

The Philadelphia Department of Human Services Policy and Procedural Guide

November 15, 2004

TO: All DHS Staff

FROM: Cheryl Ransom-Garner, Commissioner

RE: Procedure for Effective Communication with Limited English Proficient (LEP) Clients



Effective Immediately

The purpose of this policy and procedural guide is to inform all staff of the services available to assist them in providing effective communication to our Limited English Proficient (LEP) clients and to provide procedural guidelines to aid in accessing these services.

It is the policy and practice of the Department of Human Services that it does not discriminate in any of its policies or provision of services to clients. In keeping with this policy, the Department has made provisions for free language assistance services to LEP individuals to ensure meaningful access to the Department's services. DHS staff must make LEP clients aware of the availability of free interpreter services.

The Department discourages the use of friends, neighbors, and family members, especially children, as interpreters.

A priority order for use of Interpreter services has been established to ensure the proper use of these services and to ensure the Department's goal to provide effective communication for our LEP clients. When the need for interpreter services has been identified, the worker will seek services in the following order:

1. Professional In-Person Interpreters
2. Telephonic Interpretation
3. Bilingual volunteer employees

Bilingual volunteer employees should only be used as a last resort when all other services have been exhausted

Additional services and help aids include:

- Speaker phone devices
- Language Identification Cards
- Quick Reference Step-by-step process guide for accessing Language Line.
- Document Translation
- Sign Language

- 1. Professional In-Person Interpreters** – contract provided professional interpreters who are available by request for in-home and other in-person language services.

Procedures

- *Obtain a Request for Interpreter Services Form, which is located on DHS Central.*
- *Contact Quantum, Inc., which is listed on the reverse of the form.*
- ***Quantum, Inc. must be contacted first for ALL in-person interpreter services, prior to contacting other agencies.*** *Staff should identify themselves as calling from DHS when requesting an interpreter. If Quantum, Inc. is unable to provide the needed service, the worker will then contact one of the other agencies listed.*
- ***The interpreter service provider should be contacted as soon as possible prior to the time of a needed service and immediately when a scheduled service has to be cancelled.*** *There is a 2-hour minimum charge if cancellation notice is not provided at least 24 hours in advance.*
- *Specify the language for which an interpreter is needed.*
- *Fill out the form completely, specifying the date (or dates if recurring) that service is needed and fax form to Quantum (215 627-5570).*
- *Take the completed form to Viola Taylor in the Accounts Payable Unit, 2nd Floor-OPB (3-6894). The agency will bill DHS directly. Requests must be submitted in a timely manner.*
- *Please note each individual agency’s “Notice” requirements and ensure that the guidelines for requesting services are followed.*
- *For any problems accessing in-person interpreter services contact the DHS Global Ambassador through the Commissioner’s office at 683-6000.*

- 2. Telephonic Interpretation (Language Line Services)** – Contracted service which allows for over-the-phone interpretation 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. ***Language Line Services*** interprets from English into more than 150 languages.

Procedures

- *Contact Language Line Services at 1-800-874-9426. An operator will answer and ask for basic information, including a client identification number, personal code and the desired language assistance.*
- *The client **ID# for DHS is 507055**. Your personal code is the last 4 digits of your office telephone number.*
- *After informing the operator of the above information, and the desired language, you will be connected with an appropriate interpreter. Tell the interpreter the purpose of the call and what information needs to be relayed, then call or add the non-English speaker to the line.*
- *At the end of the call, please tell the interpreter “end of call”.*

- 3. Bilingual Volunteer Employees** – DHS staff who are professionally trained to interpret in various languages and are available to help with reading, writing or speaking in these languages (sign language is also available). Interpreter training is open to all bilingual staff.

Procedures

Volunteer Employee Interpreters may only be utilized in the following manner:

- *Called on when a professional interpreter cannot be made available in a timely manner.*
- *When a professional interpreter cannot be made available and the situation requires more than a telephonic interpreter.*
- *To act as an interpreter during meetings, during investigations or other field visits.*
- ***Bilingual staff will only be used after all other interpreter services have been exhausted.***

Volunteer Interpreters:

- *Must agree to attend a 12- hour interpreter training on interpretation skills. Training hours will be provided. If the training is not completed, the person's name will be removed from the list.*
- *Before being put on a Volunteer Interpreter list, staff must have the approval of his/her supervisor in order to act in this capacity.*
- *Volunteer Interpreters must prioritize their job responsibilities and seek supervisory approval before engaging in each interpreter assignment.*
- *Volunteer interpreters may be compensated with overtime or compensatory time for those hours acting as interpreters after their normal duty hours. All volunteer interpreter assignments which will require overtime or comp. time must be previously approved by his/her supervisor on an assignment by assignment basis.*
- *Will continue to be responsible for the performance of their normal duties when accepting any volunteer assignment.*

4. Court and Providers

- *Request for Court Interpreters should be directed to the Law Department. Requests should be made as early as possible in advance of the court hearing. Any subsequent need for an Interpreter is the responsibility of the courts. The court order for each hearing should reflect the clients need for an interpreter.*
- ***Providers are responsible for providing interpreter services for our clients as needed when they are interacting with our client and the DHS SW is not present.***

Additional Services and Help Aids

1. **Speaker phone devices** – Connects to your city cellular phone allowing the worker to access telephonic interpretation services (Language Line) from the client's home and allows all parties to listen to the interaction in their language.

Procedure

- *When at all possible, please contact Marie Cavill in the Transportation Unit (ext 3-5810) several days in advance of a scheduled visit and advise her that you will require a speaker device for your telephone.*
- *When you arrive at the client's home, turn the speaker device "on" (the switch is located at the bottom of the cell phone battery), and conduct your conversation as normal.*

2. **Language Identification Cards** – are available for use in the field as an aid to help identify a client's primary language.

Procedure

- *Each card carries the phrase "Point To Your Language, an Interpreter will be called" printed in the most commonly encountered language.*
- *The client can then point to their language and Language Line can be accessed.*
- *Cards have been distributed throughout the building. If additional cards are needed please request through routine supply requisition procedures.*

3. **Quick Reference Guide Cards** – Post-card sized step-by-step guides for use in the field when Language Line needs to be accessed.

Procedure

- *Quick reference guides have been distributed throughout the department. If additional guides are needed please request through routine supply requisition procedures.*

4. Document Translation – Vital documents translated into the primary languages of DHS clients.

Procedures

- *Selected documents translated into Spanish, Cambodian, Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean will be available in January.*

When translation is needed for a client’s specific document (which is not included in the vital documents) the following procedure should be followed:

- *Contact the DHS Policy and Planning Helpline at 683-4108 between the hours of 8:30am and 5:00pm.*
- *Ask for the assigned representative, June de Vries, Program Analyst, who will assess the need for translation services, and process document requests.*
- *Upon completion of the translation process the assigned representative will obtain the translated documents and forward to the original requesting staff member.*

5. Documenting a Family’s Need For Interpreter Services

- DHS staff will document in the case record the family’s primary language, the family’s need for Interpreter services, and all requests for Interpreter services and translated documents.
- Under current policy, the status determination for CPS and GPS is entered into FACTS database. This process has been modified and requires staff to identify the family’s primary language and whether or not the family requires interpreter services. **Updating status determination cannot proceed without answering these questions.**

Questions regarding this Procedural Transmittal or the policy it reflects may be addressed to:

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Susan Weinberg, Program Supervisor	x4116
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