



LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

State Agency: New York State Offices of the Inspector General

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This document is our agency’s **Language Access Plan**.

A **Language Access Plan** explains how we provide services to people who have limited English proficiency.

This **Language Access Plan** includes information about:

	The population with Limited English Proficiency (“LEP”) in our service area.
	How we notify the public about language access services.
	Our resources and methods for providing language access services.
	How we train our staff to provide language access services to the public.
	How we monitor language access services and respond to complaints.



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PART 1 – Our Agency’s Services



We prepared this Language Access Plan (“Plan”) to comply with New York State Executive Law Section 202-a, which establishes New York’s Statewide Language Access Policy. This Plan explains how we make sure that people with Limited English Proficiency (“LEP”) have meaningful access to agency services, programs and activities.

In this Plan, individuals with LEP are understood as people who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English.

Our agency’s services to the public include:

The Offices of the Inspector General (“OIG”) are comprised of three offices, derived from the three appointments held by Inspector General Lucy Lang:

- **The Office of the New York State Inspector General (“NYSIG”)**, as established by Executive Law Article 4-A, is entrusted with the responsibility of receiving and investigating complaints of fraud, corruption, criminal activity, conflicts of interest, and abuse in executive branch agencies of New York State government. Since June 2021, this includes complaints related to the New York State Gaming Commission.
- **The Office of the New York State Welfare Inspector General (“OWIG”)**, as established by section 74 of the Executive Law, is responsible for maintaining the integrity of New York State’s public assistance programs; and
- **The Office of the New York State Workers’ Compensation Fraud Inspector General (“WCFIG”)**, as established by section 136 of the Workers’ Compensation Law, is responsible for investigating violations of the laws and regulations pertaining to the operation of the workers’ compensation system.

OIG interacts with individuals who allege or have knowledge of misconduct and other abuses listed above.



PART 2 – The Population with Limited English Proficiency in Our Service Area

The Statewide Language Access Policy requires state agencies to translate vital agency documents into the top 12 most commonly spoken non-English language among New Yorkers with limited English proficiency. Our agency uses U.S. Census data (including data from the American Community Survey) to determine the top 12 languages most commonly spoken by individuals with LEP in New York State.

The top 12 languages spoken by individuals with LEP in New York State are:

#	Language	Estimated Number of Speakers with LEP (ACS 2018-2022)
1	Spanish	1,198,032
2	Chinese	377,524
3	Russian	124,422
4	Yiddish	90,199
5	Bangla	74,342
6	Haitian Creole	51,947
7	Korean	48,581
8	Arabic	42,907
9	Italian	41,155
10	French	34,304
11	Polish	33,122
12	Urdu	29,983

New York’s language access law also provides agencies, in consultation with the Office of Language Access, the option to add up to four more languages of translation beyond the top 12. The assessment about whether to include additional languages must be based on factors that are identified in the language access law. Our agency, in consultation with the Office of Language Access, has made the following determination with regard to the addition of languages beyond the top 12:

OIG hasn’t identified the need to add languages but will continue to monitor services, requests and relevant information to reassess if needed.

Our agency tracks encounters of individuals with LEP in the following ways:



OIG tracks its contacts with individuals with LEP through three means: OIG’s Case Management Unit, OIG’s regional administrative staff, and OIG’s Finance Unit. While the population with LEP that OIG serves are fairly small, the majority of those contacts occur through OIG’s Case Management Unit (CMU), which processes complaint intake and contacts from the public. Along with information collected from CMU, OIG also cross references with regional administrative staff at each of its offices to further ascertain whether individuals with LEP sought assistance via an in-person contact. Finally, OIG confers with its Finance Unit to see whether there were any other LEP services contracted for as a part of investigations or operations (for example, utilizing a translation service for documents).

