

OFFICE OF THE CITY COMMISSIONERS



LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

Office of the City Commissioners

Language Access Plan

Revised February 2017

Purpose and Authority

- A. The Office of the City Commissioners is pleased to submit this language access plan in cooperation with the Mayor's Office and in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 2 C.S. § 561 et seq. (Act 172 of 2006), and the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter § 8-600 and § A-200 in ensuring meaningful access to City services and programs for individuals with limited English proficiency.
- B. The purpose of this document is to establish effective guidelines for personnel of the Office of the City Commissioners. This plan will be followed when providing services to, or interacting with, limited English proficient individuals.

General Policy

- A. The Office of the City Commissioners recognizes that the population eligible for services includes individuals who are Limited English Proficient (LEP). The following policy is adopted to ensure that LEP individuals can gain equal access to the Office of the City Commissioners' services. This plan applies to all office and personnel in the department.
- B. It is the City's policy to grant access to services or programs to every person even when the person has a limited ability to speak, understand, read or write English. The Office of the City Commissioners intends to implement measures to continue to provide LEP persons with prompt, meaningful access to elections and voter registration services.
- C. The Office of the City Commissioners, rather than the LEP customer, bears the following responsibilities:
 - (1) Providing language appropriate interpretation services.
 - (2) Identifying and recording language needs.
 - (3) Discourage use of informal interpreters such as family or friends, of the person seeking services, or other customers.
 - (4) Prohibiting minor children (under 18 years of age) from acting as interpreters.
 - (5) Ensuring that staff does not make demands of an LEP customer, such as requiring that an LEP customer provide their own interpreter, in exchange for providing services.

D. The preferred method of serving LEP persons is by:

- (1) Using competent bilingual staff able to provide services directly to the customer in his/her primary language without the need of an interpreter.
- (2) Making available accessible, trained, competent bilingual staff for in-person or telephonic interpretation as ancillary support to staff.
- (3) Training staff to seek assistance from professional in-person or telephonic interpreters when staff cannot meet language needs.
- (4) Recognizing the circumstances where using a professional interpreter or translator will be both necessary and preferred even when bilingual staff are available. These unique circumstances include, but are not limited to: situations concerning HIPAA, confidentiality, or any situation that may have a legal implication. In these cases, staff must be authorized to provide effective language services even when such assistance is not requested by an LEP customer.

Language Access Coordinator

Language Access Coordinator:

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City Hall Room 134

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City Commissioners:

Lisa Deeley, Chairwoman

Al Schmidt

Anthony Clark

Direct Contact with LEP Individuals

- A. Office walk-ins: The Office of the City Commissioners interacts with members of the public when they visit our offices for election and voter registration related information or documents. The Office of the City Commissioners currently employs four bilingual Spanish speakers and one Urdu/Punjabi/Hindi speaker. All public facing offices have access to a bilingual Spanish or Urdu/Punjabi/Hindi interpreter. In the event that an in-person interpreter is not available staff may contact one of our five interpreters by telephone. If interpretation is needed in a language other than Spanish, Urdu, Punjabi, or Hindi, staff utilizes telephonic interpretation service.
- B. Telephone calls: The Office of the City Commissioners utilizes its five bilingual employees to interpret when receiving a telephone call from an LEP person who

speaks Spanish, Urdu, Punjabi, or Hindi. In the event that a Spanish or Urdu/Punjabi/Hindi speaking employee is not available or an interpreter in another language is needed, staff uses telephonic interpretation.

- C. Public events: The Office of the City Commissioners attends public information sessions. If Spanish language interpretation needs are anticipated, the Office of the City Commissioners utilizes one of its four Spanish speaking staff members. When Spanish language interpretation is needed but a Spanish speaking staff member is not present, employees can contact one telephonically. When language interpretation is needed in a language other than Spanish or Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, staff uses telephonic interpretation.
- D. Polling Place: Interpretation service is provided for 1,686 divisions across the City on Election Day. This includes 300+ in-person language interpreters. The majority of our in-person Election Day interpreters are Spanish speaking but they also include Chinese, Korean, Russian, Vietnamese, Italian, Polish and other interpreters as well. When in-person interpreters are not present, voters may utilize the language interpretation line by way of cell phones which are provided by the Office of the City Commissioners to every division in the City.

