



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

*Guide to Developing a
Language Access Plan*

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GUIDE TO DEVELOPING A LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 5 |
| Principles of an Effective Language Access Program | 5 |
| Purpose of This Guide | 6 |
| What is a Language Access Plan? | 6 |
| How This Guide is Organized | 6 |
| Chapter 1: Language Access Needs..... | 6 |
| Chapter 2: Language Access Services | 6 |
| Chapter 3: Training and Orientation..... | 7 |
| Chapter 4: Messaging and Outreach..... | 7 |
| Chapter 5: Monitoring..... | 7 |
| Who Needs Language Services? | 8 |
| Self-Assessment for Developing and Monitoring a Language Access Plan | 8 |
| Designating a Language Access Coordinator or Liaison | 9 |
| Language Access Coordinator | 10 |
| Language Access Liaison..... | 10 |
| Exempt Districts..... | 10 |
| Chapter 1: Language Access Needs..... | 11 |
| How to Identify Who Needs Services..... | 11 |
| Home Language Survey (HLS)..... | 11 |
| Self-Identification..... | 12 |
| Multilingual Population Estimates..... | 12 |
| Points of Contact..... | 12 |
| Reception..... | 12 |
| Phone System..... | 12 |
| Written Communication..... | 13 |
| Level of Interaction..... | 13 |
| Allocation of Resources | 13 |
| Interpretation and Translation Costs..... | 14 |
| Tools and Technology | 14 |
| Chapter 2: Language Access Services | 15 |
| Interpretation Services | 15 |
| Interpreter Testing/Qualifications..... | 17 |
| Translation Services..... | 17 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Translation Process and Resources | 17 |
| Web-based Translation..... | 18 |
| Chapter 3: Training and Orientation..... | 19 |
| Training for All Staff..... | 19 |
| Training for Staff Who Interpret..... | 19 |
| OSPI Interpreter Modules | 20 |
| Glossaries of Educational Terminology | 21 |
| Spanish (PDF)..... | 21 |
| Russian (PDF)..... | 21 |
| Somali (PDF)..... | 21 |
| Vietnamese (PDF)..... | 21 |
| Chapter 4: Messaging and Outreach..... | 22 |
| Language Assistance Notices | 22 |
| Parents’ Rights | 22 |
| “I Speak” Poster | 22 |
| “We Can Help You in Your Language!” Poster | 22 |
| “I Need ASL” Poster..... | 22 |
| Important Document Tagline | 23 |
| Community Engagement | 23 |
| Community-based Organizations..... | 23 |
| Parent Advisory Groups..... | 23 |
| Family Engagement Resources..... | 23 |
| Chapter 5: Monitoring..... | 25 |
| Policy and Procedures..... | 25 |
| Parent or Guardian Feedback..... | 25 |
| Updating a Language Access Program..... | 25 |
| Frequency of Assessing Effectiveness | 26 |
| Assessment Tools..... | 26 |
| OSPI’s Equity and Civil Rights Program Review | 26 |
| Conclusion | 27 |
| Legal Notice | 28 |

INTRODUCTION

Washington welcomes and encourages the presence of diverse cultures and the use of diverse languages and modalities of communication in our state.¹ In Washington schools, at least 266 languages other than English are spoken in our students' homes. Effective language access is essential for fostering meaningful family engagement in education; however, many students' family members have language access barriers. Communication barriers can significantly hinder a family's ability to participate in their child's education, often leaving the parent or guardian without the social capital or understanding of the school systems needed to effectively advocate for their children.² Language access is a key factor in ensuring equity and inclusion by creating a pathway for stronger, more effective two-way communication between families and schools, and cultivating respectful relationships.

Language access is not only the best practice, but also a legal requirement. Federal laws such as [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) (34 C.F.R. Part 100) and [Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#) mandate that schools prevent discrimination by providing effective communication with families. Additionally, Washington Law Against Discrimination [Chapter 49.60 RCW](#), [WAC 162-28-040](#), and Equal Education Opportunity Law, [Chapter 28A.642 RCW: Discrimination Prohibition](#), [Chapter 392-190 WAC](#) underscore the State's commitment to equity in education.

Principles of an Effective Language Access Program

The principles of an effective language access program are a cornerstone of culturally responsive and systemic family engagement. Key principles include:

- Accessibility and Equity
- Accountability and Transparency
- Responsive Culture
- Focus on Relationships³

By developing and implementing a language access program, schools can break down communication barriers, comply with legal requirements, and create a more inclusive and equitable experience where all families can participate meaningfully in their child's education. This guide will provide strategies, tools, and insights to help create a language access plan that prioritizes meaningful two-way communication and cultivates a sense of belonging for every family.

¹ Addressing language access in public schools, ESSHB 1153. (2022).

<https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/House%20Passed%20Legislature/1153-S2.PL.pdf?q=20250116150828>

² *Partners in Education: A dual Capacity-Building framework for Family-School partnerships*. (2013). SEDL, 6.

