

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General



Draft Language Access Plan

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LEP Policy Statement

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Inspector General (OIG) adheres to the DHS-wide limited English proficiency (LEP) policy set forth in the DHS LEP Plan at www.dhs.gov/crcl-lep. The 2014-2016 DHS OIG Language Access Plan mandates a comprehensive review of our existing communications with members of the public and determines a system within the OIG to fully develop and implement protocols that are responsive to the instruction and intent of Executive Order 13166, *Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency*.

Our LEP policy and system user guidance will be publically posted on the DHS OIG Internet website, the Hotline webpage, and newly-designed and distributed posters that are mandatorily posted in DHS detention facilities. Policy statements and guidance, and instructional memoranda will be communicated to all DHS OIG personnel. Agency-wide participation and awareness will be ensured by direct electronic communications from the appropriate DHS OIG management officials.

DHS OIG will provide meaningful access for members of the public who have limited English proficiency through a periodically updated multilingual website, multilingual DHS OIG Hotline complaint forms and access to interpreter (oral) and translator (written) services. DHS OIG will likewise incorporate LEP planning and review into its annual performance plan. DHS OIG already maintains a roster of multilingual personnel, which will be subject to updating as needed or on an annual basis. The DHS OIG will redesign the posters that are currently used in detention facilities to incorporate LEP priorities. We will also review for improvement the ways in which we communicate to the LEP public in disaster areas.

Responsible Personnel/Offices and Oversight

The Assistant Inspector General for Management and/or a designee will serve as the primary LEP coordinator for the DHS OIG.

The Assistant Inspector General for Management will create and periodically convene a DHS OIG LEP Council that will address ongoing issues and serve as a creation point for new solutions and improvements to existing policy.

The Assistant Inspector General for Management will appoint representative(s) to the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Language Access Working Group.

Component Interactions with the Public

DHS OIG mainly interacts with the persons most likely served by LEP policies through ongoing operations of the OIG Complaint Hotline and our investigative activities. Hotline correspondence often takes the form of letters or web-based complaint submissions from detainees and/or telephone calls. Ongoing investigative operations can involve interviews of

witnesses, complainants, and confidential informants. Potentially, DHS OIG personnel conducting an audit or inspection may interact with the public in need of LEP services.

LEP Communities Served or Encountered

DHS OIG most frequently encounters the following languages: Spanish, Haitian Creole, Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic, Russian, and Korean.

Tracking

DHS OIG will track and periodically assess the number of hotline correspondence and telephone calls received in foreign languages. The data for the OIG LEP languages and populations is made available to OIG personnel on our internal website under policy and guidance.

Prioritization

The DHS OIG expects significant progress in the below areas by the end of FY 2014:

- 1) DHS-OIG website
- 2) DHS-OIG Hotline complaint form
- 3) Hotline Phone Line
- 4) Reports/Summaries of Special Interest
- 5) Disaster Fraud posters
- 6) Description of DHS OIG roles and responsibilities
- 7) OIG policy guidance regarding the identification and handling of LEP persons and the obtaining of interpretation and translation services, if necessary

Language Access Procedures/Protocols

1. Identify LEP Persons and Their Language

The DHS OIG will promptly identify the language and communication needs of the LEP person. In addition, when records are kept of past interactions with individuals or family members, the language used to communicate with the LEP person will be included as part of the record.

2. Obtain a Qualified Interpreter

The LEP Coordinator will develop guidance for:

- (a) Maintaining an accurate and current list showing the name, language, phone number and hours of availability of bilingual staff;
- (b) Contacting the appropriate bilingual staff member to interpret, in the event that an interpreter is needed, if an employee who speaks the needed language is available and is qualified to interpret;
- (c) Obtaining an outside interpreter if a bilingual staff or staff interpreter is not available or does not speak the needed language.

3. Provide Written Translations

The DHS OIG will provide written translations on a case-by-case basis.