In addition to the interpretation services provided by the Office of the City Commissioners, voters who cannot read or write in English are allowed assistance to vote by a person of the voter's choice other than the Judge of Election, the voter's employer or agent of the employer, or officer or agent of the voter's union.

Language Access Services

A. Interpretation:

- (1) Services Provided: To ensure that the inability to communicate in English does not deprive the public of rights and privileges, our Office will continue to provide interpretation services for members of the public, at no cost for to the resident, for LEP individuals. Services offered include telephonic interpretation and in-person interpretation.
- (2) Protocols: To ensure the inability to communicate in English does not deprive the public of rights and privileges, the Office of the City Commissioners will continue to provide an interpreter, at no cost to the resident, for LEP persons pursuant to the following procedures:
 - a. Non-Polling Place Interpretation Protocol:
When an individual approaches an employee and appears to be asking for help but has difficulty communicating what he or she needs, and/or when a request for an interpreter is made either orally, in writing or by pointing to a Language Identification Guide, the employee shall determine whether

bilingual staff in the office is available who speaks the language being requested.

b. Polling Place Interpretation Protocol*:

When an individual approaches an Election Board and appears to be asking for help but has difficulty communicating; an in-person interpreter may be available. The Office of the City Commissioners assigns approximately 350 Election Day interpreters to various polling places. Most provide Spanish interpretation. Others provide interpretation in Chinese, Korean, Russian, Vietnamese, Italian, Polish, and other interpreters as well. When an in-person interpreter is not available, the Election Board provides the voter with a Language Line Services language identification guide which is displayed on the Election Board table. The voter points to the language being requested and the Election Board contacts an interpreter telephonically.

*Please note: Election Board Officials are either publicly elected or court appointed. The Office of the City Commissioners provides training and resources such as cell-phones to Election Board Officials.

(3) Procedures:

a. Non-Polling Place Interpretation Procedures:

When bilingual department staff is not available, the employee shall contact an interpreter telephonically, the process to do so is outlined below:

Telephonic Interpretation:

The Office of the City Commissioners can get an over-the-phone interpreter by calling the following vendor: Language Line. This service is available 24/7.

To reach an interpreter, call Language Line at XXX-XXX-XXXX and provide the Client ID and access code.

b. Polling Place Interpretation Procedures:

When an in-person bilingual interpreter is not available in the language needed, the Election Board Official contacts an interpreter telephonically through Language Line Services using the cell-phone which the Office of the City Commissioners provides to every Election Board, by following the process below:

Polling Place Telephonic Interpretation Service:

Election Board Officials can get an over-the-phone interpreter by calling the following vendor: Language Line Services at 855-446-1257.

Enter the following on the telephone keypad or provide it to the representative:

6 Digit Client ID Number: 507137

Organization Name: Managing Director's Office; Election Day

Press 1 for Spanish

Press 2 for all other languages (or say the language when requested)

Secure Access Code: (The Secure Access Code will be listed on the Language Line Quick Reference Guide displayed on the Election Board table)

(4) Future Plans:

- a. Feedback on our use of telephonic interpretation service will be gathered.
- b. A procedure for LEP individuals to be provided personal language access cards on Election Day is being explored. The wallet cards used by the City are not compatible with current Election Day procedures. The City's card instructs users to contact 311. The Office of the City Commissioners utilizes a service through Language Line Services for Election Day use.

B. Translation:

(1) Services Provided: The Office of the City Commissioners provides information, many documents, and signs which are already translated into Spanish.

a. Vital Documents:

Voter Registration: Paper voter registration applications are available in English and Spanish at City Hall Room 130, 132, 134, and 142, at the Voter Registration Office at 520 N. Columbus Blvd, 5th Floor, and a number of governmental offices such as libraries and post offices.

Voter registration forms are available for download in the "Registering to Vote" section of the Office of the City Commissioners' website in Spanish, Bengali, Chinese, French, Hindi, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Russian Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

<http://www.philadelphiavotes.com/en/voters/registering-to-vote>

Machine Ballots/Sample Ballots: The official Election Day ballot which is hung on each voting machine contains both English and Spanish text. Prior to Election Day, the Office of the City Commissioners produces Sample Ballots so that voters can look at the layout prior to going to the polls. Voters can access the Sample Ballot for their division in English/Spanish by entering their address in the search field found in the "Where is My Polling Place" section of the website. The instructions and Sample Ballots are translated into Spanish.

