

California Department  
of  
Developmental Services  
Language Access Plan

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## Introduction

To provide meaningful access to programs and services, the California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS) adopted a Language Access Policy on May 22, 2023. This Language Access Policy requires each CalHHS department or office to develop a Language Access Plan. The purpose of these plans is to guarantee that CalHHS and its departments and offices provide meaningful access to information, programs, benefits, and services to people with limited English proficiency (LEP), ensuring that language is not a barrier to vital health and social services.

A revised Language Access [Policy](#) was issued on October 17, 2025.

The Department of Developmental Services (the Department) has updated its Language Access Plan (LAP) in compliance with CalHHS Language Access Policy revisions. In developing this LAP, we have reviewed our programs and services, the ways we communicate with members of the public and the people we support, and how we currently provide information and services in languages other than English.

## Department Programs and Services

The Department 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, the Department is responsible for overseeing the coordination and delivery of services and supports to more than 492,000 Californians with developmental disabilities and their families. 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, support them in their home communities, providing choices that are reflective of lifestyle, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.

The programs and services provided to the people we support, and their families, are through a statewide network of 21 community-based, non-profit agencies known as regional centers. Regional centers provide assessments, determine eligibility for services, and provide case management services. Regional centers 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 regional centers as they are independently operated. However, the Department issued separate guidance in the [Funding to Improve Language Access and Cultural Competency Directive letter to RCs, dated April 6, 2022](#).

## The Department's Direct Services

The Office of Community Appeals and Resolutions helps to resolve people we support/family disputes and appeals.

The Office of Community Operations conducts regional center monitoring and compliance activities through Liaison Teams that represent California's various regional center catchment areas. They also provide technical assistance to regional centers and assist people we support, families, and other community members by responding to inquiries for information and issue resolutions.

The Office of Human Rights and Advocacy Services reviews language access complaints submitted by the people we support or the public.

The Office of the Ombudsperson and the Office of the Self-Determination Program (SDP) Ombudsperson provide support in accessing regional center services. Ombudspersons give information and assistance and facilitate solutions to disagreements. The Office of the SDP Ombudsperson helps the people we support, and their families navigate in the SDP.

The Legislation and Public Affairs Division interacts and educates stakeholders and the public on Department programs and services through social media, public meetings, website updates, and provides the Department language access services through qualified vendors.

The Department's State Operated Facilities Services provides 24-hour services to increase the independence of individuals, improve their living skills, and facilitate transitions into their home communities.

For a full list of the Department's 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, the Department uses the Five Factor Analysis<sup>1</sup> review for each of our programs:

1. The Number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by covered entity.
2. The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program or activity.
3. The nature and importance to people's lives of the program or activity provided by the covered entity.

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<sup>1</sup> (2CCR§14101)

4. The significance of communication to an individual's ability to access or be served by the program or activity; and
5. The resources available to the covered entity.

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

## **Providing Notice to People with LEP and Identifying Language Preference**

This section includes how the Department will notify the public about available language access services and how to identify language preferences.

The Department has translated taglines on the bottom of each page of the Department's website in Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese and Korean. These taglines provide contact information for the public on how to receive free help in their own language. Additionally, the Department provides notice of available language access services on public meeting notices and registration forms.

The developmental disabilities system supports Californians with developmental disabilities and their families from diverse language and cultural needs and backgrounds. The Department receives both verbal and written language preferences from the people we support, and their families identify during the regional center eligibility determination process and Individual Program Planning meetings. Additionally, the Department obtains language preference information when in contact with 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 regional centers' s catchment areas. The Department has implemented multiple initiatives to address the language access needs of people we support by the developmental disabilities system.

## **Language Services**

This section includes the actions the Department 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. The Department 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. The Department has certified bilingual employees in various program areas who can provide direct in-language communication for the people we support and the public.

The Department 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. The Department 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

The Department's qualified vendor provides spoken and sign language interpreting services for people we support, their families and the public who contact the Department. 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. The Department and the public can also access sign language services through the 711 National Relay Service.

