

In 2011, the DC Office of Human Rights (OHR) held two important Community Forums that focused on the needs of residents of the District of Columbia with limited or no-English proficiency (LEP/NEP).

About Language Access The DC Office of Human Rights (OHR) leads the citywide implementation of the Language Access Act of 2004 (Act), which was enacted to provide greater access and participation in public services, programs, and activities for LEP/NEP residents of the District of Columbia. The Program was designed to support, guide, and oversee the 34 agencies' compliance with the Act. The Language Access Program works in consultation with a variety of government offices that conduct outreach to communities, as well as with the D.C. Language Access Coalition ("Coalition") — an alliance of diverse community-based organizations written by name into the law — to ensure that LEP/NEP residents are represented, exercising their legal rights, and receiving services in their language. Government partners include the Mayor's constituency offices on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OAPIA), Latino Affairs (OLA) and African Affairs (OAA).

The 2011 Community Forums

OHR, in partnership with the OAA, OAPIA, OLA, and a variety of CBOs, hosted two public language access forums for the LEP/NEP community. The purpose of the language access forums was to facilitate a multisector dialogue between key stakeholders on issues of employment and health & human services. The forums helped to create an appropriate space to discuss the various issues facing the LEP/NEP community when they access these services, as well as generate new ideas, solutions, and recommendations that can be used to affect policy and increase access to services. Live interpretation services was provided for LEP/NEP participants of both forums.

Employment Forum

This forum, free and open to the public, brought together staff from community based organizations, DC Government, and LEP/NEP community members for a facilitated dialogue on issues of employment. The forum consisted of three breakout sessions centered around language rights and employment services, self-employment, and eligibility for employment services and benefits.

Health & Human Services Forum (Health Fair)

This Forum was divided up into 2 parts: dialogue and health fair yet the dialogue's structure and target population were the same as the employment forum. The breakout sessions mainly focused on public benefits eligibility, service delivery to LEP/NEP, and quality of health benefits and allied services. In addition, the forum also involved a health fair where several community members received a variety of health screenings, information about health services, and health education.

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