

New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission

Language Access Plan

Pursuant to P.L. 2023, c.263

Effective Date of Plan: December 15, 2025

Language Access Coordinator (LAC)

The best way for the public to contact the agency regarding language access efforts and services is to contact the LAC:

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Introduction

This Language Access Plan (“Plan”) is in compliance with New Jersey’s Language Access Law, [P.L. 2023, c.263](#) (“Law”), as part of New Jersey’s commitment to making our government resources more accessible to our State’s diverse residents. The Law requires State agencies to provide language assistance services and publish a language access plan explaining how they will communicate with individuals with limited English proficiency, and what services they will offer to help.

A language access plan¹ is a document that describes the services that a state government entity² and its employees are required to provide to ensure individuals with limited English proficiency have meaningful access to its programs, services, and activities.

¹ P.L. 2023, c.263 requires that “[e]ach State government entity in the Executive Branch that provides direct services to the public, in consultation with the Department of Human Services, Department of Law and Public Safety, and Office of Information Technology, shall develop and publish a language access plan that shall reflect how the entity will comply with the provisions of this act.”

² Pursuant to P.L. 2023, c.263, a “State government entity” is defined as “any State department or agency in the Executive Branch and any commission, board, bureau, division, office, or instrumentality thereof providing direct services to the public.”

Having limited English proficiency means that a person does not speak English as their primary language and may have limited ability to read, write, speak, and/or understand English.

This document provides information about:

- Our agency and how we interact with the public
- The populations with with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) that we serve or are likely to serve

It also outlines how our agency:

- Identifies language needs
- Provides language assistance services
- Makes sure language assistance services are high quality
- Informs the public about available free language assistance services
- Keeps the public informed about our efforts to follow the New Jersey's Language Access Law
- Trains staff on serving people with LEP
- Follows the New Jersey's Language Access Law.

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A. Our Agency and How We Interact with the Public

1. Agency Mission

The New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission (CRC) seeks to establish and grow a responsible, regulated medicinal and recreational cannabis industry. By applying the values of safety and equity, the Commission will center its work around creating and protecting access for patients, the production of safe products, and promoting diversity and inclusion in the industry to develop a national model for sensible, fair oversight. The Commission is committed to transparency and the public good.

2. How We Interact with the Public

CRC interacts with the public through various domains. The CRC's website and social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly known as Twitter), and LinkedIn) provide the public with access to current news and information for the public, medicinal patients, healthcare providers, potential license applicants, existing permitted and licensed business owners, municipal leaders, adult consumers, parents, and the media. The CRC holds monthly public meetings, which are announced on the agency's website, on social media, and in NJ. In accordance with the NJ Open Public Meetings Act, the public meetings are offered either in-person or virtually. Additionally, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) and the Office of Communications attend many community events throughout the calendar year. Periodically the Commission schedules town halls for public awareness and input when warranted. Meeting and town hall scheduling, registration (including accommodation requests), and transcripts are located on the Commission's website. Most Divisions within the CRC have their own unique role in interacting with the public.

Executive Director

The Office of the Executive Director utilizes hybrid channels to interact with the public. The Executive Director reports up-to-date information during our Public Meetings, such as updates on dispensary openings, licensing submissions, and approvals. Information presented at the Public Meetings and how to attend is available on our website. The office also writes memos and resolutions regarding the licensing of applicants, which are available on our website.

Government Relations

Government Relations at the CRC works with the public aiding New Jersey's local municipalities and elected officials on all levels to ensure they have the information and support they need on matters related to cannabis regulation. These interactions predominately through hybrid channels through physical and digital channels supporting municipalities come in several ways, such as:

- Providing communication and serving as a liaison between the CRC and local municipalities, providing a direct line of communication for questions, concerns, and collaboration on cannabis-related issues. Additionally, the office encourages and facilitates an open dialogue between CRC, elected officials, and local municipalities, which promotes transparency and strengthens trust between the state federal and local governments.
- Acting as a resource and providing comprehensive informational materials to elected officials and leaders on the federal, state and local levels, helping them understand cannabis laws and regulations. This support empowers them to make informed decisions for their communities. Additionally, local municipalities and the general public may subscribe for free to the quarterly Municipal Cannabis Newsletter.
- Providing guidance and support on cannabis-related topics, assisting in navigating the complexities of regulations and compliance to ensure every municipality has the support they need to implement effective and efficient policies that will

support the healthy, balanced, and socially equitable growth of New Jersey's cannabis market.

