

Table of Contents

Contents

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN OVERVIEW	4
Mission Statement	4
Vision Statement.....	4
Purpose Statement.....	4
Statutory Authority.....	5
Guidance	5
Requirements for Federal Agencies	5
Steering Committee Oversight.....	6
SUMMARY OF OUR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY SERVICE DELIVERY STRUCTURE	6
Service Delivery	6
Technology & Data Driven Decisions	7
Resource Allocations	7
Interpreter Services.....	7
Bilingual and Multilingual Workforce Member.....	8
Training.....	8
External Partnerships	9
Written Communications and Translation of Documents	9
Public Information Materials	9
Outreach to Customers with Limited English Proficiency.....	10
Oversight and Quality Assurance	10
Performance Measurement and Evaluation	11
Data Analytics and Reports	11
DEFINITION OF TERMS	11
Authorized Translator	11
Bilingual	12



Bilingual Employee	12
Interpretation	12
Interpreter	12
Language Access Line (LAL)	12
Language Access Plan (LAP)	12
Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons	12
Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH).....	12
Multilanguage Gateway	12
Multilanguage Resources	12
Multilingual	12
Multilingual Employee	12
OHDE	12
Qualified Interpreter	13
Qualified Translator	13
Translation.....	13
CONTACT INFORMATION	13



Mission Statement

The Mississippi State Department of Health's (MSDH) mission is to protect and advance the health, well-being, and safety of everyone in Mississippi.

The Office of Health Disparities Elimination (OHDE) is committed to improving social, economic, and environmental conditions to support a culture of optimal health and well-being for all Mississippians.

OHDE values the diversity of our community and strives to foster an inclusive and accessible environment that respects individual differences. This includes ensuring access to quality services and program benefits, regardless of an individual's ability to communicate, understand the information provided, or their cultural background.

Vision Statement

The [Office of Health Disparities Elimination](#) works toward a Mississippi where every individual has fair access and meaningful opportunity to achieve their highest level of health and well-being. We are committed to eliminating barriers rooted in social, economic, cultural, and environmental factors, and to creating a future where all communities can thrive—regardless of race, language, geography, or background.

Purpose Statement

- LEP policy and procedures align with the strategic goals described in the strategic Language Access Plan. These goals are to:
 - Deliver Services Effectively
 - Promote Fair Access to Health Services
 - Improve Quality
 - Reduce Gaps in Health Outcomes
- Identify gaps in health outcomes and their root causes in an effort to promote evidence-based solutions that support a fair and inclusive system—emphasizing training, policy and program development, material review and creation, staff recruitment, translation services, and community involvement.
- Utilizes the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) as general guidelines to provide a uniform framework for developing and monitoring culturally and linguistically appropriate policies, plans, and services.
- Provide education and awareness to our MSDH workforce members and federally funded program providers. This education supports their ability to take all reasonable steps to inform the public about our language accessibility services.



- Ensure that the public has access to our programs and services, regardless of their English proficiency.

Statutory Authority

Section 601 of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, [42 U.S.C. 2000d](#) et. seq. and its implementing regulation at [28 CFR 42](#) (DOJ), [45 CFR Part 80](#) (HHS), and [7 CFR 15](#) (USDA) provide that no person shall be subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin under any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance.

Guidance

[Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency](#) requires each federal agency to examine the services it provides and to develop and implement a system by which limited English proficient (LEP) persons can meaningfully access those services. It also requires federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries.” Select an agency below to view its LEP guidance for recipients:

- [DOJ Guidance to Federal Financial Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons](#) (67 Fed. Reg. 41455, 41455-41472 (June 12, 2002) (“DOJ LEP Guidance”))
- [USDA Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding the Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Persons with Limited English Proficiency](#) (79 Fed. Reg. No. 299, p. 70771-70784, November 28, 2014) (“USDA LEP Guidance”)
- [HHS Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons](#) (68 Fed. Reg. 47311, p. 47311- 47323, January 1, 2004.
- May 2011, United States Department of Justice, [Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs](#)

Requirements for Federal Agencies

- [Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency](#) (August 16, 2000)
- Office of the Attorney General Memorandum to Heads of Federal Agencies, General Counsels, and Civil Rights Heads, “Federal Government’s Renewed Commitment to Language Access Obligations Under Executive Order 13166, (February 17, 2011)
- Office of the Attorney General Memorandum to Heads of Federal Agencies, Heads of



Civil Rights Offices, and General Counsels, Strengthening the Federal Government Commitment to Language Access, in support of Executive Order 13166 (November 21, 2022)

- [Executive Order 14224](#): English was declared the official language of the United States. This designation promotes national unity, supports effective communication, and ensures the free exchange of ideas in a shared language.

