

# ***Superior Court of California County of Los Angeles***



## **2019 LEP Plan Revisions**

This Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan outlines how the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles ("Court") provides equal access to justice for LEP persons consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its implementing regulations and as contemplated by Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, 65 Fed. Reg. 50,121 (Aug. 16, 2000). The LEP Plan is informed by LEP Guidance, Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964— National Origin Discrimination Against Persons with Limited English Proficiency, the United States Department of Justice issued in 2000, 65 Fed. Reg. 50,123 (Aug. 16, 2000) and its 2002 LEP Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons, 67 Fed. Reg. 41,455 (June 18, 2002).

### **II. Needs Assessment & Data Collection- Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles**

The demographic diversity and size of Los Angeles County presents the Court with unique challenges in meeting the language needs of its LEP users. The Court has 40 locations dispersed throughout the more than 4,000 square miles comprising Los Angeles County. The County's more than 10 million residents speak over 224 different languages. There are 140 distinct cultures in Los Angeles County and 57% of County residents report speaking a language other than English. Of that number, 27% say they speak English less than very well. Moreover, the language needs vary from year to year as the population shifts.

Each year, 92% of the Court's interpreter requests are for Spanish interpreters. Requests for interpreters in Korean, Mandarin, Armenian (Eastern), Vietnamese, and other languages comprised another eight percent (8%) of the Court's requests for interpreter services. To identify emerging demographic trends through Los Angeles County and project language needs, the Court considers census information, feedback from its community outreach activities, and information provided by legal service providers and other community-based non-profit organizations. The Court closely monitors the requests for interpreter services in Court proceedings and adjusts its interpreter staffing needs accordingly.

The Court also actively participates in the language needs assessment the Judicial Council of California conducts every five years in compliance with Government Code section 68563. As part of that assessment, the Court provides the Judicial Council information about the language needs of Court users in Los Angeles County. The Judicial Council compiles and analyzes that information for all 58 trial courts in the state and submits a report to the Legislature.

### **III. Spoken Language Resources**

#### **A. Court Employees Are an Integral Part of the Court's Language Services**

The robust demographic diversity among the 10 million residents in Los Angeles County affords the Court the opportunity to employ a representative workforce. Consequently, many of its employees possess the language skills necessary to serve LEP court users.

#### 1. COURT INTERPRETER QUALIFICATIONS

The Court employs nearly 400 California certified or registered court interpreters to interpret court proceedings. They undergo rigorous testing of their proficiency in English and their target language(s). They are also required to complete 30 hours of continuing education every 24 months and to take an ethics class. They fulfill other certification/registration requirements and are also bound by a professional Code of Ethics. The Court also contracts with independent court interpreters to supplement its workforce.

If diligent efforts fail to identify a certified or registered court interpreter, Government Code 68561(c) authorizes the Court to use provisionally qualified interpreters. Before the Court uses such an interpreter, Rule 2.893 of the California Rules of Court requires the Court to inquire into the interpreters' skills, professional experience and potential conflicts of interest and to make a finding of the individuals' suitability to interpret. After doing so, the Presiding Judge or his/her designee provisionally qualifies an individual to interpret in a court proceeding.

#### 2. BILINGUAL EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

The Court identifies employees with bilingual language skills, tests their foreign language proficiency and certifies them as bilingual. Once designated as bilingual proficient, the Court compensates those employees for the language services they provide while carrying out their duties at points of contact with the public.

Volunteers and interns further expand the Court's language resources. For that purpose, the Court proactively recruits interns and volunteers with language skills to assist LEP Court users understand and complete court forms at its court-based Self-Help Centers. The Court's award-winning California JusticeCorps program, which is a public service fellowship that trains current and recent college graduates to assist self-represented litigants with navigating the court system, has been a particularly effective and valuable source of qualified, dedicated, bilingual volunteers.

