

California Department of Developmental Services

Language Access Plan

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Department of Developmental Services
Service Access and Equity Division
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Introduction

As part of ensuring meaningful access to programs and services, the California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS) adopted a Language Access Policy on May 22, 2023, which requires each CalHHS department or office's programs to develop a Language Access Plan. The goal of this work is to ensure that CalHHS and its departments and offices provide meaningful access to information, programs, benefits, and services to people with limited English proficiency (LEP) and ensure that language is not a barrier to accessing vital health and social services.

This document is the Department of Developmental Services' (DDS) Language Access Plan (LAP). In developing this LAP, we have reviewed our programs and services for the public, the ways we communicate with members of the public and the people we serve, and how we currently provide information and services in languages other than English.

Department Programs and Services

DDS works to ensure Californians with developmental disabilities have the opportunity to make choices and lead independent, productive lives as members of their communities in the least restrictive setting possible.

Under the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act, DDS is responsible for overseeing the coordination and delivery of services and supports to more than 430,000 Californians with developmental disabilities. The state's service system is designed to meet the needs and choices of individuals at each stage of their lives and, to the extent possible, serve them in their home communities, providing choices that are reflective of lifestyle, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.

The programs and services provided to consumers and their families are through a statewide network of 21 community-based, non-profit agencies known as regional centers (RC). RCs provide assessments, determine eligibility for services, and provide case management services. RCs also develop, purchase, and coordinate the services in each person's Individual Program Plan throughout each stage of their life. Services are person-centered and designed to meet a variety of unique needs and reflect the choices of individuals within their communities. This LAP does not extend to the RCs as they are independently operated. However, DDS issued separate guidance in the [Funding to Improve Language Access and Cultural Competency Directive letter to RCs, dated April 6, 2022](#). Additional information detailing language access services at DDS' State Operated Facilities will be forthcoming.

DDS Direct Services

The Office of Community Appeals and Resolutions helps to resolve consumer/family disputes and appeals.

The Office of Community Operations conducts RC monitoring and compliance activities through Liaison Teams that represent California's various RC catchment areas. They also provide technical assistance to RCs and assist consumers, families, and other community members by responding to inquiries for information and issue resolution.

The Office of Human Rights and Advocacy Services provides DDS' language access services through qualified vendors and reviews language access complaints submitted by consumers or the public.

The Office of the Lanterman Ombudsperson assists RC consumers and their families with navigating and accessing RC services, providing recommendations, and facilitating resolutions to disagreements and complaints.

The Office of Public Affairs interacts and educates stakeholders and the public on DDS programs and services through social media, public meetings, and website updates.

The Office of the Self-Determination Program (SDP) Ombudsperson provides information and assistance, facilitates solution to disagreements and investigates complaints regarding implementation of the program to SDP consumers and their families.

DDS' State Operated Facilities Services provides 24-hour services to increase consumer's independence, improve living skills and facilitate transitions into their home community.

For a full list of DDS programs and services, please visit our website at <https://www.dds.ca.gov/>

Language Access Requirements

In planning for how to provide meaningful language access moving forward, DDS reviewed the following four factors for each of our programs:

1. Number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program or service;
2. Frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with the program;
3. Nature and importance of the program, activity, or service; and
4. Resources available to our department and costs of language services.

We have also considered the specific requirements in the CalHHS Language Access Policy and [Health & Safety Code 1259](#) that apply to State Operated Facilities.

Please note this LAP does not address DDS' process for conducting or reporting on the biennial language survey required under the Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act.

Providing Notice to People with LEP and Identifying Language Preference

This section includes how DDS will notify the public about available language access services. Below is a check list of tools DDS may use to notify the public of these services.

- ☒ Translated taglines on the department website in Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese and Korean
- ☒ Other: Public meeting notices and registration forms

The developmental disabilities system serves Californians with developmental disabilities and their families from diverse language and cultural needs and backgrounds. DDS receives both verbal and written language preferences that consumers and their families identify during the RC eligibility determination process and Individual Program Planning meetings. Additionally, DDS obtains language preference information when in contact with consumers and the public and maintains records of the language preferences identified. DDS uses this data to better understand the diverse language needs in each of the RCs catchment areas. DDS has implemented multiple initiatives to address the language access needs of individuals served by the developmental disabilities system.

Language Services

This section includes the actions DDS will take to provide information and services in languages other than English.

Direct In-Language Communication

Only certified bilingual staff are permitted to communicate with the public in languages other than English. DDS evaluates opportunities to assign bilingual employees to provide information and services in non-English languages on a case-by-case basis to ensure appropriate resources are provided. Factors considered include the availability of bilingual employees to provide assistance in the identified language(s), the type and scope of information to be communicated, the format of the exchange, and whether it may be necessary to leverage other language resources to provide meaningful access to programs, services, and activities. DDS has certified bilingual employees in various

program areas who can provide direct in-language communication for our consumers and the public.

