funds, including the Municipality of Anchorage.

Pursuant to Anchorage's Municipal Policy and Procedure #16-6, the Municipality of Anchorage must "provide timely and meaningful access to LEP and deaf or hard-of-hearing individuals in the conduct of municipal business." Part of meaningful access is up-to-date plans for each Municipal Agency to best support residents and visitors of this city, not only to meet Federal Civil Rights laws, but also to create a more welcoming municipal government and community for all people.

Plan Summary

The Department of Health & Human Services, in partnership with the Mayor's office, has developed this *Language Access Plan* to help identify reasonable steps for providing language assistance to persons with limited English proficiency [LEP] who wish to access services provided. As defined by Executive Order 13166, LEP persons are those who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English. This plan outlines how to identify a person who may need language assistance, the ways in which assistance may be provided, staff training that may be required, and how to notify LEP persons that assistance is available.

In order to prepare this plan, the Department of Health & Human Services used the four-factor LEP analysis which considers the following factors:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons in the service area who may be served by the Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health & Human Services.
2. The frequency with which LEP persons come in contact with Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health & Human Services programs.
3. The nature and importance of services provided by the Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health & Human Services to the LEP population.

4. The interpretation services available to the Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health & Human Services and overall cost to provide LEP assistance. A summary of the results of the four-factor analysis is in the following section.

II. MEANINGFUL ACCESS: FOUR-FACTOR ANALYSIS

1. **The number or proportion of LEP persons in the service area who may be served or are likely to require Municipality of Anchorage services.**

The Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) Language Access Liaison examined the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2009-2013 American Community Survey, Table B16001 “Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 years and Over.” Through an analysis of population sorted by census tracts within the Municipality of Anchorage, it was determined that approximately 6.2% of the Anchorage population (17,050 individuals) speak English “less than very well”. It should be noted that “less than very well” is inclusive of responses indicating they spoke English “not well,” and “not at all.”

Table 2
Populations Exceeding the LEP Safe Harbor Threshold
(5% of total population or 1,000 individuals – whichever is less)

Primary Language Spoken	# of Individuals	% of Population
Tagalog	3881	1.4
Spanish or Spanish Creole	3287	1.2
Hmong	1687	0.6
Korean	1539	0.6
*Other Pacific Island Languages	1379	0.5

* "Other Pacific Island Languages" includes, but is not limited to: Chamorro, Hawaiian, Ilocano, Indonesian, and Samoan

2. **The frequency with which LEP persons come in contact with Department of Health & Human Services.**

The DHHS Representative reviewed the frequency with which Health Department staff have, or could have, contact with LEP persons by looking at internal databases and Language Link usage.

In 2016, 723 of the patients that visited the public health clinic spoke a primary language other than English, and we provided interpreter services 454 times. We used Language Link for over 50% of clients, from senior housing assistance to the WIC supplemental nutrition assistance and education. From Spanish-speaking daycare providers that interact with our child care licensing staff, to Hmong farmers who need to understand our food regulations, to Korean-speaking restaurant owners and refugees who need immunizations for their children to attend school there are a multitude of ways that LEP persons many interact with DHHS employees.

3. **The nature and importance of services provided by the Department of Health & Human Services to the LEP population.**

Due to the great diversity of languages spoken in the Municipality of Anchorage, the Health Department

recognizes that most staff will come into contact with the LEP population. DHHS employees are most likely to encounter LEP individuals through clinical visits, front desk check-in, phone conversations, inspections, and community meetings or gatherings.

4. **The resources available to the Department of Health & Human Services, and overall costs to provide LEP assistance.**

From 2015-2018, DHHS spent an average of \$10,000 per year on interpretation for services, as well as some written translation for public meetings with a high Limited English Proficient (LEP) population. Because there is not an operating budget allocated for these services, funding has been cobbled together annually. DHHS is in a continual review of its available resources that could be used for providing LEP assistance, and has identified which documents would be most valuable to be translated if the need should arise. DHHS will use Language Link for telephonic interpretation services, the Alaska Institute for Justice-Language Interpreter Center for in-person interpretation and may seek quotes for necessary translation from either entity. Currently, Language Link does not provide services in any Alaska Native Language, so we will exclusively use the Language Interpreter Center for these needs. Encounters with LEP persons are expected to occur as stipulated in Part II. Section 3.

III. LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN OUTLINE

A.

Identification of a LEP Person who needs language assistance services

A person who does not speak English as their primary language and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English may be a Limited English Proficient person and may be entitled to language assistance with respect to DHHS services. Language assistance can include interpretation, which means oral or spoken transfer of a message from one language into another language and/or translation, which means the written transfer of a message from one language into another language.

How DHHS staff may identify an LEP person who needs language assistance:

- Signage about language services in different languages;
- “Point to Your Language” Posters;
- Self-identify as needing an interpreter;
- Assessed and trained bilingual staff to assist if available ;
- Examine records requests for language assistance from past meetings and events to anticipate the possible need for assistance at upcoming meetings;
- At public meetings, set up a sign-in sheet table and have a staff member greet and briefly speak to each attendee. This method will allow staff to informally gauge the attendee’s ability to speak and understand English, while asking an open ended question that requires a full sentence reply;
- Survey front line staff of any direct or indirect contact with LEP individuals.

B. Language Assistance Measures

Although the Department of Health and Human Services has been using Language Link and the Language Interpreter Center since 2016, a recording and reporting mechanism will be implemented in September 2018. Invoices from both vendors assist in providing this information.