<https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf>

³ RCW 28A.183.020: *Principles*. (2022). <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.183.020>

Purpose of This Guide

Effective language access is essential for guaranteeing all parents and guardians⁴ can fully participate in their child’s education. A Language Access Plan serves as a crucial tool for ensuring that a Local Educational Agency (LEA) provides “appropriate and competent” language services.⁵ Such a plan also equips LEA staff with guidance on supporting families who require language assistance. This guide outlines the sections of a family-centered Language Access Plan for LEAs to develop, implement, and assess their language access programs to ensure they are providing families with meaningful access to services, activities, and programs for their children.

What is a Language Access Plan?

A Language Access Plan is a document that outlines how LEAs will provide language access services to parents or guardians who communicate in a language other than English or have other communication needs, such as those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and those who are blind or visually impaired. These plans should be customized to the specific language access policy and procedures of individual LEAs but include the following minimum required components: needs assessment, resource allocation, range of language services offered, communication of services to families, staff training, community engagement, and regular feedback and evaluation.⁶

How This Guide is Organized

This guide is organized by the required components of a Language Access Plan, which also aligns with the sections in the [Self-assessment](#) discussed on page 8. Each component is presented as its own chapter.

Chapter 1: Language Access Needs

Outlines how LEAs will identify and address the communication preferences and needs of parents or guardians, including those with disabilities or those who speak a language other than English.

Chapter 2: Language Access Services

Provides information about the types of language and communication services LEAs offer, outlining how these services are accessed and their availability in various settings. It includes how resources are allocated equitably to address gaps, support access, and enable effective engagement across the school community.

⁴ The terms parent/s, guardian/s, family/ies are used in the document to represent any adult caretakers who are legal guardians of a child or children. This includes, for example, biological parents, foster care providers, grandparents, aunts and uncles, siblings, or fictive kin.

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Lhamon, C. E., & Gupta, V. (2015), 38. *Dear Colleague Letter: English Learner students and Limited English Proficient parents*. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>

⁶ RCW 28A.183.040: *Liaison—Policy and Procedures—Implementation—Coordinator*. (2022). <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.183.040>

Chapter 3: Training and Orientation

Describes LEAs plan to train staff in its language access policy and procedures, including specialized sessions to prepare interpreters for educational settings.

Chapter 4: Messaging and Outreach

Description of notices LEAs use to inform families about available language services and identifies opportunities LEAs use to collaborate with community-based organizations or parent advisory groups to foster accessible and inclusive partnerships.

Chapter 5: Monitoring

Describes how LEAs track service-use and plans for regular reviews and updates to its language access policy, procedures, and plan.

Figure 1 shows the required components of a Language Access Plan. The order of the sections can be determined by LEAs.

Figure 1: Required Components of a Language Access Plan



Who Needs Language Services?

This guide focuses on providing language services to the following parent or guardian populations:

- **Limited English Proficient (LEP):** These individuals have limited ability to speak, read, or write in English. They may be fluent in one or several other languages, which they prefer for communication (written, spoken, and/or signed). An LEP individual may request language assistance regardless of their level of skill with English, and it is not the role of LEAs to assess their level of proficiency.
- **Deaf/Hard of Hearing:** Deaf and hard of hearing (HOH) individuals have a wide range of proficiency in communication methods, including spoken or written English, lip reading, American Sign Language, or other signed languages.
- **Blind/Low Vision:** Individuals with limited low/no visual ability require tools and accommodation, such as large or contrasting text, to access information provided in written or visual formats.

Limited English Proficient (LEP)

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) will refer to families who need interpretation as families who communicate in a language other than English. When doing so, it should be taken to refer to the federal requirements for limited English proficient (LEP) individuals.

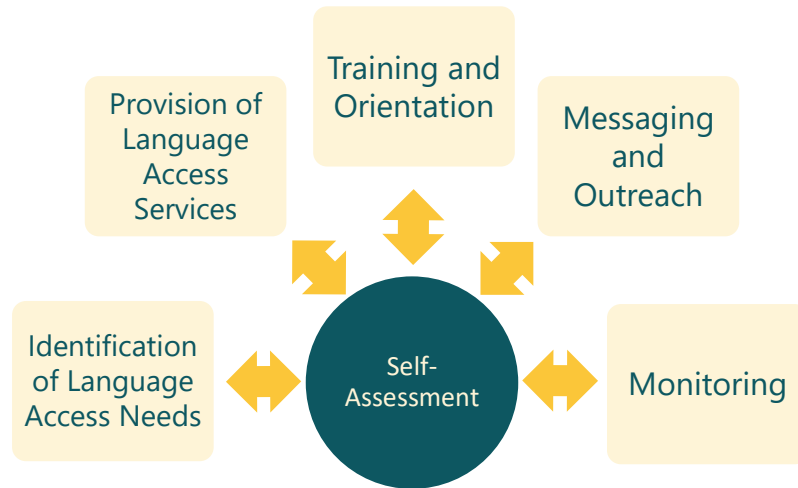
Language access service users are not monolithic; they possess a wide variety of skills and abilities and can be anyone who interacts with LEAs. It is best never to make assumptions and to honor the requests of the individuals.

Self-Assessment for Developing and Monitoring a Language Access Plan

Before creating a Language Access plan, or when reviewing and updating it, LEAs can access the level of language services they should provide by first completing a **Self-Assessment**. As shown in Figure 2, the self-assessment has five sections that align with the chapters in this guide. It is a tool to help LEAs determine the extent to which parents, guardians, and families who need language services encounter its programs and how it can best provide and monitor services to ensure meaningful communicative access.