Steering Committee Oversight

OHDE LEP Steering Committee conducts language access oversight for the agency. The steering committee ensures that we integrate language access into our regular business processes and maintain our focus on these services. Steering committee leadership meets biannually with representatives from the LEP advocacy community. As needed, we will schedule more meetings around special topics of immediate interest or concern.

SUMMARY OF OUR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY SERVICE DELIVERY STRUCTURE

Service Delivery

The Language Access Department (LAD) under OHDE delivers services through a statewide network of more than 85 offices that include:

- Regional offices
- Local Health Department offices
- Teleservice centers
- Processing centers
- Hearing offices (includes satellite offices, national hearing centers, and national case assistance centers)
- The Office of Appellate Operations
- MSDH Central Office in Jackson, Mississippi

MSDH local offices are the primary points of contact for in person support. MSDH teleservice centers handle telephone calls to the MSDH national 800 number. MSDH workforce members in processing centers primarily handle all services related from WIC to Healthcare.

The LAD provides quality healthcare service in more than 200 languages through our:

- Team of bilingual and multilingual employees
- National telephone interpreter service
- Translation service contracts.

These services are also available through all MSDH offices, which may have their own bilingual and multilingual workforce members. In addition, MSDH can use a state contracted interpreter



service. People with LEP needs can have access to the services in person, by telephone, online, and through video service delivery.

Technology & Data Driven Decisions

OHDE takes advantage of opportunities to identify and record a customer's language preferences. MSDH employees use this data to arrange for services in the person's preferred language. The Language Access Plan (LAP) firmly commits to ensure that the data accurately reflects the customer's language preferences.

To fulfill this commitment, LAP consistently:

- Refers to Public Information Materials
- Reviews MSDH business processes for data collection.
- Emphasizes the importance of language collection accuracy to MSDH workforce members
- Conducts ongoing data reviews to ensure reliability
- Invests resources to address data quality

Resource Allocations

MSDH Language Access Bureau (LAB) carefully considers the needs of people with LEP to determine our budgetary requirements for service delivery. Language service usage is reviewed regularly to help the agency prioritize workloads and to devise language access strategies to meet the needs of people who face barriers to services and benefits because of LEP needs.

- The LAB establishes policies, procedures, and guidelines to identify people with LEP needs.
- The LAB identifies the preferred language, both spoken, sign, and written, of people with LEP.
- MSDH provides guidance to employees on how to use language services to assist customers in our:
 - Program Operations Manual System
 - Hearings, Appeals, and Litigation Law manual
 - Teleservice Center Operating Guide

Interpreter Services

It is not required for people in need of language assistance to provide their own interpreters. MSDH will provide an interpreter free of charge to any person who requests language assistance or whom we believe could benefit from an interpreter. To ensure quality interpretation, MSDH encourages customers to use our free interpreter services.

If a customer with LEP prefers to use their own interpreter, we must determine if the interpreter the customer prefers meets MSDH interpreter requirements. A customer's own interpreter could be a family member, friend, or other third party. MSDH does not permit children under the age of 18 to serve as interpreters. Refer to *Qualified Interpreter* in the *Definition of Terms* Section of this document for requirements. In some instances, we could deem it necessary for customers to



use MSDH interpreters to ensure adequate language access.

Bilingual and Multilingual Workforce Members

MSDH bilingual and multilingual public-contact workforce members help us to provide quality customer service to people with LEP. MSDH identifies the need to hire bilingual or multilingual workforce members based on national trends in demographics and language preferences. It is advertised bilingual-skilled positions to hire individuals with the language skills necessary to communicate with LEP customers often requires more time to conduct business in languages other than English. MSDH policies encourage the use of bilingual and multilingual examiners for examinations.

Training

Workforce members are required to know how to identify customers with LEP, and the procedures to access our language assistance services. We train direct service personnel to ensure the effective implementation of our policies and procedures, which include services to our customers with LEP. Training is available to all MSDH workforce members on:

- LEP Services
- Bridging Gaps Through Communication
- Recognizing and Reducing Unconscious Bias
- Language Access – Title VI; Advancing Patient Center Care Through Compliance
- Health Disparity: Cause, Impact, and Change

This training helps employees deliver effective and efficient language access services to our customers with LEP needs. Our blended approach to training uses multiple communications methods, for example:

- Interactive video training.
- Video-on-demand.
- Various blended learning products (such as combination of video-on-demand, live presentations, other videos, and training aids and guides).

