

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT INDIVIDUALS

State Agency: New York State Office of the Medicaid Inspector General

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This document is our agency’s **Language Access Plan**.

A **Language Access Plan** explains how we provide services to people who have limited English proficiency.

This **Language Access Plan** includes information about:






	<p>The Limited English Proficient (“LEP”) population in our service area.</p>
	<p>How we notify the public about language access services.</p>
	<p>Our resources and methods for providing language access services.</p>
	<p>How we train our staff to provide language access services to the public.</p>
	<p>How we monitor language access services and respond to complaints.</p>

Table of Contents

PART 1 – Our Agency’s Services	3
PART 2 – The Limited English Proficient Population in Our Service Area.....	3
PART 3 – Public Outreach About the Availability of Language Access Services ...	4
PART 4 – Provision of Language Access Services	5
PART 5 – Staff Training.....	12
PART 6 – Monitoring the Plan and Responding to Complaints	13
PART 7 – Signatures.....	14



PART 1 – Our Agency’s Services

We prepared this Language Access Plan (“Plan”) to comply with Executive Order No. 26, as amended by Executive Order No. 26.1, which established New York’s Statewide Language Access Policy.¹ This Plan explains how we make sure that Limited English Proficient (“LEP”) individuals have meaningful access to agency services, programs, and activities.

In this Plan, LEP individuals are understood as people who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

Our agency’s services to the public include:

The Office of the Medicaid Inspector General (OMIG) protects the integrity of the Medicaid program by conducting and coordinating fraud, waste and abuse control activities for all State agencies responsible for Medicaid-funded services. In fulfilling this role, OMIG primarily interfaces with the Attorney General’s Medicaid Fraud Control Unit (MFCU), various Federal, State and local agencies and law enforcement officials. OMIG employs an online Medicaid fraud allegation form, Medicaid Fraud Hotline, and Explanation of Medical (Medicaid) Benefit (EOMB) letters that allow the public and beneficiaries to report fraud, waste and abuse to the agency.



PART 2 – The Limited English Proficient Population in Our Service Area

Our agency uses U.S. Census data (including data from the American Community Survey) to determine the top ten languages most commonly spoken by LEP individuals in New York State.

The estimated total number of LEP individuals in our service area is: Approximately 2.5 million LEP individuals in New York State.

The top ten languages spoken by LEP individuals in New York State are:

#	Language	Estimated Number of LEP Speakers
1	Spanish	1,201,322

¹ For additional information about our agency’s obligations to provide language access services, please visit: <https://www.ny.gov/language-access-policy>

2	Chinese	379,745
3	Russian	119,380
4	Yiddish	64,070
5	Bengali	64,020
6	Korean	55,506
7	Haitian	54,746
8	Italian	46,431
9	Arabic	40,781
10	Polish	34,840

Our agency will reassess the public’s language needs at least every two years after the effective date of this Plan.

Our agency tracks encounters with LEP individuals in the following ways:

OMIG tracks encounters with LEP individuals by documenting all calls and in-person meetings, as well as all written correspondence that occur when interpreting and translation services are requested and utilized. This documentation includes noting the language assistance service provided, when it was provided, how it was provided and the specific language in which it was provided.



PART 3 – Public Outreach About the Availability of Language Access Services

Our agency informs LEP individuals about their right to free language assistance services in the following ways, using at least the top ten languages shown in Part 2 of this Plan:

- LEP individuals are directly informed by our staff
 - In which ways?** OMIG staff directly inform LEP individuals about their right to free language assistance services by utilizing the agency’s “Language Identification Tool.” This tool notes in 40 different languages, “Point to your language. An interpreter will be called. The interpreter is provided at no cost to you.”
- Signs posted about language assistance services
 - In areas operated by the agency and open to the public
 - Other (describe)
- Information is published on our agency’s website in at least the top ten languages spoken by LEP individuals in New York State
- Outreach and presentations at schools, faith-based groups, and other community organizations
 - What are the LEP populations targeted?** OMIG staff have access to the agency’s “Language Identification Tool” during outreach events for use when staff need to inform LEP individuals about their right to free language assistance services.

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

What are the LEP populations targeted?

- Social media posts directed at LEP individuals in their languages

What are the LEP populations targeted? Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Bengali, Haitian-Creole, Yiddish, Polish, Italian and Korean.

- Telephonic voice menu providing information in non-English languages

In which languages? Currently Spanish.

