

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 9, 2022

CONTACT: Maya Vizvary, maya.vizvary@dc.gov

DC Office of Human Rights Releases Language Access Implementation Guide for Grantees/Contractors

*First-of-its-kind language access compliance guide for government funded entities
that serve our Limited English Proficient/Non-English Proficient population.*

(Washington, DC) - This week, the DC Office of Human Rights (OHR) released its first Language Access Implementation Guide to help government-funded entities in the District comply with the DC Language Access Act of 2004 (“the Act”). The Act created the Language Access Program (LAP) at OHR, which works to ensure the District’s Limited English Proficient and Non-English Proficient (LEP/NEP) communities receive equal access to government services through interpretation services and translation of vital documents. Hnin Khaing, the Interim Director of OHR said, “The DC Language Access Act does not apply just to covered entities, like District government agencies. It also covers public-facing entities - such as contractors, grantees, and vendors - who receive funding from the DC Government. And, so today, OHR leaves no stones unturned by helping all parties that serve our LEP/NEP customers to fully comply with the law.”

The District of Columbia is one of the most linguistically diverse cities in our nation, and this guide is meant to assist funded entities in preparing for the possibility of engaging with someone from the LEP/NEP community. This guide details the seven compliance areas, explains the proper way to use and display associated resources, and provides helpful tools and resources. The following compliance requirements are covered in the guide:

1. Collecting data on encounters with LEP/NEP customers and reporting this data to the covered entity on a quarterly basis
2. Providing oral interpretation services via qualified telephonic interpreters, in- person interpreters, or bilingual staff, who can facilitate language communication
3. Translating vital documents according to the same standards required of the covered entity
4. Training personnel on language access compliance requirements
5. Certifying in writing that the Act compliance requirements will be satisfied
6. Displaying multilingual signage, which communicates the availability of interpretation and translations services in all public facing locations
7. Outreach that engages the LEP/NEP communities

“I am thrilled to witness one of the major inclusivity initiatives in DC work to assist government funded grantees/contractors. This first-of-its-kind guide will serve our linguistically diverse residents of the District. This guide explains the implementation of each Language Access Act compliance requisite for funded entities and the proper way to use language access resources” explained Rosa Carrillo, Director of the LAP. Funded entities receive training from the LAP; this Guide can serve as a reference point for the weeks/months beyond the training. The Guide could also be used by Advisory Neighborhood Commissions (ANCs) to inform the funded entities in their jurisdictions of their language access compliance requirements.

For the first time since the Act was passed, a significant number of the language access complaints received in Fiscal Year 2021 were against funded entities – not mainly government agencies as per usual. The LAP is charged with monitoring and evaluating all covered entities on an annual basis. The role of OHR is to ensure compliance but not necessarily implement the action steps; this Guide will help non-compliant funded entities execute the corrective actions given by OHR. Ultimately, this Guide will strengthen funded entities’ ability to implement the best language access practices.

The guide can be found on the [Language Access webpage](#) on the [OHR website](#); a direct link to the guide is [here](#).

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About the District of Columbia Office of Human Rights (OHR)

The District of Columbia Office of Human Rights (OHR) was established to eradicate discrimination, increase equal opportunity and protect human rights for persons who live in or visit the District of Columbia. The agency enforces local and federal human rights laws, including the DC Human Rights Act, by providing a legal process to those who believe they have been discriminated against. OHR also proactively enforces human rights in the District through Director's Inquiries, which allow it to identify and investigate practices and policies that may be discriminatory.

About the Language Access Program at OHR

The mission of the Language Access Program is to eliminate linguistic barriers and to ensure that all District agencies have the tools, capacity, and technical knowledge to serve linguistically diverse customers. The Language Access Program is tasked with monitoring citywide compliance with the DC Language Access Act of 2004 and providing central coordination and technical assistance to covered entities.

About the Language Access Act of 2004

In order to ensure equal access to government services, under the DC Language Access Act of 2004 (the Act), all District of Columbia government agencies, contractors, and grantees that provide services, programs or activities to the public must provide translation of vital documents and interpretation services. The Act outlines requirements for all covered entities and distinguishes between agencies that have major public contact (38) and agencies that have limited public contact (25) but are still required to have a designated language access point of contact.