### Translation

The Department is required by state law to provide the public with translated written materials to ensure meaningful access to the Department's programs and services. The Department's programs complete the Five 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 the Department's obligation to translate vital documents and be provided guidance on the process. At a minimum the Department will translate vital documents into Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese and Korean. The Department may also translate written materials

into additional languages depending on the Five Factor Analysis and the populations the programs have contact with. Refer to the attached document at the end of this LAP for a list of the Department's vital documents and the languages they are translated into.

The Department considers essential website content as information that provides the public with meaningful access to information and services and ensures language is not a barrier to accessing the Department's services. This includes important contact information which is translated by a qualified translation vendor into the top six languages spoken in California pursuant to the CalHHS Language Access Policy. Additionally, the Department's website has non-English taglines in Spanish, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese and Korean, and in an American Sign Language video. These taglines let people know how to get free interpretation and translation services.

When translating vital documents or essential website content, if machine or Artificial Intelligence (AI) translation tools are used during any part of the translation workflow, the resulting translations must be reviewed for accuracy and quality by a qualified human reviewer before finalization or reaching its intended audience.

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

## **Training Employees**

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

### All Employee-Language Access Services Training

The Department determined all employees should have the information and LAP training that public facing employees receive. The Department began training all employees on December 1, 2024, and all employees will receive training at least annually. New employees receive language access training within their first three months of employment.

This training includes CalHHS' Language Access Policy requirements, state and federal obligations and the Department's best practices to ensure meaningful communication with individuals supported, their families, and the public. This training also provides employees with how to identify someone'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. Other topics covered are how to identify vital documents, how to request vital document translation,

and how to contact the Department's Language Access Coordinator.

## Monitoring and Updating LAP

This section describes how the Department will monitor language access services and update this LAP at least every two years. This information will ensure that the Department is compliant with the CalHHS Language Access Policy and addresses processes and procedures being used to deliver meaningful language access to individuals supported, their families, and members of the public.

The Department is in the process (as of January 2026) of hiring dedicated staff to oversee the Department's language and web accessibility efforts. Monitoring and updating the LAP every two years will be part of this position's responsibilities. Centralizing these efforts will enhance the Department's ability to act on feedback from community partners and stakeholders and build more comprehensive data collection processes.

The Department 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 individuals supported by program

## Complaint Process

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

**Office of Human Rights and Advocacy Services**

Phone: 916-654-1888

Email: [OHRAS@dds.ca.gov](mailto:OHRAS@dds.ca.gov)

Website: [Language Access Complaint Process](#)

## State Operated Facilities

A critical part of services provided by the Department are the eight state-operated facilities (SOFs) that provide 24-hour supports to individuals to increase independence, improve living skills, and facilitate transitions into the community. The Department operates one developmental center (Porterville Developmental Center), one community facility (Canyon Springs) and six acute crisis homes (STAR homes) throughout the state.

As Department employees, all SOF staff adhere to the CalHHS Language Access Policy and the Department's LAP. Per Department procedures, outlined above, the Administrative Branch of the State Operated Facilities Division (SOFD), uses the Five Factor Analysis to ensure all SOFs provide meaningful language access and determine what documents are vital for all SOFs. Vital documents are translated into the top six threshold languages as identified by the Department.

While language preferences are identified during the regional center eligibility determination process, an individual and their family's language preference information is also updated prior to SOF admission by court orders and regional center referrals. If, for some reason, new language needs were to arise, each SOF uses "I speak" and "Point-to-Language" or phonetic cards, to help identify what additional language resources are needed.

All SOFs use the Department's vendor for spoken and sign language interpreting services to communicate with individuals living in the facilities and assist with calls from families or the public. When available, at Porterville Developmental Center, on-site certified Spanish bilingual staff, may provide interpretation or translation services if needed. Any language access complaints specific to SOFs follow the Department's procedures.

For LAP training, Canyon Springs is currently not able to access the Department's Learning Management System; however, the Department is making the training available in an alternative format and will be completed Winter 2026. The Administrative Branch of the SOF, in coordination with Department's language access staff, monitors and updates, the SOFs language services in alignment with the Department's LAP.

## Vital Document List

The following is a list of the Department's vital documents. Included are the five languages required by the CalHHS Language Access Policy. Included are any others identified as threshold languages pursuant to analyses under the Five Factor Analysis, Dymally-Alatorre, and any program-specific language access laws and the Department's best practices.