

Concord Housing Authority

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN (LAP) FOR ADDRESSING LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

A. POLICY STATEMENT

It is the policy of the Concord Housing Authority (CHA) to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to its programs and activities for persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The policy is to ensure that staff will communicate effectively with LEP individuals, and that LEP individuals will have access to important programs and information. CHA is committed to complying with federal requirements in providing free meaningful access to its programs and activities for its LEP clients.

B. WHO IS LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP)

LEP individuals do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited 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 English language skills to communicate basic information (name, address etc.) but may not have sufficient skills to communicate detailed information (e.g., program requirements, policies and procedures) in English.

C. BACKGROUND

- Federal law prohibits discrimination based on national origin. National origin discrimination includes discrimination based on a person's inability to speak, read, write or understand English. Recipients of federal funds must provide meaningful access to LEP persons in federal and federally assisted programs and activities.
- On August 11, 2000, Executive Order 13166, titled, "**Improving Access to Services by Persons with Limited English Proficiency**," was issued. Executive Order 13166 requires federal agencies to assess and address the needs of otherwise eligible persons seeking access to federally conducted programs and activities who, due to LEP cannot fully and equally participate in or benefit from those programs and activities. Section 2 of the Executive Order 13166 directs each federal department or agency "to prepare a plan to improve access to...federally conducted programs and activities by eligible LEP persons...."

D. FRAMEWORK FOR DECIDING WHEN LANGUAGE SERVICES ARE NEEDED

CHA will take the following steps to ensure meaningful access to its programs, services and activities for LEP individuals in a manner that balances the following four factors:

Four-Factor Analysis:

- 1 The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be serviced or likely to be encountered by CHA;
- 2 The frequency with which LEP persons using a particular language come in contact with CHA;
- 3 The nature and importance of the CHA program, activity, or service provided to the person's life; and
- 4 The resources available to CHA and costs associated with different language service options.

E. DEFINITIONS

- Primary Language – The language in which an individual is most effectively able to communicate.
- Interpretation – The act of listening to a communication in one language and orally converting it into another language, while retaining the same meaning. Interpreting is a sophisticated skill needing practice and training, and should not be confused with simple bilingualism. Even the most proficient bilingual individuals may require additional training and instruction prior to serving as interpreters. Qualified interpreters are generally required to have undergone rigorous and specialized training.
- Translation – The replacement of written text from one language into an equivalent written text in another language. Translation also requires special knowledge and skills.
- Bilingual – The ability to speak two languages fluently and to communicate directly and accurately in both English and another language.
- Direct Communication – Monolingual communication in a language other than English between a qualified bilingual employee or other bilingual person and an LEP individual (e.g., Spanish to Spanish).

F. LEP MONITORING AND UPDATING THE LAP

Monitoring and implementation of the Plan will be conducted by the Director of Administration. The Plan will be reviewed annually to determine whether updates are needed. The annual review will assess changes, if any, in:

- Census data;
- Current LEP populations affected or encountered;
- Frequency of encounters with LEP language groups;
- The nature and importance of activities to LEP persons;
- The availability of resources, including technological advances and sources of additional resources, and the costs imposed;
- Whether existing LAP is meeting the needs of LEP persons;
- Whether staff understands the LAP and how to implement it; and
- Whether identified sources for assistance are still available.

G. LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE OPTIONS

CHA will use the “I Speak” language card asking each applicant if they need language assistance. Language cards will be kept as a permanent record in each applicants file. Computerized information will identify applicants requesting services. CHA will make reasonable efforts to provide free language assistance.

The following options are used for providing language services:

I. Oral Interpretation Services

Staff/In-House Services

Quality oral interpretation services will be provided to all LEP persons in some form. Depending on the circumstances, reasonable oral interpretation assistance might be offered through a family member or telephone service line. It is the LEP person’s decision whether to use family members or friends as interpreters. Extra caution will be exercised when the LEP person chooses to use a minor. CHA will ensure that the LEP person’s choice is voluntary, that the LEP person is aware of the possible problems if the preferred interpreter is a minor child, and that the LEP person knows that CHA will provide a competent interpreter at no cost to the LEP person. No adverse action would be taken using a child (anyone under the age of 18) as an interpreter.

Outside Services

When interpretation services are requested, CHA will provide services using a telephone service line as noted above or provide services using qualified interpreters.

II. Written Interpretation Services

Vital Forms and Documents

Using the four-factor analysis, CHA will identify the particular languages most frequently encountered by LEP persons. Vital documents/written materials and most commonly used forms will be translated into the identified languages. The use of “tag lines” on other correspondence will be used to advise recipients to contact CHA if they cannot read the English document.

III. Deciding Which Language Assistance Option to Use

The types of language assistance resources CHA decides to use will depend on the four-factor analysis and may be different in different types of activities. For more rarely-encountered languages, telephonic or contract interpretation may be a preferred option. Contract language assistance vendors will sign a Confidentiality Agreement.

H. STAFF PLANNING

The Language Assistance Plan for staff includes:

- Consideration of language needs and inclusion of second language skills in recruitment, hiring, and promotion plans and criteria.
- Informing new employees of CHA’s duty to offer free language assistance in compliance with Federal requirements.

I. TRAINING

Training is critical so that staff understands how to access language services and so that those staff involved in actually providing the language services are competent to do so. Initial and periodic training will be conducted for staff coming into contact with LEP persons. Training will include:

- An in-depth discussion of the plan;
- How to respond to LEP callers;
- How to respond to written communications from LEP clients;
- How to respond to LEP clients who contact CHA in person;
- How to use the Language Line Service;
- Which outside vendors are available for interpretation at appointments; and
- The location of translated documents.

J. MONITORING

The agency will monitor LEP compliance by:

- Setting forth clear expectations for staff regarding language assistance;
- Seeking feedback on the quality and effectiveness of the language service resources available and utilization by staff; and
- Reviewing programs and the language resources available at least once per year (or as appropriate), and making adjustments as necessary and appropriate to ensure meaningful access and to reflect improved approaches to providing language access.

K. LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE MEASURES AND INTERNAL CONTROLS

The following procedures will be used to provide language assistance:

1. Telephone communication:

- Callers who are limited English proficient often have an English speaking person present when they call.
- Ask that English speaking person to identify the language need of the caller and arrange for translation services at an agreeable time for all parties.

2. Written communication:

- Arrange for translation of the document by a qualified interpreter.

3. Walk-ins and individuals at the front desk that need translation services:

Identify the language service required using the "I Speak" cards. Arrange for translation services at an agreeable time for all parties. A notice to advise LEP clients of their right to an interpreter free of charge will be posted at the Main Office.

For all LEP persons who request services, CHA staff will:

- Contact a translator from the approved list.
- Negotiate an hourly rate for services required.
- Have the translator sign a confidentiality agreement.

- Arrange a date and time for the translation to take place.
- Arrange for payment of services rendered.
- Use the Language Line Services as needed.

L. Title VI Compliance Officer Information

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