Figure 2: Five Sections of Self-Assessment



The Self-Assessment should be completed by a group of staff comprised of both administrators and district personnel. Working with a team of individuals who are familiar with the school district and knowledgeable about the importance of language assistance services will be important in preparing for and conducting the Self-Assessment. The team can help identify barriers and be facilitators for offering effective communication to parent and guardian populations.

Having leadership support is also important. LEA leadership can help build a culture that supports effective communication, provide financial and human resources, direct staff training needs, and ensure effective language assistance services are included in policy and procedures.

Designating a Language Access Coordinator or Liaison

LEAs should designate one or more individuals to lead language access support efforts within the district. This coordinator or liaison, whether a single person or a team, will oversee the Language Access Plan, address questions regarding its content, support its implementation, and monitor its effectiveness.⁷

Figure 3: Type of Staff Required to Lead Language Access

| Type of Staff Required | LEAs |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Language Access Coordinator | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater than 75 languages spoken OR greater than 50% Multilingual Learners |
| Language Access Liaison | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater than 1,000 students enrolled OR greater than 10% Multilingual Learners AND Fewer than 75 languages spoken AND fewer than 50% Multilingual Learners |
| Exempt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer than 1,000 students enrolled AND fewer than 10% Multilingual Learners |

⁷ RCW 28A.183.040: *Liaison—Policy and Procedures—Implementation—Coordinator*. (2022). <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.183.040>

Language Access Coordinator

Depending on the student demographics, LEAs may be required to have a **Language Access Coordinator** (see Figure 3) who is responsible for the following duties:

- Facilitating district compliance.
- Assisting with the adoption of Language Access policy and procedures.
- Implementing a Language Access Plan that is culturally responsive and has systemic family engagement.
- Administering a self-assessment to evaluate policy, procedures, and plans periodically.
- Serving as a primary contact for families, community members, school district staff, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and ombuds on issues related to language access.
- Collaborating with building points of contact.
- Receiving training and technical assistance.
- Delivering language access training to staff.

The coordinator's role is a full-time position that may be one-person, but some LEAs may decide to have several staff members sharing the responsibilities of this role. This sample [job description](#) for the role provides LEAs with a suggested position overview, general duties/responsibilities, education/experience, skills/abilities, and required knowledge of a potential candidate.

Language Access Liaison

LEAs may be required to have a **Language Access Liaison** (see Figure 3) depending on their student demographics. That individual or individuals would be responsible for the duties described below:

- Facilitating district compliance.
- Assisting with the adoption of a Language Access policy and procedures.
- Implementing a Language Access Plan that is culturally responsive and has systemic family engagement.
- Administering a self-assessment to evaluate policy, procedures, and plans periodically.

Exempt Districts

Exempt Districts, which are based on student demographics in Figure 3, are not required to have a Liaison or Coordinator, nor are they required to have a Language Access policy or procedures, although both are suggested as best practice. They are required, however, to meet the state and federal requirements for non-discrimination⁸ and to collect language access data.⁹

⁸ Federal laws such as [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) (34 C.F.R. Part 100) and [Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#) mandate that schools prevent discrimination by providing effective communication with families. Additionally, Washington Law Against Discrimination [Chapter 49.60 RCW, WAC 162-28-040](#), and Equal Education Opportunity Law, [Chapter 28A.642 RCW: Discrimination Prohibition, Chapter 392-190 WAC](#) underscore the State's commitment to equity in education.

⁹ [RCW 28A.183.050: Service information collection—Feedback](#). (2022). <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.183.050>

CHAPTER 1: LANGUAGE ACCESS NEEDS

This first section of a Language Access Plan should detail how LEAs will assess the language assistance needs of the communities it serves. To begin, refer to the [Self-Assessment](#) tool mentioned on page 8.

How to Identify Who Needs Services

LEAs should first determine how they will identify parents or guardians who will need language assistance services. There are different ways LEAs can do this:

- Home Language Survey.
- Self-Identified.
- Multilingual Population Estimates.

Home Language Survey (HLS)

When a parent or guardian enrolls a student in a school, they must complete an HLS in the enrollment packet. Question #1 of OSPI’s HLS (see Figure 4) helps to identify parents or guardians who require language services, including signed language interpretation. The survey is available in 39 languages on the [OSPI Website](#).¹⁰

Figure 4: Question 1 from OSPI’s Home Language Survey

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Right to Translation and Interpretation Services</p> <p>All families have the right to information about their child’s education in a language they understand. Please tell us your language preferences so we can provide an interpreter or translated documents, free of charge, when you need them.</p> | <p>1. a) In what language(s) would your family prefer to receive written communication from the school? _____</p> <p>b) Do you need an interpreter for meetings and phone calls (including ASL)?</p> <p>Parent/Guardian Name #1: _____</p> <p>Interpreter Needed? ____ Yes ____ No Language _____</p> <p>Parent/Guardian Name #2: _____</p> <p>Interpreter Needed? ____ Yes ____ No Language _____</p> |
|--|--|

Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS)

LEAs report data related to students in CEDARS. LEA staff may refer to the following CEDARS elements for identification of students’ families who prefer to communicate in a language other than English:

- B18 Student Language Spoken at Home.
- B43 Language(s) Family Prefers to Communicate In.

