

Language Access Policy

Scope: CITYWIDE

Policy Contact:

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Supersedes:

N/A - New

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I. Purpose

The City of Sacramento (City) has one of the most diverse populations in the United States. With that diversity, comes many people who speak a wide range of different languages and have different levels of English proficiency.

The Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act ([Government Code §§ 7290-7299.8](#)) requires that State and local agencies that serve a substantial number of non-English-speaking people be able to effectively communicate with them through certified bilingual persons and translated materials. As it applies to State agencies, the law defines “substantial number of non-English-speaking people” to be five percent (5%) or more of the population served by the State agency.

This policy adopts the same five percent (5%) standard as the City’s commitment to language access and establishes that, to identify the languages that are needed, the City will use the data on persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) collected by the United States Department of Homeland Security, Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Limited English Proficiency Division ([LEP.gov](#)). As of 2024, Spanish is the only non-English language that meets the five percent (5%) threshold in Sacramento County.

The provisions of this policy shall be implemented to the extent that local, state, or federal funds are available, and to the extent permissible under the law.

II. Definitions

- **Bilingual employee** – a City employee who is proficient in both the English language and a language other than English.
- **City** – the City of Sacramento.
- **Interpretation** – oral language assistance provided by an interpreter either in person or via a telephone interpretation service.
- **Limited English proficiency (LEP) individual** – someone who does not speak English as their primary language and is limited in their ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. Many LEP persons are in the process of learning English and may read, write, speak, and/or understand some English, but not proficiently. LEP status may be context-specific. An individual may have sufficient language skills to communicate basic information (e.g., name, address, etc.,) but may not have sufficient skills to communicate detailed information in English.
- **Language Access Coordinator (LAC)** – Citywide position responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the policy.
- **Language service company (LSC)** – a company that provides professional language

services such as translation, interpretation, and localization.

- **Meaningful access** – language assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the individual who is LEP. Meaningful access means access that is not significantly restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to programs or services provided to persons who are proficient in the English language.
- **Over the phone interpretation (OPI)** – also known as "telephonic interpretation," is a service that connects human interpreters via telephone to individuals who do not share a common language. It is a type of remote interpreting service that involves a 3-way conference call with the interpreter, a City staff member, and a LEP individual.
- **Sight-translation** – the *oral* conversion of what is *written* in one (source) language into another (target) language without adding, omitting, or distorting meaning.
- **Substantial number of LEP individuals** – a group of LEP individuals within the City who speak a shared language other than English and whose numbers are at least five percent (5%) of the total City population
- **Translation** – written language assistance provided by a translator.
- **Video remote interpretation (VRI)** – is a video telecommunication service that uses devices such as web cameras or videophones to provide sign language or spoken language interpreting services.

III. Policy

This policy establishes the language access program and the role of the Language Access Coordinator. This policy endeavors to formalize processes, training, marketing and outreach, and protocols. This policy shall be implemented to the extent that funding is available and to the extent permissible under the law.

A. Language Access Program

The City will strive to utilize certified bilingual staff members and maintain contracts with language service companies (LSCs) to provide Citywide language access services, including document translations, interpretation, and website and social media translation.

1. Document Translations

The City will expand and proactively translate key public documents into Spanish, within reason and to the extent funding is available. The following written City-produced documents may be considered for translation:

- Written materials disseminated to the public including, but not limited to, brochures, flyers, and other outreach materials.

- Applications or forms to participate in City programs, services, or activities, or to receive benefits or services from City programs.
- Materials explaining a City department's services or programs.
- Public service announcements, community alerts, and educational material.
- Complaint forms.
- Each City department's main website page will have a written notice regarding the availability of translation of materials.
- Any other written documents that have the potential for determining eligibility for, or access to, services from, or participating in, a program of a City department.

An individual City department or office that services other LEP groups may elect to proactively translate documents into languages other than Spanish if the department or office has reason to believe that the LEP group makes up five percent (5%) or more of the population served by that particular department or office, or that it is necessary to achieve the department's or office's outreach objectives.

The City will also make reasonable efforts to provide translated documents to LEP individuals in a timely manner to ensure meaningful access to all benefits and services. The City will endeavor to ensure that LSCs it contracts with are able to translate documents as quickly as possible.

2. Interpretation

Interpreters can be provided to LEP individuals during key encounters that concern benefits or services to which the individual is entitled or may affect the LEP individual's rights, health, or safety.

Except in emergency situations or to obtain non-essential information, such as identifying the language that the person speaks, the City will take reasonable measures to ensure that non-certified interpreters, such as minor children or other family members of the LEP individuals, are not used as interpreters in key encounters, as described above. If an LEP individual indicates that a non-certified interpreter, such as a minor child, family member, or community member, can serve as an interpreter in key encounters, City staff will:

- Use a certified interpreter to inform the LEP person that the City can provide a certified interpreter at no cost and in a reasonable amount of time; and
- Obtain verbal confirmation from the LEP individual that they do not want a certified interpreter supplied by the City.

