

# LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN FOR LEP INDIVIDUALS

**State Agency:** New York State Division of Human Rights

**Effective Date of Plan:** APR 01 2015

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## PART 1 – INTRODUCTION

**Pursuant to Executive Order No. 26 (“Statewide Language Access Policy”), we have prepared this Language Access Plan (“Plan”) that sets forth the actions we will take to ensure that persons with limited English proficiency (“LEP”) have meaningful access to agency services, programs, and activities.**

### **Statement of Agency Services to the Public:**

The New York State Division of Human Rights ("Division") provides individuals in New York the opportunity to file complaints of discrimination in employment, housing, credit and places of public accommodations pursuant to the provisions of the New York State Human Rights Law. The Division is the State's Civil Rights Law enforcements agency. If after an investigation the Division concludes there is reason to believe State Human Rights laws were violated, the complaint will be prosecuted and parties afforded the opportunity to have a hearing before an administrative law judge.

**In developing this plan, we have understood LEP individuals to be persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. We will reassess language needs periodically as needed, but at least every two years starting from the effective date of this plan.**

## PART 2 – ASSESSING LEP POPULATION LANGUAGE NEEDS

**The estimated total number of individuals in our service area is:** 19,651,127.

As the State’s Civil Rights agency, parties who are within the agency’s service jurisdiction include all residents of New York, employees in New York, and visitors (e.g. tourists, business people).

**The top six languages spoken by LEP individuals that our agency serves or could potentially serve are as follows:**

<b>Language</b>	<b>Estimated Number of LEP Individuals Who Speak this Language</b>
Spanish	1,230,302
Chinese	329,482
Russian	130,961
Italian	65,243

Korean	64,426
French (Haitian) Creole	64,046

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

**We use the following resources to determine the top six languages spoken by LEP individuals:**

- U.S. Census data (including American Community Survey data)
- Agency data on client contacts
- School system data
- Information from community organizations that serve LEP individuals

**Names of organizations:**

- NY Immigration Coalition (<http://www.thenycic.org/>)
- Migration Policy Institute (<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/>)
- Asian American Federation (<http://www.aafny.org/>)
- Empire Justice Center – Language Access Resource Center (<http://www.empirejustice.org/issue-areas/civil-rights/language-access/>)
- Information from other government agencies

**Names of agencies:**

- New York City Department of City Planning (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/census/popdiv.shtml>)
- New York City Office of Immigrant Affairs (<http://www.nyc.gov/html/imm/html/home/home.shtml>)
- New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (<http://otda.ny.gov/>)
- New York State Department of Labor (<http://labor.ny.gov>)

Other (describe)

**We have determined the frequency of our contacts with LEP individuals as follows:**

Where vendor interpreting services are required to assist with communication with LEP individuals on telephone calls or office visits a record is made and this data is compiled and sent to the DHR in periodic reports. When an individual who is a party in a complaint is identified as requiring language assistance, the Division employee assigned to the case inputs the information about the language needs in the agency's case management system.<sup>1</sup> Frequency of contact with the individual can be tracked as the case moves along from investigation to conclusion. On a quarterly basis, beginning in October 2014, reception staff will be surveyed to provide best estimates of the frequency of contacts with LEP individuals calling and visiting the Division's offices and/or units, and this information will be provided to the Language Coordinator.

### **PART 3 – PUBLIC OUTREACH AND NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES**

**We inform LEP individuals, in the languages indicated in the chart in Part 2 of this plan, about their right to free language assistance services by using the following measures:**

- LEP individuals are informed directly by our staff

**In what ways?** All Division employees have received training on how to access an interpreter using the telephone. For LEP individuals that speak Spanish, Spanish language staff<sup>2</sup> are responsible for communicating with the individual and informing her/him that free language assistance is available. When no Spanish language Division staff are available or when the foreign language spoken is not Spanish, Division employees are authorized to access telephonic interpreting services. Each office has designated an area in the office where a confidential conversation with Division staff can be conducted. These areas are equipped with speaker telephones which enable employees to access interpreters using private vendors.