More details are available in [CEDARS Reporting Guidance](#).

¹⁰ Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (n.d.). Home Language survey. https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-10/homelanguagesurvey_guidance.pdf

Self-Identification

LEAs should consider annually updating parent or guardian’s communication preferences to ensure they have accurate and up-to-date information for providing the necessary language support and services. The HLS should not be used for this purpose, however, because it is only to be filled out once—when a family is enrolling their child in the district. To identify parents or guardians with communication disabilities, LEAs can provide opportunities for families to self-identify during enrollment and throughout the year. How LEAs will do this should be outlined in the plan. LEAs should also include how they will ensure privacy, train staff to recognize and respond to communication needs, and maintain updated records to provide necessary accommodation.

Multilingual Population Estimates

The Office of Financial Management provides another resource for LEAs to identify their [Limited English Proficiency Population Estimates](#) at the county level. While the estimates are not actual counts, they can help with planning needs for providing language access.

Points of Contact

When a parent or guardian interacts with their child’s school (e.g. calling in for an absence, filling out paperwork, picking up their child from the nurse), they will need language services at different points of contact, including, but not limited to, teachers, paraeducators, office staff, and other district personnel.

Other considerations for providing language access services in front desk reception, the phone system, and written communication are explored next. Ensuring accessibility across these touchpoints helps create a more inclusive and welcoming experience for families.

Reception

The Language Access Plan should outline how LEAs will provide language access services to all parents and guardians, including those who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or visually impaired. These services should be available when families check in for meetings, seek directions, or request other types of information. Accessible signage in the most commonly spoken languages within school buildings—along with formats appropriate for those with hearing or visual impairments—can help families navigate reception areas more easily. For example, the “I Speak” poster referenced in [Chapter 4](#) supports the identification of language preferences. Additionally, prominently displayed notices and taglines about the availability of interpreters and other communication supports—such as captioning or Braille materials—can reduce communication barriers and help ensure equitable access for all.

Phone System

The Language Access Plan should include a description of how LEAs phone systems will identify and meet an individual’s language and/or communication needs, whether through use of an automated system (e.g., for English, press 1; for Spanish, 2), or early identification of communication assistance.

Written Communication

Parents or guardians may also need language assistance to read or complete paperwork, such as enrolling their child in the school, signing-in for a parent-teacher conference, or reading educational information about a school's programs or services. The Language Access Plan should specify what types of documents will be translated, the languages offered, and processes to ensure translations and alternative formats, such as Braille or screen-reader-compatible files, are accurate and accessible. See [Chapter 2](#) for guidance on Translation Services.

Level of Interaction

The plan should describe how parents or guardians who communicate in a language other than English, as well as those who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or visually impaired, interact with schools. Figure 6 identifies some of the interactions they may have with LEAs.

Figure 6: Types of Interactions Families May Have with LEAs

| Types | Examples |
|--|---|
| Navigating School or District Websites | Accessing information on school calendars, bell schedules, updates, and resources online. |
| Attending School Events | Participating in open houses, performances, assemblies, or award ceremonies. |
| Receiving and Using Brochures and Flyers | Reviewing brochures and flyers about school programs, events, or policies. |
| Accessing Written Communication | Reading newsletters, announcements, or handbooks in print or digital formats. |
| Participating in Public Meetings or Hearings | Attending board meetings or community forums to stay informed and provide input. |
| Engaging in Outreach Programs | Interacting with programs designed to support families, such as literacy nights or cultural celebrations. |
| Responding to Surveys or Questionnaires | Providing feedback through district surveys or school questionnaires. |
| Utilizing Online Portals or Apps | Logging into portals for grades, assignments, or school questionnaires. |

The way parents or guardians interact with LEAs should determine how to prioritize services. LEAs may identify and track interactions to refine their plan and their quality improvement activities. Refer to the section titled "Identifying Parents or Guardians Who Need Language Assistance" for ways to identify families who need services.

Allocation of Resources

This section should describe the resources allocated for communication services to ensure equitable access for all parents or guardians. [OSPI's Unlocking Federal and State Program Funds to support Student Success](#) is a useful document for LEAs to use to determine how the federal and state funds it receives can be most effectively utilized to support identified activities, including language access.

Interpretation and Translation Costs

Begin by outlining the results of your needs assessment ([See Page 8](#)), which should identify the scope and frequency of events requiring interpretation, translation, or other communication services, including accessible formats such as Braille, large print, and captioning. Specify which documents will be translated and adapted, the target languages, and the technologies or services needed, such as sign language interpretation or assistive listening devices. Include an initial budget projection to address these needs, emphasizing that the budget will be refined annually based on actual usage and updated cost estimates.

Figure 7: General Costs of Language Assistance Services



Prices will vary for language assistance services. Figure 7 shows the varied costs based on 2024 [DES Language Access Contract](#) pricing.

