

# Supreme Court of Texas Language Access Plan

## I. Legal Basis and Purpose

This document serves as the plan for the Supreme Court of Texas (“the Court”) to provide to persons with limited English proficiency (“LEP”) services that are in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d *et seq.*; 45 C.F.R. § 80.1 *et seq.*; and 28 C.F.R. § 42.101–42.112). The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and reasonable language assistance to LEP persons who have contact with the Court.

This LEP plan was developed to ensure meaningful access to the Court’s services for persons with limited English proficiency. Access services for persons with hearing loss are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act rather than Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and therefore will not be addressed in this plan.

## II. Needs Assessment

Public hearings before the Court are at the highest appellate level in the State of Texas, and they tend to involve oral arguments among attorneys and judges. To date, the need for LEP services has been quite limited.

Nonetheless, the Court will make every effort to provide services to persons with LEP. The following list shows the top foreign languages that are most frequently used in Texas, from current U.S. Census Bureau statistics.<sup>1</sup>

1. Spanish
2. Vietnamese
3. Chinese
4. Korean

## III. Language Assistance Resources

The Court has designated its Clerk as the primary point of contact for all LEP services. All staff will be trained to direct anyone inquiring about LEP services to the Clerk. The Court is taking reasonable steps to ensure that LEP individuals have meaningful access to all services, though the Court has generally received very limited requests for assistance in languages other than English. LEP individuals may contact the Court’s personnel via the phone, the Clerk’s office reception counter, e-mail, or other means.

1. **Spoken-language services.** The most common point of service is at the Clerk’s office’s

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2008-2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B16001; generated by Marco Hanson of the Office of Court Administration using American FactFinder; <<http://factfinder2.census.gov>>; (4 March 2014).

reception counter or telephone calls to the Clerk's office. Bilingual assistance is provided at the reception counter and by phone by the placement of bilingual staff as is practical. The Court can also call on other bilingual staff from elsewhere in the building to assist at the reception counter or by phone. To facilitate communication between LEP individuals and staff, the Court will use the following resources to the extent they are available within the Court's funding restrictions:

- Bilingual employees;
- "I Speak" cards, to identify the individual's primary language;
- When appropriate, Language Line, Lionbridge, and other companies that are available to provide assistance through remote interpretation and translation. These contractors provide interpretation services via the telephone in over 170 languages; and
- Guidance from the Office of Court Administration's Language Access Coordinator.

2. **Written documents.** The Court will utilize its staff and other resources to begin the process of:

- Translating key forms, FAQs, and parts of the Court's homepage, intended for the general public, into Spanish; and
- Provide translations into English of Spanish-language forms and letters received by the Court.

#### **IV. Staff Training**

The Court is committed to providing LEP training opportunities for all staff members. Training and learning opportunities currently offered by the Court will be expanded or continued as needed. Those opportunities include:

- Training for current employees to make them aware of the Court's Language Access Plan;
- Diversity training, cultural competency training; and
- New employee orientation training on language access for public-facing employees.

#### **V. Public Notification and Evaluation of Language Access Plan**

The Court's Language Access Plan is subject to approval by the Justices of the Court. Any revisions to the plan will be submitted to the full Court for approval. Copies of the plan will be provided to the public on request, and the Court will post this plan on its public website. Periodically, the General Counsel in consultation with the Clerk will assess whether changes to the plan are needed. The plan will remain in effect unless modified or updated. Periodic assessments may include identification of any problem areas and development of corrective action strategies. Elements of the assessment may include:

- Number of LEP persons requesting assistance and cost to the Court of providing this access;
- Assessment of current language needs to determine if additional services or translated

materials should be provided;

- Solicitation and review of feedback from LEP communities and advocacy groups;
- Assessment of whether staff adequately understand LEP policies and procedures and how to carry them out; and
- Review of feedback from staff.