The number of individuals with LEP served by OIG annually is fairly small. Of the estimated 5,931 complaints received in 2023 by OIG, 5 complaints spoke Spanish, 2 spoke Russian and 2 spoke Mandarin. OIG has developed standardized protocols where all contacts with individuals with LEP and their requested languages are tracked. The OIG Language Access Coordinator regularly tracks this data by monitoring usage and noting any deficiencies with CMU, regional administrative staff, and OIG Finance Unit monthly. This information is up-to-date and is reviewed for accuracy and efficiency periodically by OIG’s Special Deputy Inspector General for Operations and senior operations team.



PART 3 – Public Outreach About the Availability of Language Access Services

Our agency informs individuals with LEP about their right to free language assistance services in the following ways, using at least the top 12 languages

shown in Part 2 of this Plan:

- Individuals with LEP are directly informed by our staff

In which ways? Individuals with LEP who contact OIG (via phone or in person) are informed of free language assistance services, by either bilingual staff (who are fluent in the requested language) or through telephonic interpreting service.

- Signs posted about language assistance services
 - In areas operated by the agency and open to the public
 - Other (describe)

- Information is published on our agency’s website in at least the top 12 languages spoken by individuals with LEP in New York State

- Outreach and presentations at schools, faith-based groups, and other community organizations

What are the populations with LEP targeted?



- Local, non-English language media directed at individuals with LEP in their languages

What are the populations with LEP targeted?

- Social media posts directed at individuals with LEP in their languages

What are the populations with LEP targeted?

- Telephonic voice menu providing information in non-English languages

In which languages? Arabic, Bengali, Mandarin, Haitian Creole, Italian, Korean, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Yiddish, French and Urdu.

- Other (describe)



PART 4 – Provision of Language Access Services

A. Determining the Need for Services

During *in person* encounters, our agency uses the following tools to determine whether an individual has LEP, and what their primary language is:

- “I Speak” posters or visual aids that provide information about free interpreting services in multiple languages
- Reception staff make those determinations based on training and experience
- Bilingual staff members, where available, assist in identifying the language of individuals with LEP
- Other (describe) OIG’s trained Case Management Unit staff and/or trained investigators are staff most likely to interact with individuals with LEP and make this determination in most cases. OIG investigators are equipped with “I Speak” information when in the field. Similarly, OIG’s training staff are equipped with “I Speak” information when conducting trainings at State agencies, as are any staff members conducting outreach and other presentations.

On *telephone calls*, our agency uses the following tools to find out if an individual has LEP, and what their primary language is:

- Reception staff make those determinations based on training and experience
- Bilingual staff members, where available, assist in identifying the language of individuals with LEP



Telephonic interpreting service

Other (describe)

Our agency’s protocols for assessing whether an individual needs *oral interpreting* services in different service situations is as follows:

During office in-person encounters: OIG’s trained Case Management Unit personnel, front-line staff or investigators first determine, if possible, the language spoken by individuals with LEP. If OIG is unable to determine the individual’s language, OIG staff will utilize the “I Speak” information to facilitate language identification. Once the language of the individual with LEP is determined, they are assisted by an OIG bilingual staff member, if available. When the language of the individual with LEP is not among those spoken by a bilingual staff member, OIG staff connects the individual with LEP with OIG’s free telephonic interpreting service.

At initial contact in the field: OIG staff are trained to first ask open-ended questions to determine language proficiency. In addition, all OIG staff have been provided with “I Speak” information to assist in determining the requested language of the individual with LEP. When OIG staff is fluent in the requested language and is available to assist, that staff member will serve as an interpreter for the individual with LEP. In the event the requested language of the individual with LEP is not spoken by a bilingual staff member, OIG staff connects the individual with LEP with OIG’s free telephonic interpreting service for assistance.

When speaking on the telephone: OIG assesses whether the individual with LEP needs oral interpreting services when it becomes apparent that the individual does not speak English at a level that will allow them to interact effectively with the OIG staff. Trained Case Management Unit personnel, front-line staff or investigators first determine, if possible, the language spoken by the individual with LEP. If a bilingual staff member is fluent in the language spoken by the individual with LEP, the individual will receive immediate assistance from OIG staff. When the language of the individual with LEP is not among those spoken by a bilingual staff member, OIG staff connects the individual with LEP with OIG’s free telephonic interpreting service.

