



THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT
OF COLUMBIA

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
OFFICE ON **LATINO AFFAIRS**



Language Access Act of 2004
Best Practices Outline

Suggestions for Frontline Centers to create a Multilingual Welcoming Environment

1) What to have at the Front Door:

- ❖ Websites (first point for information) , have an Spanish tab and upload vital documents
- ❖ Welcome sign should be in multiple languages, also show office hours, exit sign in Spanish.
- ❖ Language Access poster placed visually at the entrance (In different languages)
- ❖ Print a poster in Spanish that says you have the right to be served in your own language
- ❖ Identify largest language groups in area and serve accordingly

2) What to have at the Front Desk/ reception area:

- ❖ Make language line directory visible at front desk for front line staff
- ❖ “I speak” cards should be at the front counter in all 6 major languages spoken in DC (Spanish, French, Amharic, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese)
- ❖ Brochures/flyers/ forms should be printed in multiple languages and located near the front desk.
- ❖ If you have transitioned to digital signage, have it play repeatedly on a monitor
- ❖ All new and updated printed materials should be available simultaneously in major languages
- ❖ “Best Practices” Manual should be kept at the front desk
- ❖ All signs should be accessible to LEPs/NEPs
- ❖ Have a directory of professionally trained interpreters and translators for the major languages your site services
- ❖ Have a trained front desk staff member present to aid LEPs/ NEPs in acquiring an interpreter quickly and efficiently

3) Suggestions for successful Interactions with LEP/NEP clients:

- ❖ Have trained, bilingual staff to interact with LEPs/NEPs (as many certify bilingual staff members as possible)
- ❖ Intensive cultural sensitivity training for ALL staff members, this training should include how to be aware of cultural differences in speaking with LEPs/NEPs clients.
- ❖ Have an interpreter present for the entire interaction from hello to goodbye. Also, staff should instruct interpreters to be channel of information and not speak for the clients. If face to face interaction happens, staff and client should face each other and talk to one another and not to the interpreter. Interpreters should stand off to the side.
- ❖ Children should not be used as interpreters. If a client brings his/her own interpreter, then that interpreter should be over the age of 18.

4) Other helpful Tips and Ideas:

- ❖ Do face-to-face bilingual surveys on your site’s performance. Talk to your client pool about what difficulties they faced at your site.
- ❖ Organize community interpreters training, Lunch & Learn or get together meetings and special pay for multilingual employees.

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