

Introduction

Virginia is more linguistically diverse than ever before. This is no longer just experienced in the urban and suburban areas surrounding northern Virginia. Communities with multiple spoken languages are growing all over the Commonwealth. More than 14% of Virginians now speak a language other than English in their home (US Census, 2010). In smaller cities like Harrisonburg, more than 32 languages are spoken by children in the Harrisonburg City Public Schools (VDOE, 2013). In places where you would least expect it, we are encountering large numbers of linguistically diverse communities. For example, the population of Galax, in the far southwest, 14% of the population is Hispanic/Latino, 6% is foreign born, and 9% speak a language other than English in the home (U.S. Census, 2012).

Language spoken and the proficiency an individual has in English can affect the ability to obtain quality health care (Youdelman 2008; Flores et al. 2008). Language barriers in the health care setting can lead to problems such as delay or denial of services, issues with medication, treatment, and underutilization of preventive services (Green et al. 2005; Jacobs et al. 2004; Gandhi et al. 2000). Difficulty in communication also may limit clinicians' ability to understand an individual's symptoms and effectively provide treatment (Karliner et al. 2004). Language services, such as translation and interpretation, can facilitate this communication and thus improve health care quality, the patient experience, adherence to recommended care, and ultimately health outcomes (Flores 2005; Jacobs et al. 2006; Karliner et al. 2007). Planning in

What are language access services?

Language access services are also commonly referred to as language assistance services and linguistically appropriate services. LAS are services that are designed to ensure effective communication between individuals who are limited English proficient, individuals who are Deaf, Late Deafened, Hard of Hearing, of DeafBlind, or individuals who may have other communication barriers and their English speaking providers. Primary LAS include interpretation (oral) and translation (written) services. LAS can also involve provisions that enhance communication, such as assistive technology, tools for low literacy, signage and symbols for wayfinding.

advance for such services can save time, confusion, organizational reputation, licensing, and money.

Below is a template for use in developing your organization's language access services plan. Each organization is different, so each plan will be different. It will be important that your organization approach this quality improvement initiative in an intentional and systematic way so as to maximize resources and ensure return on investment. You can use the graphic on the left as a roadmap for this planning.



AGENCY NAME

Language Access Plan

I. Introduction

The Agency has prepared this Language Access Plan (“LAP” or “Plan”), which defines the actions to be taken by Agency to ensure meaningful access to agency services, programs and activities on the part of persons who have limited English proficiency. The Agency will review and update, on a biannual basis, this LAP in order to ensure continued responsiveness to community needs.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to ensure clients of the Agency meaningful access to services, programs and activities although they may be limited in their English language proficiency.

The Agency is committed to this Language Access Plan as the appropriate response to meeting our clients’ needs. The Plan is consistent with the DBHDS Policy 1023 Workforce and Service Delivery Cultural and Linguistic Competency (or) Departmental Instruction 209 Ensuring Access to Language and Communications Supports.

III. Agency Description

The Agency should use this section to describe the Agency, its mission, services, programs and activities as fully but as succinctly as possible.

IV. Language Access Plan:

Approach: The Agency Language Access Plan shall be fully implemented subject to the availability of fiscal resources to implement said language access plan. This Language Access Plan represents Agency administrative blueprint to provide meaningful access to Agency services, programs and activities on the part of LEP individuals. This Language Access Plan outlines the tasks Agency will undertake to meet this objective.

Language Access Plan:

- (1) Agency Language Access Coordinator:
(Identify the Language Access Coordinator, agency contact information including address, telephone number and email address)
- (2) Agency Language Access Needs Assessment:
 - a. Based on the services, programs and activities listed above prioritize and describe the steps the agency will take to ensure such services, programs and activities provide meaningful access to the populations whose language meet or exceed the 5% threshold. For agencies that have regional offices, this process should be described for each region.
 - b. Language Makeup of Client Population

LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES PLAN TEMPLATE

(Each language and the percentage of the language's presence should be identified and listed in this section)

- c. Points of Contact between Agency and Client Population
(Agency Office including regional offices, website address (es), main telephone numbers, etc.)

(3) Language Resources Assessment:

- a. Identification of existing staff who are linguistically, culturally, and technically able to deliver services in a language other than English and/or to serve as interpreters
(Actual staff need not be identified; languages spoken should be)
- b. Community-based resources available to be deployed to assist agency in meeting language access needs

(4) Language Service Protocols:

- a. Which language services are required to implement the Language Access Plan
(In this section, the Agency shall indicate the specific types of resources – in-person interpretation, phone interpretation, community-based resources, etc., that are available to provide language access and how the resources will be deployed to meet language access needs)
- b. Define and describe Agency's language access protocols for providing interpretation services
- c. Define how a client will be able to access and utilize the resources identified in paragraphs (a) and (b)

(5) Vital Document Translation:

- a. Agency to identify, by list, the name of vital documents, in whole or in part, to translate including timeframe for translation
- b. Agency website content, by list, to translate including timeframe for translation

(6) Stakeholder Consultations: (Did the Agency consult stakeholders in the development of this Language Access Plan – description of consultation)

(7) Staff Training:(Describe the Agency's plan to implement staff training activities)

(8) Notice to Public: (Describe the Agency's plan to notify clients of free language assistance and how a client may access such assistance)

(9) Agency Monitoring: (Describe the agency's monitoring plan)

Adapted from Massachusetts Office of Finance and Administration LEP Agency Template