For pre-planned appointments of individuals with LEP: Prior to meeting with an individual with LEP, OIG informs the individual(s) of the availability of free interpreting services, either through a bilingual staff member who is fluent in the language of the individual with LEP, or through an interpreting service.

Other (describe): Prior to conducting an interview of an individual with LEP, OIG determines the primary language spoken by the individual with LEP and solicits an in-person



interpreting service available on the NYS Office of General Services (OGS) Statewide Language Services Contract to schedule an interview.

Our agency records and maintains documentation of language assistance needs of individuals with LEP as follows:

OIG has developed standardized protocols where all contacts with individuals with LEP and their requested languages are tracked. The OIG Language Access Coordinator regularly tracks this data by monitoring usage and noting any deficiencies through contacts with CMU, regional administrative staff, and OIG Finance Unit monthly. This information is up-to-date and is reviewed for accuracy and efficiency periodically by OIG’s Special Deputy Inspector General for Operations and senior operations team.

B. Oral Interpreting Services

Our agency has made the following resources available for oral interpreting requests:

- Bilingual staff members who work directly with individuals with LEP

Number of staff and languages spoken:

- Bilingual staff members who provide oral interpreting services on a volunteer basis
Number of staff and languages spoken: Spanish (4), Russian (1), Punjabi (2), Urdu (2), Hindi (2), Ukrainian (1) and Italian (1).

- Telephonic interpreting service

Number of contractors and languages spoken: OIG uses one main telephonic interpretation contractor that covers approximately 300 languages and dialects, and potentially any contractor under the NYS OGS Statewide Language Services Contract.

- Contracts or other arrangements with school and community organizations

Number of contracts or other arrangements and languages spoken:

- Other (Describe)

Our agency protocols for informing individuals with LEP that free interpreting services will be provided and that they do not need to provide their own interpreters is as follows:

- During office in-person encounters:** OIG staff are trained to inform individuals with LEP of OIG’s free interpreting services via bilingual staff members or telephonic interpreting services.

- At initial contact in the field:** OIG staff are trained to inform individuals with LEP of OIG’s free interpreting services via bilingual OIG staff members or telephonic interpreting services.



When speaking on the telephone: OIG staff are trained to inform individuals with LEP of OIG’s free interpreting services via an OIG bilingual staff member or telephonic interpreting service.

For pre-planned appointments of individuals with LEP: OIG staff are trained to inform individuals with LEP of OIG’s free interpreting services via bilingual OIG staff members, telephonic interpretation services (if appropriate), or through an in-person interpreting service.

Other (describe):

Our agency’s protocols for obtaining interpreting services in a timely manner is as follows:

OIG has trained staff to promptly contact an interpreter in a timely manner upon request by an individual with LEP or upon determining that an interpreter is needed. OIG only utilizes interpreting services listed on OGS-approved contracts, who guarantee what OIG determines to be an acceptable response time

If an individual with LEP insists on having a family member, friend, or other person interpret, our protocols for deciding whether to accept or decline such an arrangement is as follows:

Individuals with LEP that come into contact with our agency will be informed of the availability of free interpreting services. Generally, individuals with LEP may not have a family member, friend, or minor interpret. However, **during emergencies** an individual with LEP may be permitted to have a minor, a family member, or friend interpret. Upon request, an individual with LEP may also be permitted to have a minor, a family member, or friend interpret for routine matters, such as asking the location of the office, hours of operation or rescheduling an appointment. Where the interaction with the individual is permitted to have an interpreter of their choosing, they must fill out a written consent/waiver form. The agency will provide an independent interpreter at all times, except during emergencies as noted above.