1. DHHS staff will take reasonable steps to provide the opportunity for meaningful access to LEP clients who have difficulty communicating English.
2. The following resources will be available to accommodate LEP persons:
 - “Point to your language” posters and brochures will be in easy view of front desk.
 - Language Link brochures with “Point to your language” language identification and instructions for use will be given to all DHHS office employees.
3. Staff will be trained on how to identify language of LEP through use of “Point to your language” cards or through assistance of Language Link operator

Determination will be made for long documents if paid translation is to be pursued.

IV. STAFF TRAINING

During initial staff orientation, the Language Access procedure will be included. The following training will also be provided to all staff:

- Information on the MOA’s responsibilities per/in regard to Title VI Policy and Language Access for LEP populations.
- Description of language assistance services offered to the public.
- Use of the “Point to your language” cards.
- Documentation of language assistance requests.
- How to handle a potential Title VI/LEP complaint.
- Specific note that staff should not be asking for the citizenship status of any individual.

V. TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS

- When DHHS programs create a document, or schedule a public meeting, for which the target audience is expected to include LEP individuals, then documents, meeting notices, flyers, and agendas will be printed in an alternative language based on the known LEP population.
- Quotes for translation services may be received from either vendor before a contract is signed.

VI. MONITORING

Monitoring and Updating the LAP - DHHS will update the LAP as required. At a minimum, the plan will be reviewed annually and updated with data points from the previous year and incorporate any new U.S. Census data as available. Updates will incorporate data gained from the reporting tool and staff observation, including:

- The number of documented LEP persons provided Language Link services in previous year
- Determination of the current LEP population in the service area
- How the needs of LEP persons have been addressed
- Determination as to whether the need for translation services has changed
- Determination whether local language assistance programs have been effective and sufficient to meet the need

- Determination whether the DHHS financial resources are sufficient to fund language resources needed
- Determination whether DHHS fully complies with the goal of this Language Access Plan
- Determination whether complaints have been received concerning the agency's failure to meet the needs of LEP individuals

VII. DISSEMINATION OF DHHS LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

- Post signs at all front counters notifying LEP persons how to access language services.
- The Notice of Rights under Title VI to the public is posted at all entrances in DHHS
- LAP will be posted on the DHHS webpage
- Copies of the LAP will be provided, on request, to any person(s) requesting the document via phone, in person, by mail or email. LEP persons may obtain copies/translations of the plan upon request. Any questions or comments regarding this plan should be directed to:

Municipality of Anchorage Department of Health and Human Services
 Language Access Representative
 Shannon Kuhn
 825 L Street Anchorage, AK 99501
 907-343-4622
KuhnSK@muni.org

Municipality of Anchorage Mayor's Office
 Language Access Representative
 Amy Coffman
 P.O. Box 196650 Anchorage, AK 99519-6650
 907-343-7112 (phone)
coffmanaj@muni.org

Language Access Services Complaint Process:

- The complaint process will be included in the posted notification of the right to an interpreter;
- The Department Language Access Representatives will notify individuals of the complaint procedures and notification in languages most encountered;
- A complaint regarding the denial of language accessible services, or regarding the quality of language accessible services, including interpreters or translated materials, may be made in person, or in writing; or online at:
https://moa_onlineforms.formstack.com/forms/language_access_complaint
- The complaint should specify the date, individuals involved, and the nature of the client (i.e. the interpreter was summarizing, or a LEP individual was denied services because they did not bring their own interpreter);
- All complaints will be directed to the DHHS Language Access Representative and the Mayor's Language Access Liaison, who will respond in a timely manner and make recommendations for corrective action, if needed;

Complaint form can be found online at:

https://moa_onlineforms.formstack.com/forms/language_access_complaint

Hard Copies will be available at the front desk and will be translated into Spanish, Tagalog, Korean, Hmong, Samoan and Yup'ik.

VIII. DEFINITIONS

- A. Essential Public Information: Any information used by a department when dealing with the public which is necessary to accomplish the department's mission and with respect to public safety, public health, and economic development.
- B. Department Language Access Representative: The employee designated by the department director to be responsible for the department's Language Access Plan (LAP) program.
- C. Four Factor Analysis: The procedure to determine the level of need for language services by documenting: 1) the number and proportion of LEP persons as reported by the most recent census; 2) the frequency with which LEP persons visit various MOA locations; 3) the nature and kind of programs or activities LEP persons use; and 4) the available resources and overall costs for LEP services.
- D. Frontline: Applies to departments and/or personnel that have regular and substantive contact with the public via in person or telephonic communication.
- E. Interpretation: The immediate spoken communication of meaning from one language (the source language) to another (the target language).
- F. Interpreter: A person who is bilingual or multilingual and possesses the ability to successfully convey a message from one language to another through oral communication.
- G. Language Access Plan (LAP): Department specific documents outlining the procedures and practices that the department will implement to provide language access services to LEP individuals.
- H. Limited English Proficient (LEP): Someone who is not able to speak, read, write or understand English at a level that allows the person to interact effectively with department staff. Individuals maintain the right to self-identity as a LEP person and should not in any circumstances be expected to pay for translation or interpretation services in order to effectively communicate with the department.
- I. Mayor's Language Access Liaison: The employee designated by the Mayor to support the LEP program and to support the Department Language Access Representative.
- J. Telephonic Interpretation: A service that connects human interpreters via telephone to individuals who wish to speak to each other but do not share a common language. The telephone interpreter converts the spoken language from one language to another, enabling listeners and speakers to understand each other. Interpretation over the telephone most often takes place in a consecutive mode, which means that the interpreter waits until the speaker finishes an utterance before rendering the interpretation into the other language.

- K. Translation: The written communication of meaning from one language (the source language) to another (the target language).
- L. Translator: A person who is bilingual or multilingual and possesses the ability to translate from one language to another in written form.