Sample Ballots may also be viewed by visiting the County Board of Elections' office at 520 N Delaware Avenue, 6th Floor (215-686-1530).
(<http://www.philadelphiavotes.com/es/component/voterapp/?tmpl=component>)

Provisional Ballots: When an individual appears at a polling place but is not in the official list of registrants in that division, the individual may vote by Provisional Ballot. These ballots are bilingual in English and Spanish. Absentee Ballot Applications, Emergency Absentee Ballot Applications, and Alternative Ballot Applications are available in English and Spanish. These forms may be obtained at the Philadelphia County Board of Elections in City Hall Room 142, by download on the department's website at <http://www.philadelphiavotes.com/es/votantes/absentee-and-alternative-ballots>, or through the mail by request.

Voter Cancellation Forms:

(<http://www.philadelphiavotes.com/es/votantes/como-cancelar-su-registracion>) are available in Spanish on our department's website, at our Voter Registration or City Hall offices, or through the mail by request.

Voter Education Handbooks: Prior to each election, the Office of the City Commissioners produces handbooks which contain vital election and voter registration information. The Handbook is available in English and Spanish. It can be obtained by visiting our Voter Registration or City Hall offices or by download in the "Reports and Data section of the department's website.

(<http://www.philadelphiavotes.com/es/recursos-y-datos/reports-and-publications>)

- b. Translated Signage at the Polling Place: Bilingual (English/Spanish) Sample Ballot; Bilingual (English/Spanish) Ballot on the voting machine; "Notice of Voters' Rights" poster in Spanish; "General Information and Instructions Re: Voting Rights and Responsibilities of Election Officials" poster in Spanish; "Language Interpretation Services for Voters" poster in Spanish; "Information Statement on Access to the Election Process for People with Disabilities in the City of Philadelphia" poster in Spanish; "Plain Spanish Statements" for ballot questions (if applicable); Language Interpretation (Language Line) card with directions on how to access an interpreter in 38 languages.
- c. Website: The Office of the City Commissioners' website PhiladelphiaVotes.com contains important election related information such as important dates, a list of candidates, requirements to run for office, information on becoming an Election Board Official, election results, a list of elected officials with contact information, and a polling place look-up. It is available in English and Spanish. The Spanish version can be accessed by either going to PhiladelphiaVotes.com/es or by clicking on "Español" at the top right corner at PhiladelphiaVotes.com.
(<http://www.philadelphiavotes.com/es>)

- d. **Advertised Election Notices:** Important election information is advertised in Spanish in *Al Día* and *El Sol* prior to every election. The advertisements include: Public Meeting Notice, Ballot Drawing, Notices of Election, Alternative Ballot Notice, Notice of Canvass and Computation, and the list of polling places.

2) Future Plans:

- a. The Office of the City Commissioners will continue to translate vital election and voter registration information and documents into Spanish.
- b. **Access for LEP Voters with Disabilities:** The Office of the City Commissioners is exploring technology to allow LEP individuals with disabilities the ability to hear the text on Sample Ballots in their primary language when accessing it through the Office of the City Commissioners' website.
- c. **Signage for Interpretation Services:** Language Identification Guides will be available on the public counter or posted at each public facing office.

C. Bilingual Staff:

- (1) The Office of the City Commissioners has four staff members who are able to speak Spanish and one staff member who is able to speak Hindi/Punjabi/Urdu. These staff members are able to deliver services directly in their specific language or as an interpreter for other staff members.

(2) Future Plans:

Hiring: The Office of the City Commissioners is committed to continuing to assign Spanish language bilingual staff members to both of its public facing buildings: City Hall and 520 N. Columbus Blvd.

D. Training Staff on Policy, Plan, and Protocols:

(1) Training Protocol:

- a. The Office of the City Commissioners Language Access Plan & Protocol will be available as a hard copy to all current employees and during new employee orientation to new permanent staff hires.
- b. The Office of the City Commissioners' Human Resources Unit will have a current electronic copy available so all staff will be knowledgeable of LEP policies and procedures.
- c. All staff providing assistance to the public, public demonstrations and information seminars, or who receive inbound calls, and all supervisors will

receive LEP training every three years or upon employment and then every three years.