- Brochures or flyers about language assistance services

- In public areas of the agency

- Elsewhere in the agency's service areas

- Signs posted about language assistance services

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<sup>1</sup> The system has a box marked "Special Needs". By marking this box, all subsequent employees who are assigned to the case and/or who are tasked with communicating with the individual are charged with checking the "Special Needs" box to see if language services are required.

<sup>2</sup> The Division has a number of bilingual employees with their language specialization added to their Civil Service title. These individuals are tested for basic language competency. In July 2014, the agency had 16 employees with Civil Service tested language skills: 15 are bilingual Spanish and 1 is bilingual Chinese/Mandarin.

In public areas of the agency

Elsewhere in the agency's service areas

Outreach and presentations at schools, faith-based groups, and other community organizations

**What are the LEP populations targeted?** Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Haitian Creole, Italian and Korean language communities as well as immigrant communities that speak Polish, French and Arabic.

Local, non-English language media directed at LEP individuals in their languages

Telephonic voice menu providing information in non-English languages

**In which languages:** The Division's toll-free number has a voice mail in English and Spanish. During working hours, the telephone is answered by bilingual staff. After hours, the voice mail is activated, and calls left in Spanish are followed up the next day by Spanish language staff.

Other (describe)

#### **PART 4 – PROVISION OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES**

**We use the following resources to determine when an individual is LEP, and what the individual's primary language is, when the encounter is *in person*:**

"I Speak" posters or visual aids

Reception staff makes those determinations based on experience, with the assistance of bilingual staff members where available

Other (describe) Language Line Solutions (conference call/speaker phone)

**We use the following resources to determine when an individual is LEP, and what the individual's primary language is, when the encounter is *by telephone*:**

Reception staff makes those determinations based on experience, with the assistance of bilingual staff members where available

Telephonic interpreting service

Other (describe)

**We record and maintain documentation of each LEP individual's language assistance needs as follows:**

Individual parties identified as LEP are flagged in the Division's Case Management System (CMS). The Division's Language Access Coordinator and the Language Access Working Group have oversight over the documentation of LEP language assistance within the Division.

### **A. Oral Interpreting Services**

**Our protocol(s) for assessing whether an LEP individual needs oral interpreting services is as follows:**

**For in-person encounters:** How to communicate and interact with LEP individuals is an important part of the Division's ongoing training of staff. Issues with language communication may or may not be apparent to the Division employee from an initial brief conversation. In order to make that assessment we have the following protocols in place:

Spanish-speaking individuals- Many of the Division's offices have bilingual Spanish staff who are either at or near the reception area. These individuals are assigned to speak with Spanish-speaking visitors requesting language assistance. In offices with no Spanish-speaking staff (or when a Spanish-speaking employee is not available), telephonic interpreting services are used in offices or conference rooms designated for these purposes.

Our protocol is to ask the LEP individuals: "Do you speak Spanish?" and "Do you want to speak with someone who speaks Spanish?" We also have "Interpretation Services Available" placards which have the following statement in Spanish (and 19 other languages): "Point to your language. An interpreter will be called. The interpreter is provided at no cost to you."

For guests speaking other languages- If the visitor is speaking a language other than Spanish or the Division employee cannot determine the language spoken, the first task is to identify which language is being spoken and communicate to the visitor that free interpreting services are available. The Division employee can show the "Interpretation Services Available" placard which has the following statement in 20 languages: "Point to your language. An interpreter will be called. The interpreter is provided at no cost to you." Once the language is identified, the Division employee will take the visitor to an area designated for accessing the interpreter using the telephone. All Division staff have been trained on how to access these services.

**By telephone:** The Division's receptionist is a Spanish bilingual employee<sup>3</sup>. All telephone calls from Spanish-speaking callers are answered by her and, if necessary, re-directed to appropriate bilingual Spanish language staff. Language Line over-the-phone interpreters are used in all other situations or in those offices which do not have Spanish bilingual staff.

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<sup>3</sup> Whenever we refer to "Spanish language" Division staff, the reference is to bi-lingual Spanish employees who have been tested for basic Spanish language skills and have a language designation added to their regular Civil Service title. Our short-hand designation is "SL" for Spanish language and "CL" for Chinese language.

**At initial contact in the field:** All investigators and those employees who need access to Language Line interpreters in the field can do so using their personal access codes and the Division's code. Any telephone can be used for this purpose if it is equipped with conference call features and a speaker.