- Other (describe)



PART 4 – Provision of Language Access Services

A. Determining the Need for Services

During *in person* encounters, our agency uses the following tools to determine whether an individual is LEP, and what their primary language is:

- “I Speak” posters or visual aids that provide information about free interpreting services in multiple languages
- Reception staff make those determinations based on training and experience
- Bilingual staff members, where available, assist in identifying LEP individual’s language
- Other (describe)

On *telephone calls*, our agency uses the following tools to find out if an individual is LEP, and what their primary language is:

- Reception staff make those determinations based on training and experience
- Bilingual staff members, where available, assist in identifying an LEP individual’s language
- Telephonic interpreting service
- Other (describe)

Our agency’s protocols for assessing whether an individual needs *oral interpreting* services in different service situations is as follows:

- During office in-person encounters:** During in-person encounters, OMIG staff are directed to utilize the agency’s “Language Identification Tool” to determine the LEP individual’s primary

language, followed by contacting the agency’s interpreting and translation vendor to find out more about the nature of the contact and what further assistance is needed.

At initial contact in the field: At initial contact in the field, OMIG staff are to utilize the agency’s “Language Identification Tool” to determine the LEP individual’s primary language, followed by contacting the agency’s interpreting and translation vendor to find out more about the nature of the contact and how to further assist.

When speaking on the telephone: When OMIG staff encounter an LEP individual on the phone, the staff member informs the LEP individual about free interpreting services provided by the agency’s interpreting and translation vendor and asks the individual to identify their primary language. If the LEP individual is unable to relay what their primary language is, OMIG staff are to utilize the agency’s interpreting and translation vendor for assistance and find out more about the nature of the contact and how to further assist.

For pre-planned appointments with LEP individuals: For pre-planned appointments with LEP individuals, OMIG staff are to schedule an interpreter in the individual’s primary language with the agency’s interpreting and translation vendor. This applies to both in-person and remote video meetings.

Other (describe):

Our agency records and maintains documentation of each LEP individual’s language assistance needs as follows:

OMIG’s Language Access Coordinator documents calls and in-person meetings, as well as all written correspondence that occur when interpreting and translation services are requested and provided. This documentation includes noting the language assistance service provided, when it was provided, how it was provided and the specific language in which it was provided. In addition, OMIG’s Language Access Coordinator reconciles this information for accuracy with the records maintained and provided by the agency’s interpreting and translation vendor.

B. Oral Interpreting Services

Our agency has made the following resources available for oral interpreting requests:

Bilingual staff members who work directly with LEP individuals

Number of staff and languages spoken:

Bilingual staff members who provide oral interpreting services on a volunteer basis

Number of staff and languages spoken:

Telephonic interpreting service

Name of vendors: OMIG utilizes any vendor under the NYS OGS Statewide Administrative Services Contract.

- Contracts or other arrangements with school and community organizations

Number of staff and languages spoken:

- Other (Describe)

Our agency protocols for informing LEP individuals that free interpreting services will be provided and that they do not need to provide their own interpreters is as follows:

During office in-person encounters: OMIG’s protocols direct staff to inform LEP individuals during in-person encounters about their right to free language assistance services by utilizing the agency’s “Language Identification Tool.” This tool notes in 40 different languages, “Point to your language. An interpreter will be called. The interpreter is provided at no cost to you.”

At initial contact in the field: OMIG’s protocols direct staff to inform LEP individuals at initial contact in the field about their right to free language assistance services by utilizing the agency’s “Language Identification Tool.” This tool notes in 40 different languages, “Point to your language. An interpreter will be called. The interpreter is provided at no cost to you.”

When speaking on the telephone: OMIG’s protocols direct staff to inform all LEP individuals during inbound and outbound telephone calls, and reiterate as needed, that interpreting services are provided at no cost.

For pre-planned appointments with LEP individuals: OMIG’s protocols direct staff to inform all LEP individuals, and reiterate as needed, that interpreting services are provided at no cost.

- Other (describe):**

Our agency’s protocols for obtaining interpreting services in a timely manner is as follows:

OMIG’s protocols for obtaining interpreting services in a timely manner include determining the LEP individual’s language and informing them that they can receive free interpreting services; contacting OMIG’s interpreting and translation vendor; informing the vendor’s customer service representative the language that is needed for interpreting services or asking the customer service representative for assistance identifying the language, if needed; utilizing the interpreter once connected; and working with the interpreter to provide interpreting services between the agency and the individual in his or her primary language with respect to the provision of services or benefits.

