

Philadelphia City Council

Language Access Plan

PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

In coordination with the Mayor's Office, the City Council of Philadelphia is committed to maintaining 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 Councils public meetings, services and programs for individuals with limited English proficiency ("LEP").

This document is an effective plan and protocol for City Council personnel to follow when providing services to or interacting with, individuals who are "LEP" or limited English proficient.

Following this plan and protocol is essential to the success of our mission to facilitate public access to the legislative processes and to provide superior constituent services.

GENERAL PURPOSE

The City recognizes that the entire population is eligible for services, including individuals who are limited in their English proficiency. The following has been adopted to ensure that LEP individuals have equal access to City Council services and have the means to communicate effectively with Councilmembers and staff. This plan applies to all City Council offices and Satellite offices.

It is City Council's policy to grant access to services, programs, or information to all its taxpayers, even when the person has a limited ability to speak, understand, read or write English. City Council intends to take reasonable steps to provide LEP individuals with effective access to services and programs. City Council also seeks to reduce barriers by increasing its capacity to deliver services and information to people in their primary language.

LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATOR

Julia O'Connell
City Council Language Access Coordinator
Chief Clerk of Philadelphia City Council
Room 402 City Hall
julia.oconnell@phila.gov (215) 686-3446

DIRECT CONTACT WITH LEP INDIVIDUALS

City Council has several points of contact with the public including:

Direct communication with LEP constituents

Office walk-in

Scheduled in-person meetings

Phone calls (incoming and outgoing)

Letters and emails

Website and Social Media

City Council Public Functions

City Council Sessions

City Council Hearings

Council sponsored Public Meetings and Events

Mass Communication with Constituents

Community meeting and town halls

Mass mailings

Flyers

Press releases

Language Access Services and Protocols

To ensure that the inability to communicate in English does not deprive the public of rights and privileges, City Council provides four types of Language Access Services:

Telephone Interpreting Service

Written translation of documents

In person interpretation for LEP individuals

In person American Sign Language

Telephone Interpreting Services

When an LEP individual presents in-person or via the telephone, employees shall determine whether a qualified bilingual staff person is available to assist the constituent. If a bilingual staff person is not available, the employee should use the Globo Telephone Interpreting Service flyer to contact a qualified interpreter to facilitate communication with the LEP

constituent. After the call is complete, the staff must notify Julia O'Connell, City Council Language Access Coordinator, that this service has been used.

Video interpretation

Video interpretation can be ordered through City Council's Language Access Coordinator in advance video calls or meetings LEP individual are expected.

In person Interpretation

In person interpretation can be ordered in advance ordered through City Council's Language Access Coordinator for all types of City Council meetings and events at which LEP individuals are expected to attend.

Written Translation of Documents

City Council Offices may request translation for the following documents by placing an order through City Council's Language Access Coordinator:

Legislative Documents

Press releases

Hearing Testimony

Meeting notices or Flyers

American Sign Language

Interpreters may be ordered through City Council's Language Access Coordinator in advance of meetings and events.

Training Staff on Policy and Protocols

Training is provided on the City Council Language Access Plan to provide guidance on how to effectively communicate with LEP individuals. The City Council Language Access Plan is part of City Council's Employee Guide.

City Council distributed the LEP plan and materials to all offices and has a current electronic copy available, so all staff are knowledgeable of LEP policy and procedures.

Every City Council office has been given the Globo telephone interpretation instructional flyer. This service can be utilized if a LEP individual calls or presents in person.

The Chief Clerk provides a staff training course twice a year that includes City Council's language access policy and procedures and materials.

NOTICE TO PUBLIC OF AVAILABILITY OF LEP ASSISTANCE

A. Posters notifying LEP individuals of their right to language services will be developed and displayed in areas of public contact. These posters will contain simple messages such as 'Free Interpreter services are available. Please ask for assistance.' - and will be in English as well as the principal languages spoken in the service area.

B. Department notices and flyers will also provide notice of the availability of language services and simple instructions on how to request language assistance.

C. Taglines will be included in or attached to a document when helpful. Taglines in languages other than English can be used on documents written in English that describe individuals with LEP can obtain translation of the document or an interpreter to read or explain the document.

D. Staff will also have access to the City of Philadelphia Language Access Cards. These are cards with a detachable wallet-size card that say in both English and a second language 'I speak (language). I need assistance in (language)."

DATA COLLECTION AND ANNUAL REPORT

Data Collection

The following information will be monitored and collected and submitted to the Office of Immigrant Affairs:

1. Number of LEP Encounters (By Language)
2. Type of Language Services Provided to LEP Customers
3. Number of Documents Translated
4. Language Services Expenditures

Additionally, Language Access Coordinators will report quarterly on the following:

1. Number of bilingual staff
2. Number of staff trained in Language Access/Cultural Competency

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 e-mail to:

Charlie Elison
Director of the Office of
Immigrant Affairs
Philadelphia City Hall
1400 JFK Blvd
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Charles.Elison@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 contact:

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

For more information, please visit www.phila.gov/humanrelations