### IV. Language Assistance Resources

#### A. Interpreters in the Courtroom

##### 1. Providing Interpreters in the Courtroom

The Court provides spoken-language certified/registered Court Interpreters free of charge to LEP court users in court proceedings in all case types.

The Court assigns Spanish interpreters to courtrooms adjudicating Criminal, Juvenile, Traffic, Family Law, Probate, Mental Health, Unlawful Detainer, Small Claims and other Limited Civil cases.

## 2. Determining Need for Interpreter in a Court Proceeding

LASC provides multiple opportunities for LEP individuals to identify their need for language services before they appear in court. LEP court users with Unlawful Detainer, Small Claims, Family Law, Probate, Traffic and other Civil cases who speak a language other than Spanish, can request an interpreter in advance of their hearing, through the Court's web portal. The portal is accessible at [lacourt.org](http://lacourt.org). The Court assigns Spanish-speaking interpreters to the courtrooms handling these case types so Spanish-speaking LEP individuals do not need to schedule an interpreter.

When an LEP individual first appears in the courtroom, judicial officers will determine whether the individual requires an interpreter. Pursuant to Standard 2.10 of California's Standards of Judicial Administration, the judicial officer will typically examine the party or witness to determine whether an interpreter is needed when: (1) a party or counsel requests such examination or (2) it appears to the judicial officer that the party or witness may not understand or speak English well enough to participate effectively in the proceedings.

### B. Language Services Outside the Courtroom

The Court assigns bilingual-certified employees to points of public contact. The Court supplies employees at its public counters with "I Speak" cards to help LEP court users identify the language they speak. The Court also provides its employees access to glossaries of legal terms in: Arabic, Western Armenian, Hindi, Hmong, Mien, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Spanish, Urdu and Vietnamese on the Court's internal website.

In response to the prodigious language diversity in Los Angeles County, when bilingual staff is not available to assist an LEP court user at a public counter, the Court provides audio remote telephonic interpreter assistance using the services of an outside language provider.

The Court seeks to facilitate communication with LEP individuals by providing them linguistically appropriate services such as:

- Staffing Self-Help Centers throughout the County with bilingual employees, interns and volunteers who assist LEP persons in various languages. The Centers may also use audio remote telephonic language services to assist LEP court users;
- Conducting workshops to educate and assist court users regarding dissolution, responses to domestic violence restraining orders and family law judgments in Spanish and Armenian;
- Assigning bilingual employees to mediate custody and visitation matters in family law cases;
- Having Self-Help Center staff conduct joint workshops with community service providers serving LEP populations;
- Providing online automated assistance to traffic litigants using state-of-the-art text-to-speech technology in the top five languages in which the Court receives requests for interpreters;
- Linking the Court's website to key Judicial Council Self-Help information and forms in Spanish, Korean, Armenian (Eastern), Chinese, Vietnamese and other languages; and
- Having a Traffic Interactive Payment System (TIPS) telephone line in Spanish.
- Language Access webpage on [LASC.org](http://LASC.org) translated in our top five languages

### C. Translated Forms and Documents

Making commonly used forms and documents accessible to LEP individuals facilitates access to court services and enables LEP Court users to understand and participate more effectively in the judicial process. To that end, the Judicial Council maintains a Self-Help information webpage in multiple languages, which includes instructional and informational material on a variety of case types. This website also offers translated forms that the Court makes available at its Self-Help Centers.

Additionally, to facilitate communication with LEP court users, the Court:

- Includes jury summons information and telephonic information about jury services in Spanish;
- Provides its courtroom staff continuance forms in Spanish, Korean, Armenian (Eastern), Chinese, and Vietnamese to enable them to provide basic information to litigants;
- Posts signs in Spanish, Korean, Armenian (Eastern), Chinese and Vietnamese informing LEP court users about the availability of interpreter services (free of charge) at building entrances.
- Posts court closure signs in Spanish, Korean, Armenian (Eastern), Chinese, and Vietnamese;
- Maintains customer satisfaction survey cards in the top five interpreted languages; and
- Maintains a complaint form for language services on its website in Spanish, Korean, Armenian (Eastern), Chinese, and Vietnamese.