If an LEP individual insists on using a family member, friend, or other person as an interpreter, our protocols for deciding whether to accept or decline such an arrangement is as follows:

In the event of an emergency, the LEP individual will be permitted to use a family member, friend or other person as an interpreter. Upon request, an LEP individual may also be permitted to use a family member, friend or other person as an interpreter for routine matters, such as asking the location of the office, hours of operation or rescheduling an appointment. When 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, the individual must complete the Free Interpretation Services Waiver Form. However, if the LEP individual is engaged in official business with the agency, the agency is responsible for providing an independent interpreter. 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 or official agency matters.

Our agency provides information to all staff members who have contact with the public about how to obtain oral interpreting services. Our protocol in this regard is as follows:

OMIG requires all agency staff, including all front-line staff and their supervisors and managers, to annually complete the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) language access training, as well as OMIG's agency-specific language access plan and procedure training. In addition, the agency's Language Access Coordinator publishes and maintains an intranet page that provides information about oral interpreting services for all staff members who have contact with the public.

The agency's Language Access Coordinator ("LAC") maintains a list of oral interpreting resources that are available to staff. This resource list 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 an LEP individual's primary language
- Languages in which each interpreter or service is qualified
- Procedures for accessing each interpreter or service

Our agency records and maintains documentation of oral interpreting services provided to LEP individuals at each encounter. Our protocol in this regard is as follows:

OMIG's Language Access Coordinator documents calls and in-person meetings that occur in which interpreting services are requested and provided. This documentation includes noting the language assistance service provided, when it was provided, how it was provided and the specific language in which it was provided. In addition, OMIG's Language Access Coordinator reconciles this information for accuracy with the records maintained and provided by the agency's interpreting and translation vendor.

Cultural Competence and Confidentiality

Our agency makes sure interpreters are culturally competent² in the following ways:

The vendors that OMIG contract with to provide interpreting and translation services are required to implement quality assurance standards to guarantee that its interpreters are trained and are linguistically and culturally competent.

Our agency makes sure interpreters follow state and federal confidentiality protocols in the following ways:

OMIG’s current interpreting and translation vendor ensures its interpreters adhere to industry standards for confidentiality and ethics. In addition, when necessary or appropriate, interpreters enter into specific confidentiality agreements that reflect the requirements and obligations the vendor has to its clients, such as Business Associate Agreements (BAA) for Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) compliance. Furthermore, independent interpreters are to enforce standards of confidentiality in accordance with NYS Law.

C. Translations of Documents

At least every two years after the effective date of this Plan, our agency determines and reassesses vital documents (including website content) that must be translated. This process is accomplished in the following ways:

OMIG’s Agency Communications and Intergovernmental Relations unit reviews all new website content and draft documents with OMIG staff prior to its posting or publishing to determine if it is considered vital and requires translation. Recommendations for content or document translations are shared with the Medicaid Inspector General for review and approval. Upon approval, the content or vital document is translated using OMIG’s interpreting and translation vendor.

Our agency’s process for making sure documents are written in plain language³ before they are translated into other languages is as follows:

Prior to submitting documents for translation, the proposed documents are to be analyzed for readability using Microsoft’s Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level tool to ensure it meets plain language guidelines.

Our agency has the following resources available for translation of documents:

- Contracts with vendors for translation services

² Cultural Competence is defined as *a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency or among professionals that enables effective interactions in a cross-cultural framework*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. 2000. Assuring Cultural Competence in Health Care: Recommendations for National Standards and an Outcomes-Focused Research Agenda. Extracted from: https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/Assets/pdf/checked/Assuring_Cultural_Competence_in_Health_Care-1999.pdf

³ The [Plain Writing Act of 2010](#) defines plain language as writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience. Extracted from: <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/PLAW-111publ274>

Names of vendors: Geneva Worldwide and any other vendor under the NYS OGS Statewide Administrative Services Contract.

Contracts or other arrangements with schools and community organizations

Names of schools/organizations and languages:

Translation of documents by bilingual staff members

Other (describe)

The agency's Language Access Coordinator ("LAC") maintains a list of translation resources that are available to staff. This resource list includes:

Names and contact information for all resources

Names and locations of staff members who are available to provide translations of documents

Languages in which each translation service is qualified

Procedures for accessing each translation service

Our agency translates documents that LEP individuals submit in their primary languages in a timely manner. Our protocol in this regard is as follows:

Upon receiving a document or correspondence from an LEP individual that requires translation, the document or correspondence is to be sent to the agency's translation vendor in a judicious and timely manner.

