

# LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

Free Library of Philadelphia

*Updated: May 2026*

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Free Library of Philadelphia

# Language Access Plan

## Purpose and Authority

- A. In Cooperation with the Mayor's Office, the Free Library of Philadelphia is committed to compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 2 C.S. § 561 et seq. (Act 172 of 2006), and the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter § 8-600 and § A-200, in ensuring meaningful access to City services and programs for individuals with limited English Proficiency (LEP).
- B. The purpose of this document is to establish an effective plan and protocol for The Free Library of Philadelphia personnel to follow when providing services to, or interacting with, individuals who have limited English proficiency (LEP). Following this plan and protocol is essential to the success of our mission to advance literacy, guide learning, inspire curiosity, and promote diversity and inclusion.

## GENERAL POLICY

- A. The Free Library of Philadelphia recognizes that the population eligible for services includes individuals who are Limited English Proficient (LEP). It is the policy of the Free Library to ensure meaningful access to LEP individuals. The Free Library of Philadelphia adopts the following policy to ensure that LEP individuals can gain equal access to Free Library services and communicate effectively. **This Plan applies to all Free Library departments and neighborhood libraries.**
- B. It is the City's policy to grant access to services or programs to every person, even when the person has a limited ability to speak, understand, read, or write English. The Free Library must take reasonable steps to provide LEP persons with meaningful access to services and programs. The Free Library seeks to reduce barriers by increasing its capacity to deliver services and benefits to people in their primary language.
- C. The Free Library bears the responsibility for providing appropriate services. Staff at the initial point of contact have the duty to identify language needs. The use of informal interpreters such as family, friends of the person seeking service, or other customers is discouraged. Minor children are prohibited from acting as interpreters. No staff may suggest or require that an LEP customer provide an interpreter in order to receive services
- D. The preferred method of serving LEP persons is by:
- 1) Using competent bilingual staff able to provide services directly to the customer in their primary language without the need for an interpreter;
  - 2) Available, trained, competent bilingual staff may be used for in-person or telephone interpreting to support other staff;
  - 3) Using professional telephonic interpreters;
  - 4) Providing materials and services in the person's primary language when available (such as library card applications)

# **LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATOR**

**Nubia Ortega**

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# DIRECT CONTACT WITH LEP INDIVIDUALS

The Free Library of Philadelphia has several points of contact with the public. LEP individuals visit neighborhood libraries, attend library programs, call the library, and interact with library staff at community events throughout the city. In these instances, if there are no bilingual staff available to interpret, staff must use telephonic interpretation.

## A) INTERPRETATION

Interpretation is the immediate oral rendering of the source language into the target language.

### Services Provided

- To ensure that the inability to communicate in English does not deprive the public of rights and privileges, the Free Library will provide an interpreter, at no cost to the resident, for LEP individuals. Services offered include self-identified multilingual staff, telephonic interpretation, and in person interpretation at larger events.

### Protocols

- In individual approaches an employee and appears to be asking for help but has difficulty communicating what he or she needs, and/or when a request for an interpreter is made either orally, in writing, or by pointing to a language poster, the employee shall determine whether a multilingual staff member who speaks the language being requested is available. When staff is not available, the employee shall contact a telephone interpreter service (GLOBO) to provide interpreter services.
- If GLOBO cannot provide interpretation services for the language requested, call United Language Group and follow the instructions given.
- **Guides to telephonic interpretation for both GLOBO and ULG are available for all Free Library staff and can be found via StaffWeb.**

## B) FREE LIBRARY LOCATIONS

|                                          |                                                              |                                     |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Andorra Library                          | Independence Library                                         | Queen Memorial Library              |
| Blanche A. Nixon/<br>Cobbs Creek Library | Joseph E. Coleman<br>Northwest Regional Library              | Ramonita G. de Rodriguez<br>Library |
| Bushrod Library                          | Katharine Drexel Library                                     | Richmond Library                    |
| Bustleton Library                        | Kensington Library                                           | The Rosenbach                       |
| Cecil B. Moore Library                   | Kingsessing Library                                          | Roxborough Library                  |
| Charles L. Durham Library                | Lawncrest Library                                            | South Philadelphia Library          |
| Charles Santore Library                  | Library of Accessible Media<br>for Pennsylvanians (LAMP)     | Tacony Library                      |
| Chestnut Hill Library                    | Lillian Marrero Library                                      | Thomas F. Donatucci, Sr.<br>Library |
| David Cohen Ogontz Library               | Logan Library                                                | Torresdale Library                  |
| Eastwick Library                         | Lovett Memorial Library                                      | Wadsworth Library                   |
| Falls of Schuylkill Library              | Lucien E. Blackwell West<br>Philadelphia Regional<br>Library | Walnut Street West                  |
| Fishtown Community<br>Library            | McPherson Square Library                                     | Welsh Road Library                  |
| Fox Chase Library                        | Nicetown-Tioga Library                                       | West Oak Lane Library               |
| Frankford Library                        | Northeast Regional Library                                   | Whitman Library                     |
| Fumo Family Library                      | Oak Lane Library                                             | Widener Library                     |
| Greater Olney Library                    | Overbrook Park Library                                       | Wynnefield Library                  |
| Haddington Library                       | Parkway Central Library                                      | Wyoming Library                     |
| Haverford Library                        | Paschalville Library                                         |                                     |
| Holmesburg Library                       | Philadelphia City Institute                                  |                                     |