### V. Judicial and Court Staff Training

The Court is committed to training its judicial officers and employees on strategies to communicate with LEP individuals. The Court's Education and Development Unit and its Judicial Education Seminars Program incorporate language access issues in core course offerings. At this time, those educational opportunities include:

- New Judges Orientation;
- Judges College;
- Orienting and onboarding new employees;
- Overview of the Court;
- Family Law, Civil and Criminal courtroom process and procedure;
- Customer Service: addressing the needs of diverse Court users;
- Customer Service in the Courts;
- Diversity and cultural Awareness;
- Legal terminology training (in English) available for certified bilingual staff;
- Telephone Etiquette;
- Court Interpreter Minimum Continuing Education (CIMCE) certified courses;
- State-wide conferences on language access or conferences that include sessions dedicated to topics on language access, and
- Judicial officer orientation on the use of court interpreters and language competency.

The Court continuously reviews all courses and implements LEP court user awareness and training wherever possible in the core curriculum.

Additionally, the California Center for Judicial Education and Research develop specialized training for judicial officers. The Language Access Plan Implementation Task Force and the Court Interpreter Advisory Panel also develop training, including a video advising judicial officers on how to appoint spoken language interpreters in trial court proceedings. This video is also available on the Court's Digital Library for judicial officers.

## VI. Public Outreach and Education

Court leaders engage in community outreach and education to communicate about the various services available to all language speakers. Outreach and education efforts include:

- Collaboration with governmental agencies, public and private educational institutions, and legal service organizations that serve immigrant and foreign language communities; and
- Outreach meetings with community service providers such as [Legal Aid Foundation of Los Angeles, Neighborhood Legal Services, Bet Tzedek, Public Counsel, etc.]
- Cultural festivals and events

## VII. Public Notification and Evaluation of Limited English Proficiency Plan

### A. Limited English Proficiency Plan Approval and Notification

Once the Court's Executive Officer/Clerk approves the Limited English Proficiency Plan, it is posted on the Court's public website. A link to the plan is also available on the Judicial Council of California's public website.

### B. Annual Evaluation of the Limited English Proficiency Plan

The Court's Language Access Services Administrator reviews this plan annually to assess its relevance and to update it as needed. Elements of the evaluation will include:

- Data pertaining to LEP persons requesting language assistance with Court services;
- Assessment of Court's language access services;
- Review of feedback from LEP communities in Los Angeles County;
- Assessment of whether Court staff adequately understands LEP policies and procedures and how to carry them out;
- Review of feedback from court employee training sessions.

### C. Complaint Process

Any person who has a complaint related to language access services may file a written complaint. The complaint form, available in English, Spanish, Korean, Chinese, Armenian (Eastern) and Vietnamese, can be downloaded from the Court's website and mailed to the Language Access Services Administrator at: Language Access Services, 1945 S. Hill Street, Room 801, Los Angeles, CA 90007 or sent by e-mail to: LanguageAccess@LACourt.org. The LAS Administrator will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 10 business days. The Court will investigate the complaint, and communicate the findings to the complaining parties. While the Court takes the complaint process seriously, the process is not a process by which parties may seek reconsideration of their legal case.

D. Language Service Division

If you have a question about language access or comments regarding the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles Limited English Proficiency Plan, you may contact the Language Access Services Division of the Court at:

Language Access Services (LAS)  
Amy C. Blust, Administrator  
1945 South Hill Street, Room 801  
Los Angeles, CA 90007  
(213) 745-2925  
ABlust@lacourt.org

E. Limited English Proficiency Plan effective date: August 26, 2019

F. Approved by:

  
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Executive Officer/Clerk of Court

Date: 9-18-19