



SF Environment

Our home. Our city. Our planet.

A Department of the City and County of San Francisco

Deborah O. Raphael
Director

DRAFT Departmental Language Access Policy

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Department of the Environment

LANGUAGE ACCESS POLICY

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I. Introduction

The San Francisco Department of the Environment (ENV) recognizes the importance of effective and accurate communication to its customers. It is the policy of the ENV to provide Limited English Proficient (LEP) residents and businesses with timely and effective access to the agency's services and programs, consistent with the access provided to English speakers. All LEP and LEP owned or managed businesses receiving information from the department will be provided free interpretive services by bilingual staff or through the Language Line Interpretation Services (LLIS).

The Language Access Policy is also to be used as a resource for ENV staff on how to serve Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals who we engage with through our programs. Policies and procedures are defined below in order to facilitate meaningful access to the department's programs and services for LEP individuals.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that LEP clients of ENV are able to access, understand, and participate existing and future programs and services. Accessibility and language competency is an essential function to ensure our policies and programs reach all audiences of San Francisco.

III. Agency Description

San Francisco Department of the Environment - The San Francisco Department of the Environment creates visionary policies and innovative programs that promote social equity, protect human health, and lead the way toward a sustainable future. We put our mission into action by mobilizing communities and providing the resources needed to safeguard our homes, our city, and ultimately our planet

Key Language Ordinance and Policy Staff:

a. Director

Deborah Raphael

Deborah.raaphael@sfgov.org

415.355-3701

b. Deputy Director

Jennifer Kass

Jennifer.kass@sfgov.org

Phone

c. Outreach and Communications Manager Language Access Liaison

Donnie Oliveira

Donald.oliveira@sfgov.org

Phone

d. Emergency Spanish Translator

Claudia Molina

Claudia.molina@sfgov.org

Phone

e. Emergency Cantonese Translator

Michael Fung

Michael.fung@sfgov.org

Phone

f. Emergency Filipino Translator

Ruth Santander

Ruth.santander@sfgov.org

Phone

g. Emergency Russian Translator

Alex Dmitriew

Alex.dmitriew@sfgov.org

Phone

IV. General Language Access Needs of Department

The most recent United States Census Bureau's American Community Survey results released in October of 2015 provides the most detailed LEP demographic available for programmatic planning and implementation. An overview of the survey reveals that 22% of the San Francisco population over 5 years old speak English less than 'very well' and that over 46% of residents speak a language other than English at home.

The most recent department communications data reflects a similar LEP need. In 2014, 22% of all businesses served through our programs required translation or interpretation services.

For the complete data breakdown, please see Appendix A and B

V. Language Access Protocols

This section describes procedures to be followed when an LEP individual comes into contact with the Department. ENV has established the following internal protocols for its public interactions.

a. Walk-in

1. The Department of the Environment offices are located in a privately owned and managed high security building which creates a unique challenge for providing immediate, on-demand language access services. Because department staff are not immediately available upon entry to the building, an initial engagement with building security is required and there is no guarantee for multi-lingual conversation. Therefore, department walk-in visitors are encouraged to call the department's main phone line at 415.355.3700 via a personal phone or at the security desk to speak with department staff.
2. Visitors that speak any language that is staffed for translation in the Department will be connected with the appropriate employee (*Appendix C: Roster of Multilingual Employees*) by the front desk to provide language assistance.
3. If no one is available with proficiency in the language required, reception staff can utilize Language Line Solutions for interpretation services at **1-866-874-3972**

b. Telephone

1. When a LEP individual calls the main phone line (415.355.3700), employees will attempt to identify the caller's preferred language by using simple questions that may help to ask about the language spoken by the caller.
2. If and once the preferred language is identified, the LEP caller can be transferred to the appropriate bilingual staff.
3. If there are no available staff who speak the appropriate language, the employee should contact Language Line Solutions
4. Recorded telephonic messages: the Department has a basic telephonic message about office hours and services. Callers are able to listen to this basic message in English, Chinese, Filipino, and Spanish.

c. Email

1. The office may receive emails in languages other than English. Employees who check the general office email account can verify the language of such messages by asking a bilingual colleague for assistance or by copying and pasting some text into Google. Once the language is identified, the message can be sent to the appropriate bilingual employee for translation.
2. If the language cannot be translated by in-house staff, employees should send the message to the Language Access Liaison for further support.

d. Written Communications

1. All new forms of collateral, including flyers, notices, letters, webpages, fact sheets, invitations and advertisements must be vetted by the department Language Access Liaison to determine appropriate level of translation services.
 - i. Information deemed 'vital' which includes, but is not limited to; enforcement communications, notices of health or financial implications or legal mandates must be translated into Spanish, Cantonese and Filipino.
 - ii. Educational, promotional or general awareness collateral will be translated as necessitated by target audience and approved by the department Language Access Liaison
2. In a commitment to serving both LEP residents and businesses and providing easily accessible information, the department has developed unique, multilingual websites to provide culturally competent and thoughtfully translated materials. As new programs come on line, these websites will provide information to the public in clear and concise LEP formats.

e. Tracking Client Data for Language Access Ordinance Compliance Plan

All public-serving Departments are required to submit an annual LAO Compliance Plan based on data collected during the prior fiscal year. The Compliance Plan must include data on the number of LEPs who used the Department's services. ENV will track translation and interpretation data via Language Line reporting, materials translated, website visits and outreach conversation logged.

V. Complaint Process

The Department of the Environment is committed to continually improving translation and interpretation services. If at any time a resident or business is not satisfied with ENV services, they can formally make a complaint via our website and complaint form (Appendix D: Complaint form):

<http://sfenvironment.org/article/directions-and-accessibility-information>

Any complaints related to language access should be forwarded to the Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs within 24 hours. Complaints can be emailed to civic.engagement@sfgov.org, or faxed to (415) 554-4849.

VI. Internal Staff Training

ENV staff will receive regular training on department language policies and procedures at department-wide staff meetings on an annual basis.

VII. Appendices

Appendix A: US Census Bureau 2015 Data

Appendix B: 2015 Department LEP Clientele Data

Appendix C: Roster of Multi-Lingual Employees

Appendix D: LAO Complaint Form

Appendix E: Glossary of Terms