- d. LEP training will include information on the following topics:
 - Legal obligation to provide language assistance;
 - LEP plan and protocols;
 - Identifying and responding appropriately to LEP individuals;
 - Obtaining interpreters (in-person and over-the-phone);
 - Using and working with interpreters (in-person and over-the-phone)
 - Translating procedures;
 - Documenting language requests; and
 - Using or not using bilingual staff as in-house interpreters.
- e. The Office of the City Commissioners will circulate this language access policy and related protocols to all staff within 30 days after adoption. Every three years, the Office of the City Commissioners will circulate the revised policy and protocols to all staff after adoption.
- f. Staff who speak languages other than English and who are willing to assist with interpretation will attend interpreter training. Initially, the Office of the City Commissioners will utilize the training and certification process already in place, provided by the Health Federation of Philadelphia for our Election Day Poll Interpreters. Many of the topics including Interpreter Best Practices, How to Utilize the Language Line Card, the Rights of LEP individuals, Signs of Being LEP, Interpreter Code of Ethics, and Transparency, are essential to providing interpretation regarding all subject matters. In the future, the Office of the City Commissioners will work with OIA to ensure our in-house interpreters receive training developed for their unique roles. This training will take place every three years or upon employment and then every three years.

(2) Future Plans

The Office of the City Commissioners will update its list of staff who speak languages other than English and who are willing to assist with interpretation.

E. Administrative Hearings

(1) Protocol

- a. For all Public Meetings of the County Board of Elections, if a formal request is made for an in-person Spanish interpreter, the Office of the City Commissioners will make a staff member available.
- b. If a request was not made but a Spanish interpreter is needed during the hearing or an interpreter is needed in a different language, the Office of the

City Commissioners will make the Language Identification Guide available so an interpreter may be contacted telephonically.

Notice of Right to Language Access

(1) In addition to outreach events in immigrant communities and collaboration with organizations geared toward providing services to LEP persons, the Office of the City Commissioners will:

- a. Work in collaboration with OIA and other City agencies to inform the public of the availability of the language services provided and how to access them.
- b. Post steps on how to access interpretation services for information purposes and for Election Day interpretation on the official website: www.PhiladelphiaVotes.com. These steps will be provided on the English and Spanish side of the website and will be available in the following languages: English, Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Russian.
- c. Notify LEP individuals of their right to language services via posters which will be developed and displayed in areas of public contact and at Public Meetings. These posters will contain a simple message – such as ‘Free Interpreter services are available. Please ask for assistance.’ – and will be in English and Spanish.

(2) Future Plans:

- a. Notices published in Spanish language papers will provide notice of the availability of language services by directing readers to contact the Office of the City Commissioners for additional information and by accessing full-length instructions on the website.
- b. Research the feasibility and cost associated with providing steps to access to interpretation services for information purposes and for Election Day interpretation in Chinese, Vietnamese, and Russian language publications.

Data Collection

To ensure that language access measures continue to be effective, the Office of the City Commissioners will track and monitor usage of services by LEP individuals and monitor response rate to complaints or suggestions by LEP individuals, community members, and employees regarding language assistance services.

Creating a record of language assistance services will help to inform the Commissioners on whether to make changes to the quantity or type of language assistance services provided.

(1) Annual Reports: The following information will be required to be monitored and collected by departments and will be collected via annual reports by the Office of Immigrant Affairs.

a. Number of LEP Encounters By Language and Type:

- a) Each public facing office will maintain data so the department can tabulate the number of LEP encounters by language and type (in-person, telephonic, website) on a quarterly basis.
- b) The Office of the City Commissioners will report the number of users who visit the Spanish side of the www.PhiladelphiaVotes.com website.
- c) The Office of the City Commissioners will report on the number of Election Day Interpreter callers by language and the number of voters who completed Voter Assistance Forms and needed assistance due to LEP needs.

b. Number of Documents Translated

c. Language Services Expenditures

d. Number of bilingual staff

e. Number of staff trained in Language Access

(2) Annual Report / Evaluation

a. The Office of the City Commissioners will conduct an annual evaluation of its Language Access Plan to determine its overall effectiveness, review the progress of department goals and identify new goals or strategies for serving LEP residents. The Language Access Coordinator will lead the evaluation with the assistance of the Department Administrators and Deputy Commissioners. The evaluation will include the following:

- a) Assessment of the use of telephonic interpretation, in-person interpretations, and translation services;
- b) Assessment of the number and types of language requests during the past year;
- c) Assessment of whether staff members understand the Language Access Plan and procedures, how to carry them out, and whether language assistance resources and arrangements for those resources are up-to-date and accessible;

- d) Assessment of complaint information; and
 - e) Assessment of feedback from LEP individuals and community groups.
- b. Evaluation results and recommended changes will be shared by the Office of the City Commissioners' Language Access Coordinator and incorporated into an annual report which is required to be filed under Philadelphia Home Rule Charter § 8-600. The Language Access Coordinator will also keep records of any language access services provided and will make this information available during the annual review process.