DDS adheres to the California Department of Human Resources' process for bilingual oral fluency examination and certification. Certified bilingual employees must pass a language fluency exam, conducted in accordance with applicable standards, with results that correlate to the Interagency Language Roundtable scale. DDS coordinates testing in listening/speaking and reading/writing modalities and, where appropriate, may require more advanced or specialized testing to evaluate competency in a non-English language.

Interpretation

DDS' qualified vendor provides spoken and sign language interpreting services for consumers, their families and the public who contact DDS. These services are available in approximately 100 non-English languages, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The vendor is available to any employee needing to access these services. DDS and the public can also access sign language services through the 711 National Relay Service.

Translation

DDS is required by state and federal law to provide consumers, families, and the public with translated written materials to ensure meaningful access to DDS' programs and services. DDS programs complete the Title VI four-factor analysis to identify vital documents and the languages to translate vital documents into. Examples of vital documents generally include:

- critical program information
- eligibility criteria
- complaint forms
- appeal/hearing information
- state of emergency information
- consent forms
- program applications
- notices of denial/loss of services
- notices of rights and responsibilities

New programs will be informed of DDS' obligation to translate vital documents and be provided guidance on the process. At a minimum DDS will translate vital documents into Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. DDS may also translate written materials into additional languages. Refer to the attached document at the end of this LAP for a list of DDS' vital documents and the languages they are translated into.

DDS considers essential website content as information that provides consumers and the public with meaningful access to information and services and ensures language is not a barrier to accessing DDS services. This includes important contact information

which is translated by a qualified translation vendor into the top five languages spoken in California pursuant to the CalHHS Policy. Additionally, DDS' website has non-English taglines in Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese, and in an American Sign Language video. These taglines let consumers and the public know how to get free interpretation and translation services.

DDS receives written communication from consumers and the public in languages other than English. DDS' bilingual employees will respond and communicate in that same language. If needed, contractor services will be used to translate the communications.

Training Employees

This section includes information on how DDS' employees are trained to provide language access services to the public.

Training Plan

Public Facing Employees

Language access training will be provided to all current public-facing employees no later than December 1, 2024, and at least annually thereafter. New employees hired into public contact positions will receive language access training within their first three months of employment.

This training will include Agency's language access policy requirements, state and federal obligations and DDS' best practices to ensure meaningful communication with our consumers, their families, and the public. This training will also include how to identify an individual's language preference, how best to communicate in that language, how to connect with an interpreter via telephone and best practices for virtual meetings where interpreters are needed.

Non-Public Facing Employees

This section describes DDS' plan for training employees who are not in public contact positions.

DDS will include language access training for non-public facing employees in the Service Access and Equity's module of DDS' New Employee Orientation. The training will include this LAP, how to identify vital documents, how to request vital document translation, how to connect with an interpreter and how to contact DDS' Language Access Coordinator.

Monitoring and Updating LAP

This section describes how DDS will monitor language access services and update this

LAP at least every two years. This information will ensure that DDS is compliant with the CalHHS Language Access Policy and address processes and procedures being used to deliver meaningful language access to DDS consumers and members of the public.

DDS will create a monitoring process to ensure implementation of details included in this LAP. This process will entail:

- ☒ Identification of training needs
- ☒ Assessing training effectiveness
- ☒ Assessing employee awareness of language access policies and procedures
- ☒ Assessing effectiveness of interpretation and translation services
- ☒ Check-in with community partners and stakeholders
- ☒ Tracking costs of providing language access services
- ☒ Data collection
 - Identifying amount and type of language services (interpreter services, sight translations) available to consumers by program

Every two years, CalHHS will generate and update the list of minimum threshold languages for the translation of vital documents and essential web content. Consistent with CalHHS Policy, DDS' LAP will be reviewed, revised if necessary, and resubmitted to CalHHS every two years. Revisions will address any changes in the Title VI four-factor analysis; whether existing policies and procedures are meeting the needs of LEP individuals; whether employees are sufficiently trained; and whether identified resources for assistance are up-to-date, available, accessible, and viable.

Reevaluations will incorporate, as appropriate, new programs, new legal requirements, additional vital documents, and community input on DDS' LAP.

Complaint Process

Members of the public or recipients of services should direct complaints regarding language access to:

Complaint Process Contact Name: DDS' Bilingual Services Coordinator

Phone: 916-654-1888

Email: OHRAS@dds.ca.gov

Website: [Language Access Complaint Process](#)

Document List

The attachment is a list of DDS' vital documents. Included are the five languages required by the CalHHS Language Access Policy. Also included are any others identified as threshold languages pursuant to analyses under Title VI, Dymally-Alatorre, any program-specific language access laws and DDS' best practices.