These and other LEP resources are accessible through MSDH's internal Learning Management System (LMS) known as HealthStream. MSDH HealthStream includes training tools to:

- Enhance skills, which includes workforce members language skills
- Contribute to the agency's goal to provide optimal service to customers with LEP

MSDH develops and reviews training materials. It also considers recommendations from advocates to maintain and constantly improve basic language access training. It includes training on how to:

- Identify customers with LEP, take appropriate action, and use available resources to assist them effectively.
- Implement policies and procedures to provide effective language access services to



- people with LEP.
- Identify, assess, and record the language preferences of customers with LEP at the earliest point of contact.
- Access language assistance through multilingual services, which include in-house bilingual interpreters, translators, and telephone interpreter services.
- Secure translations of non-English documents
- Identify language needs in the communities we serve.

The agency maintains a centralized electronic repository which contains all Language Access Policy and procedure references. These resources are available to MSDH workforce members through the agency's intranet.

External Partnerships

When the agency provides financial assistance to an entity that facilitates access to our programs and services, the recipient and any sub-recipient must also be able to facilitate access for people with LEP. The entity must take reasonable steps to ensure that people with LEP have meaningful and fair access to its programs and activities. MSDH programs monitor such entities to ensure adherence to MSDH policies and defined expectations of meaningful and fair language access for the customers.

In addition, MSDH maintains external partnerships with advocates and third-party organizations. These advocates and third parties assist people who face barriers to MSDH services, which include people with LEP. MSDH conducts external outreach to promote the availability of Health Disparity training and Bridging Gaps Through Communication to third-party organizations.

Written Communications and Translation of Documents

To provide communication autonomy and improve administrative efficiency, the LAD contracts with authorized agencies to provide written communications in languages other than English. They also translate evidentiary and other documents received from the public to English. The LAD constantly identifies materials that require translation into the languages our customers with LEP use most frequently, develop a priority order for the translation workload, and allocate resources to translate the materials. The LAD regularly reassesses the materials that require translation to ensure that MSDH maintains current and effective public information materials.

The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) contracts out all translation services to ensure both qualification and liability. The selection of a contracted agency must guarantee that translators are certified by reputable organizations such as the American Translators Association (ATA), the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL), or other relevant bodies. The selected translation agency is responsible for verifying the relevant educational background of translators, such as degrees in translation, linguistics, or specific fields like law, medicine, or engineering. In conclusion, the selection of the translation agency involves evaluating both the qualifications of individual translators and the overall capabilities of the agency.

Public Information Materials



The Language Access Department Multilanguage Gateway includes detailed instructions in several languages to help people access our free interpreter services. This site includes links to publications in languages other than English. These publications and instructions are also available from the [Information Desk - Mississippi State Department of Health \(ms.gov\)](#) home page when you select the:

- “Language” link at the top of the page; or
- Email the language.access@msdh.ms.gov

Information on the MSDH website is currently translated by Google Translate and not by a qualified human translator. The information translated by Google Translate may not be as accurate as the English version and this software may not “see” tables, images that contain text, menu items, and headers as content that requires translation.

When machine translation software is utilized, MSDH encourages its statewide network of more than 85 offices to have a human translator proofread all content containing vital information for accuracy of the translated information. Website content that is translated and checked by qualified human translators is more likely to be accurate and locatable by individuals with LEP.

Google Translate, and artificial intelligence (AI) other emerging technologies for translation or interpretation may create a privacy risk because it harvests information from translated content. For this reason, MSDH does not translate or interpret Personal Identifiable Information or Protected Health Information using such emerging technologies.

Outreach to Customers with Limited English Proficiency

The Office of Health Disparity Eliminations actively (OHDE) collaborates with a wide range of language access advocates and government entities. It gauges the needs of the LEP communities to ensure that MSDH has a broad perspective and identifies the best ways to serve these populations.

The LEP Steering Committee hosts bi-annual meetings with national language advocacy groups. At these meetings, MSDH obtains feedback and perspectives about our language access service delivery. External partners also maintain regular communications with advocates. These meetings and contacts are opportunities for MSDH to learn about the changing needs of our customers with LEP.

OHDE has established cooperative relationships with diverse populations with LEP and their advocates within the nine districts. These relationships also help us to consider whether we need any modifications to our policies and procedures.

Oversight and Quality Assurance

The Office of Health Disparity Eliminations oversight and quality assurance efforts help us monitor the efficiency of our language access services. These efforts include:

- The review of agency directives, procurement, and data quality.



- Customer satisfaction surveys.
- Advocate and customer feedback.