4. Provide Notice to LEP Persons

The OIG Offices will inform LEP persons of the availability of language assistance, free of charge, verbally during face-to-face encounters or via telephone, and Hotline posters.

5. Monitor Language Needs and Implementation

On an ongoing basis, the DHS OIG will assess changes in demographics via encounters with LEP individuals, types of services or other needs that may require reevaluation of this policy and its procedures. In addition, the DHS OIG will regularly assess the effectiveness of these procedures, including but not limited to mechanisms for securing interpreter services, equipment used for the delivery of language assistance, complaints filed by LEP persons, etc.

Employee Duties and Development

The DHS OIG will consider implementing a system to evaluate the competency and proficiency of employees, who self-identify their foreign language skills. Additionally, the DHS OIG will evaluate work assignments and position descriptions to determine if some positions require a competency to be bilingual.

Training

The DHS Office of Management's Training & Workforce Development Division will include LEP as part of the training plan for managerial and front line staff as part of its overarching Workforce Training Plan. This plan will include resources on identifying LEP persons, accessing available language services, and working with interpreters. Online training content available through the DHS Language Access Plan website, at <http://www.dhs.gov/department-homeland-security-language-access-plan> and copies of the DHS publication, "[Language Identification Guide for DHS Personnel and Others](#)" ("I Speak") will be added to and made available for all new managerial and front line staff upon entry on duty.

Managerial, supervisory, and front line staff training will occur within three months of entry on duty and every third year thereafter unless otherwise directed by the Assistant Inspector General for Management and/or the DHS OIG LEP Council.

Resources

The Office of Management will provide leadership and oversight of the LEP Council. Select employees from the Offices of Management, Investigations, Emergency Management Oversight, Integrity and Quality Oversight, and Public Affairs will provide support to the LEP project. Resources needed to fund this project will be provided through our Training and Development budget.

Notice to LEP Persons

NOTICE TO PERSONS WHO DO NOT SPEAK ENGLISH (translated in the aforementioned languages)

If you have difficulty understanding English you may request interpreter services. These services are free of charge.

Also, the public website and complaint form will be available in Spanish and in other languages when frequent requests for translation warrant.

Procedures for Quality Control

The DHS OIG will consider seeking recognized certification of employee foreign language proficiency. As OIG contracts for translation and interpreter services, we will include quality control requirements in the contract. Additionally, the Office of Management will consider conducting periodic internal audits of language assistance services.

Outreach to LEP Communities

The DHS-OIG will conduct effective outreach, including: 1) Providing information to the public and to LEP communities regarding the language assistance services available free of charge. Information should be provided in English and in the appropriate other languages using, for example, signage, websites, translated documents, and telephone tree options; 2) Coordinating with other agencies and stakeholders to ensure consistent identification of LEP status, primary language, and similar information; and 3) Exchanging promising practices and challenges with other governmental and non-governmental agencies.

Monitoring and Performance Measures

The DHS OIG LEP Council will be responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and updating the language access program at a minimum of every two years. Examples of monitoring and evaluating the Language Access Plan include:

- Surveying staff on how often they use language assistance services, if they believe there should be changes in the way services are provided or the providers that are used, and if they believe that the language assistance services in place are meeting the needs of the LEP communities in the service area.
- Conducting customer satisfaction surveys of LEP applicants and beneficiaries based on their actual experience of accessing the agency's benefits, programs, information, or services.
- Observing and evaluating agency interactions with LEP individuals.
- Soliciting feedback from community-based organizations and other stakeholders about the agency's effectiveness and performance in ensuring meaningful access for LEP individuals.

- Keeping current on community demographics and needs by engaging school districts, faith communities, refugee resettlement agencies, and other local resources.
- Considering new resources including funding, collaborations with other agencies, human resources, emerging technology, and other mechanisms for ensuring improved access for LEP individuals.
- Monitoring the agency's response rate to complaints or suggestions by LEP individuals, community members, and employees regarding language assistance services provided.