The following non-exhaustive list of documents are currently translated by our agency in the languages indicated:

- *AR: Arabic*
- *BE: Bengali*
- *CH: Chinese*
- *HA: Haitian-Creole*
- *IT: Italian*
- *KO: Korean*
- *PO: Polish*
- *RU: Russian*
- *SP: Spanish*
- *YI: Yiddish*

Name	Top Ten Languages										Additional Languages
	AR	BE	CH	HA	IT	KO	PO	RU	SP	YI	
Medicaid Fraud Allegation Form	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Turkish
Report Medicaid Fraud Flyer	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Reporting Medicaid Fraud in New York State Brochure	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Protecting Your Medicaid Card and Number Brochure	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Blow the Whistle on Medicaid Fraud Poster	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Building Opportunities for MWBEs	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Explanation of Medicaid Benefits (EOMB)*	X										
RRP Notification Letter**											

**The EOMB is in English on the front and Spanish on the back and includes an enclosure that provides information in Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Russian, Bengali, Haitian-Creole, Korean and Yiddish informing the recipient that it is an important document and if the individual needs help understanding it to call to be connected to an interpreter for free. The enclosure is currently in the process of having Polish, Italian, Arabic and additional*

languages inclusive of the NYS Medicaid program population added to it, and it will be completed before August 1, 2022.

***The RRP Notification Letter includes an enclosure that provides information in Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Russian, Bengali, Haitian-Creole, Korean and Yiddish informing the recipient that it is an important document and if the individual needs help understanding it to call the agency's NYC office to be connected to an interpreter for free. The enclosure is currently in the process of having Polish, Italian, Arabic and additional languages inclusive of the NYS Medicaid program population added to it, and it will be completed before August 1, 2022.*

New documents identified for translation after the signing of this Plan and before the 2-year reassessment will be translated in a timely manner.

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

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



PART 5 – Staff Training

The person in the agency who is responsible for training staff in language access services is: OMIG's Staff Development and Training unit is responsible for the provision of training to staff in language access services.

The staff training includes the following components:

- The agency's legal obligations to provide language access services
- The agency's resources for providing language access services
- How to access and work with interpreters
- Cultural competence and cultural sensitivity
- How to obtain translation services
- Maintaining records of language access services provided to LEP individuals

The methods and frequency of training are as follows:

OMIG requires all agency staff, including all front-line staff and their supervisors and/or managers, to annually complete the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) language access training and OMIG's agency-specific language access plan and procedure training. Refresher trainings are offered to staff, as needed.



PART 6 – Monitoring the Plan and Responding to Complaints

A. Monitoring

Our agency’s Language Access Coordinator (“LAC”) will monitor implementation of the Plan to make sure we are in compliance. Our protocols in this regard are as follows:

OMIG’s Language Access Coordinator will monitor implementation of the plan to ensure compliance by reviewing the language access program staff training roster with OMIG’s Staff Development and Training Unit to ensure all staff adhere to the methods and frequency of training outlined in this language access plan; reviewing OMIG’s public website to ensure that documentation approved for translation has been completed and is accessible; reviewing and ensuring all vital documents are translated or provide for oral interpreting services in at least the top ten languages; evaluating the volume and nature of communications that require interpreting and translation services to ensure that such services were provided in a timely manner; and reporting to OMIG’s Executive Leadership Team on the success of OMIG in adhering to its Language Access Plan.

B. Complaints

We provide information to the public in at least the top ten most commonly spoken non-English languages in the state, advising members of the public of their right to file a complaint if they feel that they have not been provided adequate language access services or have been denied access to services because of their limited English proficiency. We do not retaliate or take other adverse action because an individual has filed a language access complaint.

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

The standardized complaint forms, along with the procedures for filing a complaint, are available in all ten languages in our public offices upon request. The complaint forms are also available for download or online submission through our website. Additionally, information on the right to file a complaint is posted in the top ten languages on our website and in our offices in areas where it can be easily seen by the public.

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

The Language Access Complaint Form is available on OMIG’s website and is provided upon request in person or by calling, writing or emailing the agency. If a complaint regarding the provision of language services is received, it is to be sent directly to OMIG's Language Access Coordinator for immediate attention and appropriate action.


All complaints must be timely forwarded to the Statewide Language Access Coordinator.

PART 7 – Signatures

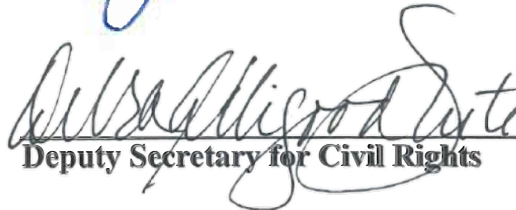



ACTING MEDICAID INSPECTOR GENERAL 7/28/2021

Head of Agency Title Date


LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATOR 7/28/2021

Agency LAC Title SPECIAL ASSISTANT Date


7/30/2021

Deputy Secretary for Civil Rights Date