**For pre-planned appointments with LEP individuals:** Spanish language ("SL") staff or Language Line interpreters are available to communicate this information to the LEP individual, and all office reception areas also display placards which convey the information about free language services.

The Division employee asks the individual if s(he) would feel more comfortable in communicating in her/his native language. If the individual answers in the affirmative, the Division employee enters information about the language services needed in the "Special Needs" box of the Division's computerized CMS – the agency's case tracking system. An "LEP" label is also placed on the file folder to alert any Division employee handling the case file that language services are needed.

All staff have the responsibility to check both the CMS and the folder so that language services are arranged prior to a pre-planned appointment. LEP individuals are not always identified in the initial phase for any number of reasons. Once a Division employee becomes aware that language services are required, that employee has the responsibility to enter that LEP information in the CMS and on the folder and make the appropriate arrangements for interpretation or translation services.

**Other (describe):**

**Our protocol(s) for informing LEP individuals that they do not need to provide their own interpreters and that free interpreting services will be provided is as follows:**

**For in-person encounters:** Information about free interpreting services is displayed in the public reception areas of the Division's offices (posters and/or placards). In addition, as soon as the need is identified, LEP individuals are informed of free language services at the earliest point of contact with Division staff, usually by the Division's receptionists.

**By telephone:** The information is conveyed by receptionists answering the Division's telephones.

**At initial contact in the field:** This information is conveyed by any Division employee in the field who needs to communicate with an LEP individual.

**For pre-planned appointments with LEP individuals:** In most instances, the CMS and the case folder should alert the Division staff that language services are required (either by telephone or in person). In those instances where the need for language services has not been entered in the "Special Needs" box of the CMS or on the case folder, Division employees are responsible for making arrangements for interpreting or translation services as soon as it becomes apparent.

**Other (describe):**

**If an LEP individual insists on using a family member, friend, or other person as an interpreter, our protocol(s) for determining whether to accept or decline such an arrangement is as follows:**

LEP individuals that come into contact with our agency will be informed of the availability of free interpreting services. Generally, an LEP individual may not use a family member, friend, or a minor as an interpreter. However, **during emergencies** an LEP individual will be permitted to use a minor, a family member or friend as an interpreter. Upon request, an LEP individual may also be permitted to use a minor, a family member or friend as an interpreter for routine matters, such as asking the location of the office, hours of operation or rescheduling an appointment. Where the interaction with the LEP individual occurs at the agency's office, and an individual is permitted to use an interpreter of his or her choosing, he or she must fill out a written consent/waiver form.

Where an LEP individual is engaged in official business with the agency, the agency will provide an independent interpreter at all times. An LEP individual will not be permitted to use an independent interpreter of his or her choosing when filling out applications or when involved in other legal matters.

**Our protocol(s) for obtaining interpreter services in a timely manner is as follows:**

1) Spanish-speaking LEP individuals are by far the greatest percentage of LEP individuals using the Division's services. Our Central Office Receptionist is bilingual in Spanish and English, and refers all Spanish-speaking LEP individuals to available Spanish bilingual "SL" staff once the individual indicates that he/she prefers to speak in Spanish.

2) Most Regional Offices have one or more Spanish bilingual "SL" Civil Service employees. These employees are expected to provide interpreter services.

3) In those offices without such staff or if the bilingual staff is unavailable to interpret, staff can access Language Line services, and specific areas and telephones are designated for these purposes.

4) For lengthier interviews, such as fact-finding or two-party conference, we make arrangements for in-person interpreting (using the Division's Spanish bilingual designated Civil Service employees or professional interpreters provided by the Office of General Service (OGS) language vendors). Division employees may also use the vendor for interpreting services if this appears to be a good alternative.

**We record and maintain documentation of oral interpreting services provided to LEP individuals at each encounter as follows:**

The Language Access Coordinator's receives a log of contracted oral interpreting services provided to LEP individuals by the OGS private vendor, Language Line Solutions. Calls made using Language Line services require the entry of a personal code. This enables the Division to capture data on language use by employees.