Tools and Technology

The Plan should also identify specific tools and technology—such as interpretation and translation tools, assistive listening devices, screen readers, and Braille materials—that support effective communication for families. LEAs should outline funding, staff training, and technology procurement to ensure these supports are accessible and sustainable.

CHAPTER 2: LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES

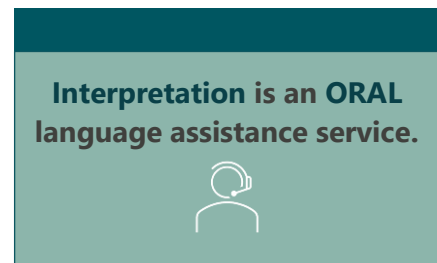
Having Language Access Services in place facilitates effective communication with parents or guardians who speak a language other than English or who have other communication needs. This section of the Language Access Plan should describe how LEAs will provide interpretation, translated materials, and communication services to families. The following definitions for this chapter apply throughout this guide:

- “Language services” refers to a broad spectrum of services used or required to facilitate communication and understanding between speakers of different languages and typically includes interpretation and translation services.
- “Interpretation” means the process of first fully understanding, analyzing, and processing a spoken or signed message and then faithfully rendering it into another spoken or signed language.
- “Interpreter” means a spoken language or sign language interpreter working in a public school to interpret for students’ families, students, and communities in educational settings.
- “Qualified Interpreter” means an interpreter who can interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary.
- “Translation” means the process of communicating the meaning of a written source-language text into an equivalent target language text in such a way that the content of both texts can be considered the same.^{11 12}

Interpretation Services

Interpreters provide verbal interpretation and may use spoken language or sign language. Interpreters may be dedicated dual-role staff interpreters, qualified bilingual staff, or contracted interpreters. The plan should outline the process LEAs use to ensure that spoken and signed language interpreters, including school employees who perform this role, are appropriate and competent to serve in the role of interpreter, including having:

1. Knowledge in both languages of any specialized terms or concepts to be used in communication on the issue.
2. Training in the role of interpreter and translator, the ethics of interpreting and translating, and the need to maintain confidentiality.¹³



¹¹ RCW 28A.183.010: Definitions. (n.d.). <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.183.010>

¹² 4218P - Language Access.doc | Powered by Box. (n.d.).

<https://wssda.app.box.com/s/j1os5tqp50qqfjpmwcewshcutjwfj6lu>

¹³ U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights,

The plan should outline the type of interpretation services for spoken word and other communication services that are offered by LEAs and when they are appropriate as is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Types of Interpretation Services

| On-Site Interpreting | Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) | Phone Interpreting |
|--|--|--|
| Describe its availability and when it is most appropriate for events requiring in-person engagement (e.g., IEP meetings, parent-teacher conferences, disciplinary hearings.) | Define its role in providing immediate access for virtual meetings or when on-site interpreters are unavailable. | Explain its use for quick, on-demand interpretation for brief conversations. |

The plan should include the names of the language access service providers, in-house and contracted language service companies, and include the specific roles and services they provide (e.g., on-site, VRI, or phone-interpreting). It should also address the availability of interpretation services, indicating whether they are on-demand or require scheduling in advance. Any variations in availability based on language or service type should be detailed, ensuring transparency for staff and stakeholders. Additionally, the plan should identify the top languages spoken by the community and prioritize these languages for interpretation services. A list of languages available for each type of service should also be included to ensure clarity.

The process for requesting an interpreter should be detailed step by step, including forms, timelines, and approval processes, along with contact information or links to the designated request platform. The plan should specify who is authorized to request an interpreter, such as teachers, administrators, or office staff.

Often, LEAs use a combination of approaches to provide language access services. The plan may include details on the use of different types of interpreters in different scenarios. It is important to tailor the approach based on both the need and available resources.

Using family members or friends as interpreters is highly discouraged because they are often not adequately equipped to interpret. Linguistic fluency alone does not ensure accuracy, quality, or competency in interpreting. Additionally, relying on children to convey information about their own education or complex situations is inappropriate. Children should never be used to fulfill interpretation or translation requirements for communication between families and school or district staff.

Lhamon, C. E., & Gupta, V. (2015), 38. *Dear Colleague Letter: English Learner students and Limited English Proficient parents.* <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>

Interpreter Testing/Qualifications

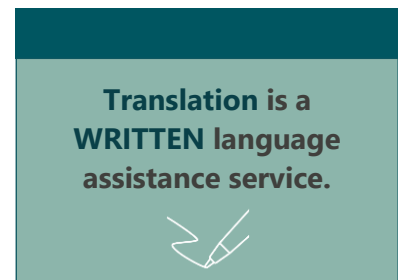
Currently, in Washington, there are no credentialing requirements for interpreters in the educational setting outside the classroom. There are, however, credentialing requirements for sign and spoken language interpreters serving in social service, medical, and court settings. These requirements utilize local and national testing and certifications. Currently, the certification process for interpreters and translators is managed by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) [Language Testing and Certification Program](#). LEAs may choose to use these and other tests to ensure that interpreters are appropriate and competent. However, since the interpreter certification is specifically for social services or medical purposes, it may be a good idea to consider having staff take additional training in interpreting in an educational setting. See [OSPI Interpreter Modules](#) on page 20 for more information.