Our agency provides information to all staff members who have contact with the public about how to obtain oral interpreting services. Our protocol in this regard is as follows:

At the beginning of employment all OIG staff are provided with instructions on obtaining interpretation services. New staff are also directed to OIG’s intranet with instructions to review and understand all staff content, which includes OIG’s Language Access Plan. Moreover, OIG’s Director of Training or their designee provides annual all-staff training on OIG’s Language Access Plan, which includes procedures for obtaining language-access services, as well as broader training topics on cultural sensitivity, inclusion and confidentiality. New York State’s



Statewide Learning Management System also provides an annual training module on language access, which contains information about how to obtain oral interpreting services.

The agency’s Language Access Coordinator (“LAC”) maintains a list of oral interpreting resources that are available to staff. This resource list includes:

- Names and contact information for all resources
- Names and locations of staff members who are available to act as interpreters or provide services directly in the primary language of an individual with LEP
- Languages in which each interpreter or service is qualified
- Procedures for accessing each interpreter or service

Our agency records and maintains documentation of oral interpreting services provided to individuals with LEP at each encounter. Our protocol in this regard is as follows:

OIG has developed standardized protocols where all contacts with individuals with LEP and their requested languages are tracked. The OIG Language Access Coordinator regularly tracks this data by monitoring usage and noting any deficiencies through contacts with CMU, regional administrative staff, and OIG Finance Unit monthly. This information is up-to-date and is reviewed for accuracy and efficiency periodically by OIG’s Special Deputy Inspector General for Operations and senior operations team.



Cultural Competence and Confidentiality

Our agency makes sure interpreters are culturally competent¹ in the following ways:

The linguistic competence of bilingual staff is self-assessed. Cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, inclusion, and confidentiality are topics covered in OIG staff training. Where the agency utilizes independent interpreting services, that contractor will implement quality assurance standards to guarantee that its interpreters are trained and are linguistically and culturally competent, as in accordance with contractor requirements on all New York State-approved contractor interpretation services contracts and in accordance with New York State Law.

Our agency makes sure interpreters follow state and federal confidentiality protocols in the following ways:

Where the agency utilizes independent interpreting services, that contractor must adhere to and enforce confidentiality standards that are also in accordance with New York State-approved contractor interpretation services contracts and New York State Law.

C. Translations of Documents

At least every two years after the effective date of this Plan, our agency determines and reassesses vital documents² that must be translated. This process is accomplished in the following ways:

The Language Access Assessment Team is comprised of the Language Access Coordinator, Chief of Staff, Chief Counsel, Special Deputy Inspector General, Director of Finance, Director of IT, Chief of Investigations for the Case Management Unit, and communications staff. Its mission includes reassessing language access internal operations, contractors, OIG’s documents and website content every two years.

¹ Cultural Competence is defined as *a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system or agency or among professionals that enables effective interactions in a cross-cultural framework*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health. 2000. Assuring Cultural Competence in Health Care: Recommendations for National Standards and an Outcomes-Focused Research Agenda. Extracted from:

https://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/Assets/pdf/checked/Assuring_Cultural_Competence_in_Health_Care-1999.pdf

² Vital Documents is defined as any paper or digital document that contains information that is critical for obtaining agency services or benefits or is otherwise required to be completed by law.



Our agency’s process for making sure documents are written in plain language³ before they are translated into other languages is as follows:

Members of OIG’s Language Access Assessment Team are tasked with ensuring that documents are written in plain language before they are translated into other languages.

Our agency has the following resources available for translation of documents:

- Contractors for translation services
Number of contractors: Contractors assigned under OGS Statewide Administrative Services Contract.
- Contracts or other arrangements with schools and community organizations
Names of schools/organizations:
- Translation of documents by bilingual staff members
- Other (describe)

The agency’s Language Access Coordinator (“LAC”) maintains a list of translation resources that are available to staff. This resource list includes:

- Names and contact information for all resources
- Names and locations of staff members who are available to provide translations of documents
- Languages in which each translation service is qualified
- Procedures for accessing each translation service

Our agency translates documents that individuals with LEP submit in their primary languages in a timely manner. Our protocol in this regard is as follows:

OIG will solicit an outside translation service who must guarantee a reasonable response time in the translation of documents.