**Competency and confidentiality**

**The linguistic and cultural competence of interpreters is addressed as follows:**

Where the Division utilizes independent interpreting services, that vendor will implement quality assurance standards to guarantee that its interpreters are trained and are linguistically and culturally competent. The Division has language parenthetic staff that have been tested by Civil Service. In addition, the Division integrates cultural competency into its training programs.

**The issue of confidentiality pertaining to the use of interpreters is addressed as follows:**

The training provided to staff will address the importance of confidentiality. Furthermore, independent interpreters will enforce standards of confidentiality in accordance with NYS Law.

**Maintaining a list of oral interpreting resources**

**We use, or have available for oral interpreting, the following resources:**

- Bilingual staff members who work directly with LEP individuals

**Number of staff and languages spoken:** Approximately 15 Spanish bilingual staff members (four at the Central office and 11 in Regional offices) and one Mandarin-Chinese bilingual staff member (regional office).

- Bilingual staff members who provide oral interpreting when necessary

**Number of staff and languages spoken:** The Division has created a chart of volunteer staff that speak several other languages including Chinese (Cantonese), Chinese (Mandarin), and Russian. However, these staff members are not relied upon except in exigent circumstances. None of these staff are required to offer their language services. Service, when provided, is of a voluntary nature.

- Telephonic interpreting service

**Names of vendors:** Language Line Solutions, Inc. and potentially any other vendor under the OGS Statewide Administrative Services Contract.

- Contracts or other arrangements with community organizations or individuals for oral interpreting services

**Names of individuals/organizations and languages:** We have no formal relations with community organizations for oral interpreting services. However, for community civil rights programs where we anticipate attendance by LEP individuals, we have worked closely with community groups to ascertain interpretation demands.

- Other (describe)

**The agency's Language Access Coordinator maintains the list of oral interpreting resources that are available to staff, which includes:**

- Names and contact information for all resources
- Names and locations of staff members who are available to act as interpreters or provide services directly in the LEP individual's primary language
- Languages in which each interpreter or service is qualified
- Procedure for accessing each interpreter or service

**We inform all staff members who have contact with the public how to obtain oral interpreting services as follows:**

All Division staff are informed about how to obtain oral interpreting services via mandatory language access training and distribution of follow-up information. Follow-up information is communicated via periodic agency e-mail bulletins and the distribution of hard-copy materials to the Regional Offices.

#### **B. Translations of Written Documents**

**The process to determine and reassess, at least every two years starting from the effective date of this plan, those vital documents (including website content) which must be translated is as follows:**

In 2010, a "Vital Document Working Group" consisting of Division professionals familiar with the law enforcement processes of the agency identified 15 form letters and other documents as "vital documents." These documents were translated into nine languages: Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Arabic, and Polish and French. They are posted and available for use on the Division's website. This includes the Division's complaint form. Periodically, and at least once a year, the Language Access Working Group reviews requests from the "Vital Document Working Group" as well as from others in the Division. A determination is made as to how best to provide this information to LEP individuals. In some instances, the Division will decide to translate several additional documents.

**The process to timely translate documents that LEP individuals submit in their primary languages is as follows:**

The Division's complaint form has been translated into nine languages. All complaints must be signed, dated and notarized. All complaints submitted by LEP individuals must be in the language they understand, and the OGS contracted vendor translators are utilized for this purpose. Most other documents submitted as part of the Division's administrative procedures (e.g. respondent's answer, complainant's rebuttal) will either be interpreted or translated by the OGS contracted vendor. Designated Division employees oversee these procedures in each unit where an investigation is being

processed. This insures a professional level of timely translation and/or interpretation. After consultation and upon approval by the Language Coordinator and the appropriate Supervisory employee, Division SL staff may also serve this purpose in some circumstances where the documents are simply written and brief.

**The process for ensuring that documents are written in plain language before they are translated into other languages is as follows:**

The Division's External Relations Unit reviews all Division materials to ensure that they are written in plain language.

**The following documents are currently translated by the agency in the languages indicated:**

Brochures translated into nine languages (Spanish, Russian, Haitian Creole, Chinese, Italian, Korean, French, Arabic and Polish) plus the Division's poster into 14 additional languages.<sup>4</sup> These documents are posted on the Division's website: [www.dhr.ny.gov](http://www.dhr.ny.gov).