## C) TRANSLATION

- To ensure that the inability to communicate in English does not deprive the public of rights and privileges, our department will continue to provide translations, at no cost, for LEP individuals.
- A number of frequently used documents are translated into many languages. Additional requests should follow the document translation protocol below.
- In person interpretation for library programs, events, and outreach can be requested through the Language Access Plan Coordinator.
- Funds for translation services come from the Free Library's Language Access Plan budget and not individual locations.

### Available Translated Documents

The following vital written documents have been translated into many commonly spoken languages in Philadelphia:

- [Library Card Application](#)
  - available in Arabic, Chinese, Dari, French, Haitian Creole, Khmer, Korean, Pashto, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Tajik, Ukrainian, Uzbek, Vietnamese, and Yoruba
- [Reconsideration of Library Materials](#)
  - available in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese
- [Standards of Acceptable Behavior](#)
  - available in Arabic, Chinese, Dari, French, Haitian Creole, Pashto, Russian, Spanish, Tajik, Ukrainian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese
- [Unattended Children Signs](#)
- [Photo Release Forms](#)
  - available in Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese
- [Photography and Filming Notices](#)
  - available in Arabic, Chinese, Dari, French, Haitian Creole, Pashto, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, Uzbek, and Vietnamese

There are several frequently used Free Library documents available in the Language Access Plan folder on StaffWeb. To order copies for your location, contact your Area

Coordinator. Newly added translations are announced through the monthly Language Access Plan data request email.

#### Protocol for Document Translation

Email your request to [ortegan@freelibrary.org](mailto:ortegan@freelibrary.org). Please allow 3-4 weeks for the process, including translation. Once your requested translation is received, it will be emailed to the requester for next steps, including formatting and printing.

For larger projects that will require coordination with the Graphic Design Studio, such as system-wide flyers or programs, please contact the Language Access Coordinator as early as possible in the process.

#### Protocol for In Person Interpretation Requests

[Information](#) on requesting in-person interpretation is available on StaffWeb. To request this service, complete the [In Person Interpretation Request Form](#). Please give as much lead time as possible; last minute requests are not guaranteed to be honored due to lead time needed for requesting and obtaining a translator. For in person interpretation, staff at the event/location will be the main point of contact, with assistance from the Language Access Plan Coordinator.

## D) STAFF TRAINING

The Free Library's Language Access Plan and Protocols will be provided to all staff at the Free Library, posted on the intranet, and provided as a hard copy to all Free Library staff members at hiring so that all staff will be knowledgeable of Language Access Plan policies and procedures.

To continue meaningful access to library information and services for LEP individuals, all public service staff will receive annual Language Access Plan training upon orientation and regularly through staff meetings. Contact the Language Access Plan Coordinator for more information.

Language Access Plan training will include information on the following topics:

- Legal obligation to provide language assistance;
- Language Access Plan and protocols;
- Identifying and responding appropriately to LEP individuals;
- Obtaining interpreters (over the phone);
- Using and working with interpreters (over the phone);
- Translating procedures;
- Using or not using multilingual staff as in-house interpreters and access to these staff members;
- Reporting data about Language Access Plan usage.

New staff training will be provided on the Free Library's Language Access Plan to provide guidance on how to effectively communicate with LEP library users.