The analysis of the feedback and data helps us enhance our LEP service delivery and training. Each Health Department office takes reasonable steps to ensure that employees and contractors who provide language access services follow the agency policy guidelines.

Performance Measurement and Evaluation

The LEP Steering Committee re-examines priorities and assesses our language access services, policies, and procedures on an annual basis. It also reviews the language access policies periodically to ensure alignment with the Agency Strategic Plan and the current needs of the public. It also conducts constant reviews of the language access services contracts to ensure that contractors provide quality LEP services. In the reviews, it will ensure that the contracts and interagency agreements:

- Contain language that adequately describes our language needs, requirements, and quality expectations.
- Provide a means to assess whether our contractors' delivery of language access services meets our quality standards.
- Provide a means to hold our contractors accountable to meet our quality standards.

This framework allows MSDH to respond quickly to any issues that could arise about language access services, policies, and procedures.

Data Analytics and Reports

The LEP Steering Committee routinely reviews policies and business processes to ensure that these documents remain current. This includes monitoring trends or areas that could benefit from improvement, more policies, or resources. The Language Access Department monitor:

- Frequently requested languages.
- Feedback from employees.
- Customer surveys.
- Customer complaints.

Data reports are part of the Office of Health Disparity Eliminations transparency (OHDE) efforts. The OHDE continues to expand these data transparency efforts and publishes yearly and quarterly data for spoken language preferences. This data is posted on the MSDH website.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Authorized Qualified Translator — A Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) workforce member or contractor who meets all of the criteria below:

- Reads, writes, and demonstrates fluency in both English and another language.



- Has demonstrated competence to translate written text from one language to another.
- Has received authorization from their Contracted Agency to perform this function.

Bilingual — Ability to read, write, speak, and understand English and one other language fluently.

Bilingual Employee — A MSDH workforce member who reads, writes, speaks, and understands English and another language fluently. In addition, their Health Department office authorizes them to provide language support, but not interpretation services unless deemed qualified to do so.

Interpretation — When a person listens to a communication in one language and orally converts it to another language, while keeping the same meaning.

Interpreter — A person who speaks English and another language fluently and facilitates communication between two people. They facilitate communication between the person who needs language assistance and the Health Department representative, who is not proficient in the person's preferred language. Other languages include sign language.

Language Access Line (LAL) – A contracted agency-wide service that provides interpreter services by phone in more than 200 languages and dialects interpreters. This service can be accessed by phone, iPad, or computer to accommodate the patient's needs.

Language Access Plan (LAP) – Document that spells out how MSDH provide services to individuals who are non-English speaking or have limited English proficiency.

Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons — Persons with limited or no ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

MSDH — The Mississippi State Department of Health

Multilanguage Gateway — The Agency's public internet site with information in multiple languages about MSDH programs and services.

Multilanguage Resources — The Agency's internal intranet site for workforce member who serve customers with limited English proficiency. This site is only available to all MSDH employees.

Multilingual — Ability to read, write, speak, and understand English and two or more languages.

Multilingual Employee — A MSDH workforce member who reads, writes, speaks, and understands fluently English, and at least two other languages fluently. In addition, their Health Department office authorizes them to provide language support, but not interpretation services unless deemed qualified to do so.

OHDE — The Office of Health Disparity Elimination.



Qualified Interpreter — An authorized MSDH workforce member or any other individual whom MSDH determined meets the below criteria.

- This person reads, speaks, understands, and demonstrates fluency in both English and another language.
- Demonstrates familiarity with basic medical terminology.
- Agrees to comply with MSDH requirements about confidentiality and disclosure of information.
- Has no personal stake in the outcome of the patient that would create a conflict of interest.
- Agrees to provide an accurate interpretation for both MSDH questions and the customers responses.
- Does not assume or infer facts or dates that the customer does not provide.
- Is over the age of 18
- Has a high school diploma or equivalent
- Has attended a 40-hour Interpreter training

Qualified Translator - An in-house or contracted translator who has been professionally trained and/or demonstrated competence to translate through national certification or comparable testing and is authorized to do so by contract with or approval by the MSDH. Qualified translators must also demonstrate knowledge of professional standards, and adherence to the corresponding professional code of ethics, as well as familiarity with the required MSDH terminology.

Translation — Conversion of written text from one language to another that maintains the same meaning.

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have feedback or concerns about our language access services, you can email us at Language.Access@msdh.ms.gov . Otherwise, you can write to the following address:

Office of Health Disparity Eliminations
Attention: Language Access Department
P O Box 1700
Jackson, MS. 39216