Patient Services/Medicinal Cannabis Program

New Jersey's Medicinal Cannabis Program helps registered patients under the care of licensed healthcare practitioners safely access cannabis-based medicine from licensed and monitored facilities. As part of medicinal treatment, patients receive cannabis orders from their doctor or other healthcare practitioner. Cannabis orders are filled at one of the state-licensed Alternative Treatment Centers (ATCs) or dispensaries across New Jersey. Patients unable to travel to a dispensary may designate and register caregivers to make purchases on their behalf. The Patient Services Unit, predominately through hybrid channels, interacting directly with patients, caregivers and providers over the phone and utilizing digital methods, such as remote access to the registry, inbox, virtual forms, and social media.

The Medicinal Cannabis Program (MCP) hosts a call center to assist patients, caregivers, and healthcare providers navigate through the medicinal registry portal or answer questions about the program. The call center also fields incoming calls from the public seeking information. There are eight Customer Service representatives who respond to calls, of which two are Spanish speaking. For patients or caregivers who struggle or don't have access to technology, the MCP offers a mail-in application, which is a paper form that is mailed directly to the patient and/or caregiver.

The MCP monitors and responds to the MedCannabis.nj.gov inbox, which serves as another entry point for communication with the Commission. also, This inbox serves as the MCP program email account. The MCP inbox receives emails from patients, healthcare providers, caregivers, and the public seeking information, submitting requested documentation, or submitting complaints. The inbox is monitored during the CRC's business hours.

Licensing

The Office of Licensing is responsible for the acceptance, processing, and review of applications for a cannabis business license. This process involves reviewing applications for completeness and scoring on a pass/fail basis. This may include researching laws/regulations and technical information, requesting clarification or corrections on deficiencies (termed as cures), and referencing standard operating procedures. The major focus is to ensure that applications are submitted correctly and moved through the process in a timely fashion according to our regulations. The application process is outlined in the Application Guide found on the Commission's website, along with resources, required documentation, and forms required for the application.

During the application process, Licensing staff work with cultivators, manufacturers, wholesalers, distributors, retailers, and delivery service providers who are interested in obtaining any level of licensure for a medicinal or recreational cannabis business or testing laboratory. Some examples of interactions include notifying applicants of missing information or discrepancies in their application, reporting the status of the application, and managing the licensing portal, including approvals, invoices, extensions, renewals, updates, and license issuances. This work is predominately done through digital channels, utilizing online forms and intakes.

Compliance and Investigation

Investigators in the Office of Compliance and Investigation play a vital role in verifying the eligibility and legal status of cannabis business license and permit applicants, and their employees. Our compliance officers work closely with existing businesses to ensure full adherence to New Jersey law and CRC regulations. This work is done through hybrid channels with the Investigation Unit working predominately with businesses through digital channels, while the Compliance Unit works predominately through physical channels by conducting in-person visits to businesses.

- **Investigation Unit**

- Conducts background checks and investigates persons and entities of interest on all business license/permit applications
- Processes applications for legally required cannabis business employee identification cards

- **Compliance Unit**

- Investigates reports of non-compliance at licensed cannabis facilities
- Inspects cannabis businesses for compliance with operational requirements, makes recommendations for remediation, and/or carries out appropriate enforcement actions
- Makes recommendations to the CRC Board of Commissioners on enforcement actions against operators out of compliance with laws and/or regulations
- Collects product samples for testing
- Oversees laboratories licensed to carry out cannabis testing
- Reviews applications for proposed facility modifications, location changes, changes to ownership or ownership structure, name changes, and other facility and operational modifications

Labor Compliance and Education

Ensures that New Jersey's cannabis industry upholds fair labor standards and cultivates a well-informed workforce. The office oversees compliance with labor requirements, including the maintenance of Labor Peace Agreements (LPAs), workplace protections, collective bargaining rights, and fair employment practices. The work done in this unit is done predominately through digital channels by:

- Collaborates with the National Labor and Relations Board (NLRB), an important function of this office, ensuring state requirements align with federal laws and statutes.
- Provides education and outreach to employers, employees, and labor organizations—offering guidance, resources, and training to promote safe, equitable, and compliant workplaces across the cannabis industry.