Translation Services

Translation focuses on written communication. The plan should describe the materials to be translated and the languages to be used, including Braille and large print.

Consider which documents are “vital” documents, or those that contain information that is critical.¹⁴ Vital documents may include those related to:

- Registration and enrollment in school and school programs.
- Language assistance programs.
- Report cards.
- Student discipline policies and procedures.
- Special education and related services and meetings to discuss special education.
- Parent-teacher conferences.
- Grievance procedures and notices of nondiscrimination.
- Parent handbooks.
- Gifted and talented programs.
- Magnet and charter schools.
- Requests for parent permission for student participation in school activities.



Translation Process and Resources

The plan should include the process by which translation requests are to be made. It is also critical to ensure that, once translated, the content is conceptually, linguistically, and culturally accurate. It

¹⁴ “School districts and SEAs have an obligation to ensure meaningful communication with LEP parents in a language they can understand and to adequately notify LEP parents of information about any program, service, or activity of a school district or SEA that is called to the attention of non-LEP parents.” U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Lhamon, C. E., & Gupta, V. (2015), pp. 37–38. *Dear Colleague Letter: English Learner students and Limited English Proficient parents*. <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>

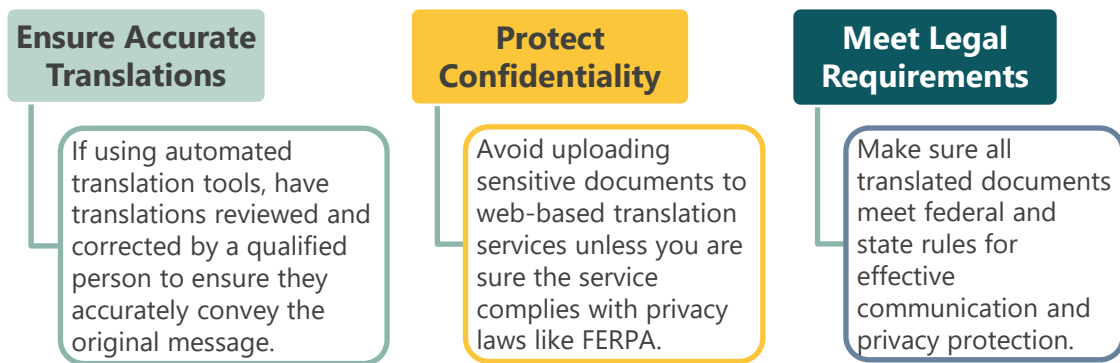
is also helpful to work directly with the communities served to ensure that translations are culturally relevant.

In the case of languages that have few speakers in a specific location or geographical area, LEAs may provide translation services through other means. Other means of translation can include sight-translation, which is the process of a qualified interpreter reading a written document in one language and verbally translating it into another language in real-time. The plan should outline the other means of translation available to LEAs and steps staff should take to ensure parents and guardians have access to the requested information.

Web-based Translation

When LEAs use web-based automated translation software to translate documents, they should ensure accurate translations, protect confidentiality, and meet legal requirements (see Figure 9).¹⁵

Figure 9: Web-based Translation Points to Consider



The Language Access Plan should outline how LEAs will use web-based translations responsibly, ensuring that translations are reviewed for accuracy by a qualified individual and that proper safeguards are in place to protect the confidentiality and privacy of student and family information in compliance with legal requirements.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, Lhamon, C.E., & Gupta, V. (2015), 38. Dear Colleague Letter: English Learner students and Limited English Proficient parents. <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-el-201501.pdf>

CHAPTER 3: TRAINING AND ORIENTATION

Staff training is an important step in providing language assistance services to families. Everyone who interacts with families, including front office staff, security guards, paraprofessionals, educators, and administrators, should have training opportunities.

Training for All Staff

LEAs must include in their Language Access Plan a clear process for how all staff will be able to identify parent's or guardian's language preferences and communication needs in the district's school information system. This ensures that building staff can access this information in advance of any interaction with families.

Besides describing how staff can identify the language assistance needs of a parent or guardian, training should also focus on:

- Effectively and respectfully communicating and interacting with individuals with language assistance needs.
- LEAs policies and procedures related to providing language access services, including the availability of interpretation and translation services.
- Processes for capturing data around parent and guardians' language needs, preferred language, preferred modes of communication, and service feedback.
- Procedures for requesting and working with an interpreter, including when to use an interpreter.
- The type of translated information that is available to families and where it can be found.

Many LEAs should also include in their plan how training about language services will be included in the onboarding process for new hires and how all staff members will periodically receive refresher courses as policies, processes, and resources are improved to meet families' evolving needs.

Training for Staff Who Interpret

Staff members who communicate "in-language" with parents or guardians, serve as spoken language interpreters, or provide American Sign Language interpretation should be assessed for language proficiency and receive regular training.¹⁶ This training should include proper interpretation techniques, ethics, specialized terminology, and other relevant topics. Without regular assessment and training, staff may not be able to provide the language assistance services

¹⁶ "In-Language Communication: direct communication with an individual in that individual's preferred language. Holder, E. & Federal Coordination and Compliance Section Civil Rights Division U.S. Department of Justice. (2011). 8. *Language Access assessment and planning tool for federally conducted and federally assisted programs.*

https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/resources/2011_Language_Access_Assessment_and_Planning_Tool.pdf

necessary to ensure parents or guardians have meaningful access to programs, activities, and services.