Training is always available through SmarterU:

- [Language Access Philly](#): a short video introduction to Language Access

- [OIA - Language Access 101](#): a longer course focusing on the basics of Language Access, how it can be used in your daily work, and the importance of following this legal City requirement

## E) MULTILINGUAL STAFF

### FREE LIBRARY STAFF - WORLD LANGUAGE SKILLS

The list of identified staff that can deliver services directly in a language other than English or serve as interpreters for other employees can be found on StaffWeb as [FLP Multilingual Staff List](#) in the Language Access Plan folder.

| World Language*    | Number of Staff | World Language*               | Number of Staff |
|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| Arabic             | 1               | Bengali                       | 1               |
| Chinese (Mandarin) | 3               | French                        | 11              |
| German             | 5               | Haitian Creole                | 1               |
| Hebrew             | 1               | Hindi                         | 1               |
| Italian            | 2               | Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia) | 1               |
| Japanese           | 1               | Malayalam                     | 4               |
| Polish             | 1               | Portuguese                    | 2               |
| Russian            | 2               | Spanish                       | 27              |
| Tamil              | 2               | Telugu                        | 2               |
| Vietnamese         | 1               | Yiddish                       | 1               |

*\* list current as of May 2026*

A survey is sent to all Free Library staff annually to update this list. If you'd like to be added outside of the survey, please email the Language Access Plan Coordinator. Staff members and their availability are current as of the date listed on the document; all information is subject to change and is not updated in real time.

## **F) LANGUAGE ACCESS MATERIALS FOR PUBLIC DISPLAY**

Periodic surveys are sent to branch staff to request Language Access signage and materials for their branch.

Materials Available for Request:

- extra large Language Help Here posters
- large Language Help Here posters
- small 8x11 Language Help Here signs
- Language Help Here window clings/stickers
- Telephonic Interpretation Cards
- [“I Speak....” cards](#) for patrons (limited availability)

Contact the Language Access Plan Coordinator for more information about and requests for these materials.

## NOTICE OF THE RIGHT TO LANGUAGE ACCESS

Posters notifying LEP individuals of their right to language access are displayed in areas of public contact at all 54 library locations across Philadelphia in the seven languages most prevalent in the City.

## LANGUAGE ACCESS COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

You may file a formal Language Access grievance with the Office of Immigrant Affairs if you believe you have been wrongly denied the benefits of this Language Access Plan. You must file your complaint within 6 months of the alleged denial. To file a formal complaint, you must fill out a [Language Access Grievance Form](#) and submit the form in person, by mail, or email to:

Office of Immigrant Affairs  
Deise Rodrigues, Language Access Program Manager  
City Hall, Room 162  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
Email: [Deise.Rodrigues@phila.gov](mailto:Deise.Rodrigues@phila.gov)

Additionally, any person, regardless of immigration status, may submit a formal legal complaint through the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations. To do so, please complete a Public Accommodations Discrimination Intake Form and submit it in person or by email to:

Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations  
The Curtis Center  
601 Walnut Street, Suite 300  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

To access the form and for more information, please visit [www.phila.gov/humanrelations](http://www.phila.gov/humanrelations)

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANNUAL REPORT

The following information will be required to be monitored and collected by departments and will be collected via annual reports by the Office of Immigrant Affairs:

- a. Number of hours staff spend providing services in languages other than English
- b. Number of minutes of telephonic interpretation
- c. Number of documents translated
- d. Language Services Expenditures
- e. Number of bilingual staff
- f. Number of staff trained in Language Access/Cultural Competency

Monthly emails are sent to staff to collect Language Access Plan data for that month. Information on services being provided in the branches is dependent on staff completing this request.

When staff members provide interpretation, we will need to collect the following data: name (staff), library, language, and approximate hours per month spent providing services in this language.

| LIBRARY | NAME (staff) | LANGUAGE | HOURS (per month) |
|---------|--------------|----------|-------------------|
|         |              |          |                   |

When the library provides programs in languages other than English, we will need to collect the following data: library, name of program, language provided, and program description.

| LIBRARY | NAME OF PROGRAM | LANGUAGE | PROGRAM DESCRIPTION |
|---------|-----------------|----------|---------------------|
|         |                 |          |                     |

The Free Library will conduct an annual evaluation of its Language Access Plan to determine its overall effectiveness, review the progress of department goals and identify new goals or strategies for serving LEP residents. The evaluation will include the following:

1. Assessment of the use of telephonic interpretation, in-person interpretation, and translation services;
2. Assessment of data collected about the LEP's primary language;
3. Assessment of the number and types of language requests during the past year
4. Assessment of whether staff members understand the Language Access Plan and procedures, how to carry them out, and whether language assistance resources and arrangements for those resources are up-to-date and accessible;
5. Assessment of complaint information;
6. Assessment of soliciting feedback from LEP individuals and community groups.

## SIGNATURE PAGE

*Nubia Ortega*

Language Access Coordinator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. J. P.', is written over a horizontal line.

President and Director