**The process for ensuring that translations are accurate and incorporate commonly used words is as follows:**

The Division through its vendor (where applicable) will ensure that proofing/editing for correctness and cultural sensitivity are a component of the translation services provided by any vendor under contract as part of the publication process. The Division will also ensure that plain language is used in materials produced before translation to ensure information is accessible to a range of literacy levels.

The Division also has "Lexicons" in nine languages providing the translations of commonly used phrases and terms to ensure standardization of terms.

**We use, or have available for translating, the following resources:**

- Contracts with language service vendors

**Names of vendors:** Language Line Solutions, Inc. and potentially any other vendor under the OGS Statewide Administrative Services Contract.

- Contracts or other arrangements with community organizations or individuals for oral interpreting services

**Names of individuals/organizations and languages:**

- Oral translations of written documents by bilingual staff members

- Oral translations of written documents by other individuals or community organizations

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<sup>4</sup> Thai, Urdu, Japanese, Bengali, Hindi, Lao, Punjabi, Vietnamese, Bosnian, Hebrew, Albanian, Greek, Portuguese and Somali.

- Other (describe) The Division has a diverse workforce, including many employees who are bilingual and bi-literate in Spanish, Russian, Chinese-Mandarin, Chinese-Taiwanese, Chinese-Cantonese and other languages. The Division taps these resources when needed in exigent circumstances, and only if these employees agree to provide their services voluntarily.

**The agency's Language Access Coordinator maintains the list of written translation resources that are available to staff, which includes:**

- Names and contact information for all resources
- Names and locations of staff members who are available to provide oral translations of written documents
- Languages in which each translation service is qualified
- Procedure for accessing each translation service

#### **PART 5 – STAFF TRAINING**

**The person(s) in the agency who is responsible for the provision of training to staff in language access issues is:**

Rocky Chin (Language Access Coordinator) and the other members of the Language Access Working Group (Lourdes Centeno and Iris Carrasquillo).

**The staff training includes the following components:**

- The legal obligations to provide meaningful access to benefits and services to LEP individuals
- How to access language assistance services
- How to work with interpreters
- Cultural competence and cultural sensitivity
- Documenting the language needs of LEP individuals and the language services provided to them by the agency
- How to obtain written translation services

**The methods and frequency of training are as follows:**

The Division's staff is required to take an annual language access training via the State Learning Management System. The mandatory training includes all the components listed in the previous question. Supplemental information regarding agency specific procedures will also be provided. Refresher courses will be provided as needed.

## **PART 6 – ADMINISTRATION**

### **Monitoring**

**To ensure compliance with the Plan, the LAC will monitor its implementation as follows:**

The Language Access Coordinator (LAC) and the Language Access Working Group will evaluate the implementation of this Plan by instituting evaluation procedures, which will include an internal and external survey instrument and some testing. The LAC will also work one-on-one with Division receptionists, and also utilize the Language Access Working Group to ascertain best practices regarding implementation and compliance.

### **Complaints**

**We provide information to the public, including to LEP individuals in languages regularly encountered in this service area, advising them of the right to file a complaint if they feel that they have been the subject of discrimination. The information we provide describes how and/or where to file a complaint. We do not retaliate or take other adverse action because an individual has filed a complaint alleging discrimination based on LEP status or needs.**

**We display information on the right to file a complaint, and the procedures to file a complaint, in the following manner:**

Fliers in our reception areas in all six languages identified in Part 2 of this Plan inform the public of Executive Order No. 26, Statewide Language Access Policy. The posted notice informs the public that complaints can be filed with the LAC or any member of the Language Access Working Group. The Division's complaint form is available in all six languages upon request and through the Division's website.

**We handle complaints made to the agency regarding the provision of language assistance services in the following manner:**

Upon receiving a complaint, the LAC or the Language Access Working Group will conduct an investigation and submit the recommendations to the Commissioner, who issues the final report.

## **PART 7 – SIGNATURES**

x Glenn Feld Commissioner 3/23/15  
Head of Agency Title Date

Richard Chin AAO/SEO 3/18/2015  
Agency LAC Title Date

Butrus L. Gattay 3/4/15  
Deputy Secretary for Civil Rights Date