OSPI Interpreter Modules

OSPI offers a self-paced training course for interpreters and dual-role bilingual staff working in educational settings outside the classroom. Register for the course at this [OSPI Interpreter Modules link](#). The Canvas course consists of the following 10 intentionally designed modules aimed at enhancing language access for parents, guardians, and families in Washington. The modules are as follows:

1. **Role of the Interpreter.** This module explores the critical role interpreters play in facilitating communication between schools and families and the impact they have on promoting inclusive educational environments and ensuring that all voices are heard and respected.
2. **Dual Role Considerations.** This module addresses the unique challenges and responsibilities faced by interpreters who also serve in other professional capacities.
3. **Ethics and Standards.** This module teaches how to apply national ethics and standards that guide professional interpreting practices to daily work, helping to uphold integrity, confidentiality, and impartiality in all interpreting scenarios.
4. **Cultural Competence and Cultural Awareness.** This module focuses on cultural awareness and cultural competence, including how to recognize and navigate cultural differences.
5. **Modes of Interpreting.** This module covers the different modes of interpreting, including simultaneous, consecutive, and sight interpreting.
6. **Onsite, Remote, and Hybrid Delivery Modalities.** This module navigates the distinct challenges of various interpreting environments.
7. **Notetaking.** This module teaches techniques for capturing key information accurately and efficiently, supporting clear and coherent communication during interpreting sessions.
8. **Terminology Management.** This module shares strategies for building and maintaining a comprehensive glossary of terms relevant to educational interpreting to ensure the right vocabulary.
9. **Specific Processes in Education.** This module provides insights into the unique dynamics of various educational environments, from parent-teacher conferences to special education meetings.
10. **Mental Health for Interpreters.** This module explores strategies for interpreters to recognize and manage mental fatigue, burnout, and vicarious trauma through techniques that will ensure well-being and sustain professional performance over the long term.

The [facilitator handbook](#) includes instructions, discussion prompts, and activities for delivery of the modules in a synchronous or hybrid setting.

Glossaries of Educational Terminology

These glossaries contain commonly used educational phrases and terminology to help interpreters navigate the complex language of education and provide accurate, effective communication. They serve as a valuable resource for bridging linguistic gaps between families, schools, and educators. Please note that OSPI is currently in the process of updating these glossaries and expanding their availability in additional languages.

[Spanish](#) (PDF)

[Russian](#) (PDF)

[Somali](#) (PDF)

[Vietnamese](#) (PDF)

CHAPTER 4: MESSAGING AND OUTREACH

Posting notices about the availability of language assistance and other communication support services is an effective way to ensure that families have meaningful access to essential information about LEA's programs, services, or activities. LEAs should include in their plan how they will post notices in prominent locations, provide them in multiple languages spoken by the community, and make them accessible through various formats, such as online platforms, printed materials, Braille, large print, and verbal or video announcements.

Language Assistance Notices

Examples of a variety of different types of notices are included below. Districts and schools should add their own letterhead, dates, and contact information where applicable.

Parents' Rights

LEAs are required to provide notice to families in their own language that an interpreter will be provided at no cost to them.¹⁷ [Parents' Rights: Interpretation and Translation Services template](#) is available in 21 languages on OSPI's Language Access website for schools to customize.

"I Speak" Poster

The OSPI ["I Speak" poster](#) helps identify what language an individual speaks and to identify what language an interpreter will need to speak to communicate effectively with that individual. "I Speak" posters are also called language identification posters and contain the text "I Speak" in a variety of languages. Displayed in a poster format near a front office or reception area, an individual can point to a language in which they communicate.

"We Can Help You in Your Language!" Poster

The ["We Can Help You in Your Language" poster](#) is available on OSPI's Language Access website and includes the top eight languages spoken in Washington. LEAs may create their own version of the "We Can Help You in Your Language!" poster that contains languages most commonly spoken in their area.

"I Need ASL" Poster

Like the "I Speak" poster, LEAs can provide an "I Need ASL" card or poster that individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing can use to indicate their need for an ASL interpreter. This [Need a Sign Language Interpreter? Poster](#) from Texas's Health and Human Services is an example of this type of notice.

¹⁷ RCW 28A.183.040: *Liaison—Policy and Procedures—Implementation—Coordinator*. (2022). [RCW 28A.183.040: Liaison—Policy and procedures—Implementation—Coordinator](#).

Important Document Tagline

Another way to provide notices is using taglines on printed and electronic materials. Taglines, like the other notices discussed above, are designed to inform parents and guardians about their right to have important documents about their child's education translated into another language at no cost. [OSPI's Important Document Notice Tagline](#) is available in 21 languages.

Community Engagement

LEAs can enhance their language access services by collaborating with both Community-based Organizations (CBOs) and Parent Advisory Groups (PAGs). These partnerships provide critical opportunities to address the unique linguistic, cultural, and accessibility needs of the school community. LEAs can develop inclusive policies, programs, and services by working with CBOs, which are non-profit or government-funded organizations focused on improving the well-being of specific communities, and PAGs, which are composed of volunteer parents and guardians who serve as a bridge between the school district and its families. This collaborative approach ensures equitable access to resources and communication for all families, including those who need language services and those who are Deaf, hard of hearing, blind, or visually impaired.