Language Access Complaint Process

- (1) You may file a formal Language Access grievance with the Office of Immigrant Affairs if you believe you have been wrongly denied the benefits of this Language Access Plan.

You must file your complaint within 6 months of the alleged denial. These forms will be available in multiple languages after it is developed by the Office of Immigrant Affairs.

To file a formal complaint, you must fill out a Language Access Grievance Form and submit the form in person, by mail, or email to:

Office of Immigrant Affairs
Orlando Almonte
Language Access Program Manager
Municipal Services Building
1401 JFK Blvd., Suite 1430
Philadelphia, PA 19102
Email: Orlando.Almonte@phila.gov

- (2) Additionally, any person, regardless of immigration status, may submit a formal legal complaint through the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations. To do so, please complete a Public Accommodations Discrimination Intake Form and submit in person or by mail to:

Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations
The Curtis Center
601 Walnut Street, Suite 300 South
Philadelphia, PA 19106

To access the form and for more information, please visit www.phila.gov/humanrelations.

Timeline for Implementation

Provided below is a list of initiatives the Office of the City Commissioners have identified as high priority. Dates are best-guess estimates and are subject to change until each is voted on by the board of Commissioners.

Fully implement Language Access Plan				June 1, 2017
	Description	Start Date	End Date	Responsible Staff
	Distribution of Language Access Plan to staff	9/1/2016	9/11/2016	Human Resources Supervisor / Language Access Coordinator
	Electronic copy of plan available from the Human Resources Unit and Language Coordinator	9/1/2016	9/11/2016	Human Resources Supervisor / Language Access Coordinator
	Availability of the Language Access Plan on the website in English	9/1/2016	9/11/2016	Web Developer / Language Access Coordinator
	Language Identification Guides on counters or posted at public facing offices	9/1/2016	10/30/2016	Administrators / Language Access Coordinator
	Provide directions for accessing an interpreter or information in English and Spanish.	9/1/2016	11/1/2016	Web Developer / Language Access Coordinator

	Bilingual Staff Training through the Health Federation of Philadelphia	9/8/2016	11/8/2016	Human Resources Supervisor / Election Compliance Administrator / Language Access Coordinator
	Explore methods to increase accessibility of Sample Ballots to LEP voters with disabilities	9/1/2016	6/1/2017	Deputy Commissioners
	Provide directions for accessing an interpreter or information in Chinese, Vietnamese, and Russian.	9/1/2016	6/1/2017	Web Developer / Language Access Coordinator
	Posters in English and Spanish of rights of LEP individuals displayed in public areas	9/1/2016	6/1/2017	Administrators / Language Access Coordinator
	Information on language services to be included in current Spanish advertisements in newspapers	9/1/2016	6/1/2017	Election Compliance Administrator / Language Access Coordinator
	Recording method implemented for LEP encounters, languages, type of service, documents translated, language services expenditures	12/1/2016	6/1/2017	Administrators / Language Access Coordinator

	Research creating and providing voters with Election Day specific Language Access Card	9/1/2016	6/1/2017	Language Access Coordinator
	LEP protocol and procedures training for public facing staff and managers	12/16/2016	6/1/2017	Language Access Coordinator / Human Resources Supervisor
	Research feasibility of providing 'steps to access interpretation services' for information purposes and for Election Day interpretation in Chinese, Vietnamese, and Russian language publications.	12/16/2016	6/1/2017	Election Compliance Administrator / Language Access Coordinator

Signature Page

Michelle Mendez

Language Access Coordinator

7 April 2017

Date

[Signature]

Commissioner

4/11/2017

Date

[Signature]

Commissioner

7 APRIL 2017

Date

Leo M. Duley

Commissioner

4-10-17

Date