

# LANGUAGE ACCESS PROGRAM e-NEWSLETTER

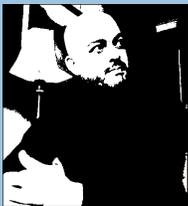
December 2010

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## SPOTLIGHT:

Gabriel Rojo,  
Language Access Program  
Director,  
Office of Human Rights



**Gabriel Rojo** has worked in the District's local communities since 1994 serving in various capacities including mentor, social worker, program manager, and advocate. As director of the Language Access Program, he works to implement the DC Language Access Act of 2004 by holding agencies covered by the law accountable for providing the District's limited and non-English proficient (LEP/NEP) residents with greater access to and participation in their programs, services and activities. Prior to that he worked at the DC Mayor's Office of the Ombudsman for Public Education where he conducted impartial and confidential case-based conflict resolution services for District residents with problems related to the public education system. The local non-profit sector is where the remainder of Gabriel's career has been focused, and in such organizations as the Andromeda Transcultural mental Health Clinic, the Columbia Heights and Shaw Family Support Collaborative, and the Latin American Youth Center. Gabriel holds a masters degree from George Mason University's Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution and Howard University's School of Social Work. He received a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Maryland in College Park after serving three years in the United States Army. Gabriel graduated from Woodrow Wilson SHS in 1988 and was raised in the District after immigrating to the U.S. from Uruguay at the age of five. ■

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I speak

한국어

Español

Français

中文

Tiếng Việt

ភាសាខ្មែរ

## Highlights: FY 10 Accomplishments

After six years of monitoring and enforcing the Language Access Act of 2004 ("Act"), the OHR continues to see steady improvement in the equitable provision of services by District government agencies. The Public Accommodations Testing Project is one area that illustrates this improvement. Inspired by the Mayor's random testing initiative to ensure optimal customer service in all agencies, the OHR launched its own testing program in FY 2009 to ensure agencies provide services effectively to the District's LEP/NEP communities. In FY 2010 sixty three percent (63%) of agencies improved their public accommodations telephone tests scores and 48% of agencies improved their scores on their face-to-face tests. Another initiative that was recently launched is the language access e-learning training module. This online training module was made available through the OHR website ([www.ohr.dc.gov](http://www.ohr.dc.gov)) in FY 2010. By the end of the fiscal year seventy nine percent (79%) of agencies covered by the Act used the online training module to train their staff, equaling a total of 1,209 employees. Community outreach to LEP/NEP communities was also

an area that saw a significant increase having gone up by thirty seven percent (37%) from the previous year. Lastly, in FY 2010 there was a fourteen percent (14%) increase in District-wide spending in translations and interpretation services.

### FY 10 At A Glance

**63%** of agencies improved their Public Accommodations Telephone Test scores in FY10.

**48%** of agencies have shown improvement in their Face-to-Face Customer Service Tests scores in FY10.

**10%** increase in Language Access staff training in FY10.

**37%** increase in outreach activities afforded to LEP/NEP communities in FY10.

## What We're Working On: FY 11 Initiatives

### 1 Reporting

In FY 2010 it became clear, from feedback provided by the agency's language access coordinators, that the agency reporting process needed to improve. After putting together a working group detailed to review and revise the reporting process, which was made up of the following language access coordinators; Sara Bardin (DCOZ), Barbara Burton (OPC), Ivan Torres (DOH), Jaime Holguin (DHS), Amy Vance (DDOT), and Ed Giefer (OP), substantial revisions were made to both the Biennial Language Access Plan (BLAP) form and the language access quarterly report form. The BLAP is the agency's 2-year plan of how they are going to implement the Act and the quarterly report describes periodically the agency's progress on their BLAP's goals. These forms, which are now more user friendly and accurate in describing

agency accountability to the Act, will begin to be used in the first quarter of FY 2011. Lastly, OHR and OCTO have come to an preliminary agreement on a contract to transfer these two forms into the District's Quickbase database system. If this comes to fruition, all agencies will be able to submit their BLAPs and quarterly reports through this online database and the reporting process will be completely paperless.

### 2 Cultural Competency

The creation of a cultural competency curriculum has become a top priority of the language access program. In a city bolstered by multicultural communities made up of immigrants, mainly, from Africa, Asia and Latin America, OHR contends that stronger efforts must be made to provide culturally competent services. This becomes even more pressing given the steady rise of language access complaints since 2005 and the nineteen percent (19%) increase in agency LEP/NEP encounters.

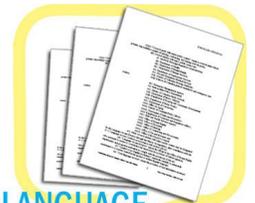
Improving the quality and quantity of cultural competency training could reduce the number of complaints while continuing to reassure the LEP/NEP communities that their rights are protected and needs will be met. OHR is developing a proposal to contract with experts in the field of cultural competency and plans to offer the curriculum to agencies beginning in FY 2012.

### 3 Community Forum & Education Campaign

In FY 2011 OHR will organize two (2) community forums on immigrant and language access rights. We will collaborate with community based organizations, DC government agencies, and ethnic media to provide relevant information to the District's immigrant and LEP/NEP residents. Through our ethnic media collaboration the forums will include a public information component highlighting our language access *Know Your Rights* education campaign and other useful information.

## D.C. Office of Human Rights

ADRIAN M. FENTY, MAYOR



LANGUAGE ACCESS ACT 2004

The Language Access Act is an important piece of civil rights legislation designed to address Limited English Proficient or Non-English Proficient (LEP/NEP) residents' language needs that operate as artificial barriers to full and meaningful participation in public services, programs, and activities. The Council of the District of Columbia identified six languages spoken largely by the District's immigrant community to be covered under the Language Access Act: Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, French,