³ The [Plain Writing Act of 2010](https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/PLAW-111publ274) defines plain language as writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience. Extracted from: <https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/PLAW-111publ274>



The following non-exhaustive list of documents are currently translated or in the process of translation by our agency in the languages indicated. Documents with an asterisk (*) are determined by the agency to be vital documents.

- *AR: Arabic*
- *BA: Bangla*
- *CH: Chinese*
- *FR: French*
- *HA: Haitian-Creole*
- *IT: Italian*
- *KO: Korean*
- *PO: Polish*
- *RU: Russian*
- *SP: Spanish*
- *UR: Urdu*
- *YI: Yiddish*

Form #	Name	Top 12 Languages											Additional Languages	
		AR	BA	CH	FR	HA	IT	KO	PO	RU	SP	UR		YI

New documents identified for translation after the signing of this Plan and before the 2-year reassessment will be translated in a timely manner.



The process for ensuring that translations are accurate and incorporate commonly used words is as follows:

OIG will ensure that plain language is used in material produced before translation to ensure information is accessible to a broad range of literacy levels. OIG through its contractor will ensure that proofing/editing for both correctness and cultural sensitivity are vital components of the translation services provided.



PART 5 – Staff Training

The person in the agency who is responsible for training staff in language access services is:

The Language Access Coordinator and members of the Language Access Assessment Team.

The staff training includes the following components:

- The agency’s legal obligations to provide language access services
- The agency’s resources for providing language access services
- How to access and work with interpreters
- Cultural competence and cultural sensitivity
- How to obtain translation services
- Maintaining records of language access services provided to individuals with LEP

The methods and frequency of training are as follows:

OIG has added Language Access training as part of OIG’s annual staff training curriculum. New staff are trained in Language Access as they are hired. OIG’s Director of Training utilizes and incorporates information obtained from OIG’s Language Access Plan into the annual staff training. In addition to OIG’s front-line staff, all OIG staff are required on an annual basis to complete the Office of Employee Relations’ online Language Access training available through the Statewide Learning Management System.



PART 6 – Monitoring the Plan and Responding to Complaints

A. Monitoring

Our agency’s Language Access Coordinator (“LAC”) will monitor implementation of the Plan to make sure we are in compliance. Our protocols in this regard are as follows:

Monitoring of compliance with the Language Access Plan includes monthly meetings with offices to assess compliance, concerns, and needs; ensuring annual training is completed by staff; and ongoing communication with the Language Access Committee.

- B. Complaints: We provide information to the public in at least the top 12 most commonly spoken non-English languages in the state, advising members of the public of their right to file a complaint if they feel that they have not been provided adequate language access services or have been denied access to services because of their limited English proficiency. We do not retaliate or take other adverse action because an individual has filed a language access complaint.**

We display information on the right to file a complaint, and the procedures for filing a complaint, in the following manner:

The standardized complaint forms, along with the procedures for filing a complaint, are available in all 12 languages in our public offices upon request. The complaint forms are also available for download or online submission through our website. Additionally, information on the right to file a complaint is posted in the top 12 languages on our website and in our offices in areas where it can be easily seen by the public.

We handle complaints made to the agency regarding the provision of language assistance services in the following manner:

Complaints made to OIG regarding the provision of language assistance services are directed to OIG’s Chief of Staff and Chief Counsel for review and handling, and if need be, with the assistance of the Division of Equal Opportunity Development.

All complaints must be timely forwarded to the Office of Language Access.



PART 7 – Signatures

Lucy Lang

Lucy Lang

Inspector General

9/12/2024

Head of Agency

Title

Date

Patricia Wojehowski

Patricia Wojehowski Language Access Coordinator 9/12/2024

Agency LAC

Title

Date

x

Margarita Larios

Margarita Larios

09/24/2024

Executive Director, NYS Office of Language Access

Date