In fulfilling its obligation to provide interpretation services, the City may choose among qualified bilingual employees, in-person interpreters, OPI interpretation, or VRI services in accordance with the needs of the LEP individual and the type of encounter.

City departments that respond in exigent or emergency circumstances involving LEP individuals shall strive to provide interpretation services as quickly as possible. The City will take measures to contract with LSCs that can provide OPI or VRI interpreters on short notice.

3. Automatic Translation and Interpretation Technology

The City will continue to provide automatic translation (also known as machine translation) technologies to translate webpages of the City's website that are commonly used by the public. City staff will expand automatic translation technology to translate other digital communications when feasible.

4. Certified Bilingual Staff

The City's Human Resources (HR) Department manages the certified bilingual staff program. Employees who are certified bilingual City staff may serve as interpreters or translators.

An LSC will be utilized if there is any doubt that a City-certified bilingual staff member is not sufficiently skilled in interpretation or possesses the necessary knowledge of terminology to interpret a medical, legal, or technical document correctly.

Bilingual staff who have not been certified through HR will not be utilized to translate documents.

5. Employee Training

The City will endeavor to ensure that employees have the appropriate training for successful interactions with LEP individuals. Staff members who interact with LEP individuals directly or have management responsibilities for ensuring the effective implementation of this policy will receive training in the following areas:

- Understanding the City's policy.
- Notifying City residents of the availability of language access.
- Providing direction on proactively identifying LEP communities in the early stages of programs and projects.
- Determining that an individual is LEP and offering assistance.
- Understanding with which LSCs the City has contracts and what services each

provides.

- Arranging for language services, including:
 - Contacting bilingual staff for in-person interpreting.
 - Dialing LSCs for OPI, VRI, and sight-translation services.
 - Arranging for professional in-person interpreters for meetings or other live events.
 - Contacting LSCs for document translations.
- Responding to non-emergency situations where an LEP individual requests to use a minor child or family member as an interpreter.
- Responding to complaints about language access services.

6. Marketing of Language Services

To ensure that LEP individuals are provided with meaningful access to City benefits and services, the City may proactively notify individuals that language services are available. Types of notification may include:

- Phone menus that offer to connect users to OPI interpreters.
- Multilingual posters in City offices that notify LEP individuals that phone interpreters are available.
- Multilingual notices of documents alerting recipients that translations are available.
- Email, website posts, social media, and other advertising campaigns, including print and radio, that serve or reach LEP populations.
- "I speak" cards in multiple languages that LEP individuals can use to alert staff of their language preferences and ensure staff know their obligations to provide an interpreter. "I speak" cards will be available in high-traffic public counters, offices, and community events as well as on the City's website for download and printing.
- Continue leveraging the Office of Community Engagement's relationship with community-based organizations to foster civic engagement with LEP groups.

Notices for public meetings will contain information alerting residents that the City endeavors to provide spoken-language interpreters when requested at least seventy-

two (72) hours in advance. City staff in lead of the program, service, and/or event outreach will make accommodations and arrangements.

7. Complaints and Resolution

The City will post a form on its website that allows LEP individuals to file a complaint concerning the City's provision of language access services. This form will also be marketed. In addition, further input will be gathered through the City's 311 operations system and the Language Access Coordinator will take this information into account.

B. Language Access Coordinator

The City's Language Access Coordinator will endeavor to ensure the effective implementation of this policy and program. The Language Access Coordinator's duties will include, but are not limited to:

- Implementing the language access policy, including educating employees about the policy, tracking policy implementation, marketing, monitoring engagement, and providing ongoing professional expertise to staff.
- Tracking data concerning the City's LEP population and the frequency of City staff's encounters with LEP individuals. To evaluate the number and proportion of LEP individuals, the City will refer to the data provided by LEP.gov, U.S. Census Bureau, LSCs, and the City's 311 and 911 programs. This information will be collectively used to assess the sufficiency of the City's language access services.
- Tracking the City's overall budget and funding for language services and determining whether a request should be made for increased funding.
- Developing guidance for City departments to identify their documents and determine areas where language access expansion can occur, within reason, and when funding allows.
- Investigating and responding to complaints regarding language access services that the City receives through the 311 service and online complaint form.
- Reviewing and updating the policy and the language access program as needed, including providing ideas for ongoing improvements.
- Regularly check with the federal LEP.gov website to leverage available resources and stay informed about developing technologies that will improve translation accuracy.



Charter Officer Review and Acknowledgement

LANGUAGE ACCESS POLICY

(Signature by all Charter Officers is not a requirement for policy adoption)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leyne Milstein".

[Leyne Milstein \(May 15, 2025 15:11 PDT\)](#)

City Manager

05/15/2025

City Attorney

City Clerk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John P. Gohda".

City Treasurer

05/15/2025

City Auditor