Community-based Organizations (CBOs)

LEAs may partner with CBOs to enhance their language access services by leveraging the CBO's expertise and connections within the community. CBOs can provide valuable insights into cultural, linguistic, and accessibility needs. By collaborating with CBOs, LEAs can develop tailored communication strategies, create culturally responsive resources, and ensure equitable access to educational programs.

Parent Advisory Groups (PAGs)

LEAs can work collaboratively with PAGs to improve their language access services by incorporating parent and guardian perspectives and feedback into their policies and programs. These groups provide parents and guardians with the opportunity to offer direct input to LEAs about the barriers families face when trying to engage with a school.

Family Engagement Resources

The following are resources that offer practical approaches for encouraging inclusiveness in family engagement practices. They emphasize the importance of culturally responsive practices and strong partnerships between schools, families, and communities.

- [OSPI Multilingual Learner Statewide Strategic Plan](#) includes goals and strategies for engaging ML students and families.
- The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition offers the [English Learner Family Toolkit](#) in three languages (Arabic, Chinese, and Spanish).

- Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) published [Partners in Education: A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships](#). Their publication presents a framework for developing effective partnerships between schools and families.
- The U.S. Department of Justice provided [Effective Communication](#) guidance in 2014 to ensure that people with disabilities receive communication as effectively as people without disabilities.

CHAPTER 5: MONITORING

Finally, Language Access Plans should include a section on monitoring and planning for continuous improvement.

Policy and Procedures

This section should describe the Language Access policies and procedures implemented by LEAs. The policy and procedures should be publicly available to ensure transparency and accountability.

The policies and procedures must include, at a minimum, the key elements from the Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA) revised model Language Access [Policy \(4218\)](#) and [Procedures \(4218P\)](#), updated in August 2022. All school districts with 1,000 or more students, or at least 10 percent multilingual learners, along with the Washington State School for the Blind, the Washington School for the Deaf, and public charter schools, must have adopted policies and procedures based on these updated models.¹⁸ These policies and procedures are also available at no cost on [WSSDA's featured policy webpage](#) and [OSPI's Equity and Civil Rights webpage](#).

Parent or Guardian Feedback

Beginning in the 2023–24 school year, all school districts must provide an opportunity for participants to provide feedback on the effectiveness of interpretation and the provision of language access services.¹⁹ The plan should include how LEAs will gather this feedback from parents or guardians to evaluate the effectiveness of language access services. It should also describe how LEAs will use this feedback to monitor and assess the language access program, making necessary updates to policy, procedures, or plans. [OSPI's Language Access Service Evaluation Templates](#) are available in 38 languages and can be customized as needed.

Updating a Language Access Program

LEAs can review and update their program by:

- Monitoring how they respond to feedback or complaints about language assistance services from parents and guardians who have used the services, staff who provide or rely on them, and community members—such as family advocates or cultural liaisons—who support families in navigating the school system.
- Keeping current on community demographics and needs by engaging local public health authorities, faith communities, refugee resettlement agencies, and other local resources.
- Monitoring utilization rates of the different types of language access services being used.
- Collaborating with other LEAs, using emerging technology, staff development, and other mechanisms for ensuring improved access for families.

¹⁸ RCW 28A.183.040: *Liaison—Policy and Procedures—Implementation—Coordinator*. (2022). <http://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.183.040>

¹⁹ RCW 28A.183.050: *Service information collection—Feedback*. (2022). <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.183.050>

Frequency of Assessing Effectiveness

LEAs should periodically evaluate and monitor their Language Access Plan to ensure that it continues to work effectively. The plan should describe how often the Language Access Plan will be reviewed.

Assessment Tools

The United States Department of Justice's [Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs](#) includes more information about assessments, as well as monitoring, evaluating, and updating language access services. Additionally, this [Language Access Services Assessment and Planning Tool](#) by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) can be used or adapted by LEAs to evaluate and assess the services they provide.

OSPI's Equity and Civil Rights Program Review

OSPI's Equity and Civil Rights (ECR) department provides this guidance for LEAs to ensure they are in compliance with providing language access services: [Guide to 14.4 Language Access \(Interpretation and Translation Services\)](#). The [OSPI's Program Review Checklist](#) for school years 2023-2024 monitors LEAs implementation of selected critical requirements under state or federal law and includes Item 14.4: Language Access (Interpretation and Translation Services).

CONCLUSION

A well-designed and implemented Language Access Plan ensures clear, effective communication and fosters positive relationships between schools and communities. When parents or guardians receive high-quality interpretation and translation services, their satisfaction and engagement increase, and this often leads to improved student engagement as well. Providing trained interpreters and professional language services at every point of contact within the educational system is essential for meaningful, two-way family engagement. An effective Language Access Plan not only supports legal compliance but also helps ensure equitable access to high-quality education for all students in Washington. By working through the sections of this guide, LEAs can create a Language Access Plan that will build strong communications systems, empower families, and promote student success.

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