Diversity and Inclusion (The Office of Minority, Disabled Veteran and Women Cannabis Development Business Office)

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion's (ODI) primary role is connecting underserved populations with information about the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory Commission and its programs. Those populations include individuals with conditions that may benefit from the Medicinal Cannabis Program, entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs from socially and economically disadvantaged communities and Impact Zones, and communities disproportionately harmed by the War on Drugs who want to apply for cannabis business licenses. ODI works to establish practices and procedures for promoting inclusion of diverse populations in the medicinal and recreational cannabis industries. On top of promoting participation, this office aims to implement programs and other initiatives that promote equitable inclusion. This work is done through hybrid channels, such as:

- Conducts advertising, promotional campaigns, seminars, informational programs, and disseminates information to the public both in-person and digitally to increase awareness for participation in the medical and personal-use cannabis industries by persons from socially and economically disadvantaged communities.
- Develops, recommends, and implements policies, practices, protocols, standards, and criteria designed to promote the formulation of medical cannabis business entities and personal use cannabis establishments, distributors, and delivery services,

and participation from persons from socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

- Prepares information regarding its activities concerning participation in the medicinal cannabis and personal-use cannabis industries by persons from socially and economically disadvantaged communities.

Communications

The Office of Communications amplifies the work being done by the Board of Commissioners, Office of the Executive Director, Licensing, Compliance and Investigation, Government Affairs, Diversity and Inclusion, the Medicinal Cannabis Program and the agency as a whole to ensure effective internal and external communication with key stakeholders in the following areas through hybrid channels such as:

- Strategic communications planning, research, implementation, and evaluation
- Media relations and press events
- Print and digital media
- Content creation for websites, blogs, newsletters, and podcasts
- Social media strategy, planning, and coordination
- Public meeting and public notice communications, including managing and securing reasonable accommodation requests for American Sign Language and language translation services (one past request was for Russian)
- Public participation and stakeholder engagement
- Community outreach and public education, including managing and fulfilling informational collateral requests (one past request included translating informational collateral in Creole)
- Internal communications and staff engagement

- Multi-channel Safe-Use Campaign elements (social, radio, billboards, digital ads)

3. Participating Entities

Office of the Executive Director, Office of Licensing, Office of Compliance and Investigation, Government Relations, Communications, Patient Services, and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

B. Populations with Limited English Proficiency that Our Agency Serves or is Likely to Serve

The Law requires that State agencies provide language assistance services to individuals who have limited English proficiency (LEP). This involves identifying the needs of the populations they serve or are likely to serve, covering both written and spoken language support.

Under the Law, agencies must translate vital documents³ and information into the seven (7) languages most commonly spoken by individuals with LEP in New Jersey. To determine these top seven languages, our agency uses U.S. Census data (including data from the American Community Survey) and consults with the Language Access Implementation Lead Agencies.

This data also helps our agency understand other language characteristics of the communities we currently serve or are likely to serve, ensuring effective language access planning.

At the time of this Plan, the top languages spoken by individuals with LEP in New Jersey are:

1. Spanish
2. Portuguese (preference for Brazilian dialect)
3. Korean
4. Gujarati
5. Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese)⁴
6. French Creole or Haitian Creole
7. Arabic

³ Vital documents are defined in P.L. 2023, c.263 as “documents that affect or provide legal information about access to, retention of, termination of, or exclusion from program services or benefits; which are required by law; or which explain legal rights.”

⁴ While spoken Chinese primarily includes Mandarin and Cantonese, translation should be tailored to Simplified and Traditional Chinese for written communication.

1. Adding Languages Beyond the Top Seven at a State-level

The Law also requires that State agencies translate vital documents into any other languages considered necessary by the agency based on the populations they serve.

Our agency has made the following determination about the addition of languages beyond the top 7:

Currently, the agency hasn't identified a need to include additional languages. The CRC will continue to assess the need for additional languages for both translation and interpreting services on an annual basis and as the need arises. The CRC will collect preferred language data on all medicinal registrations as well as any licensing applications through their application portals. This information will inform the CRC regarding the need to add any additional languages, which can also be cross walked to county of residence to determine whether there are regional language access needs. Additionally, data from our internal sources and interpretation contractor will be reviewed quarterly for the first year and then annually thereafter to determine whether additional languages need to be added for translation and whether those languages are statewide, regional, or community based.

2. Languages Available for Interpreting Services

Under the Law, State agencies have to provide interpreting services between the agency and an individual in that person's primary language when delivering services or benefits.

3. Populations with LEP

People with LEP that may interact with our agency include medicinal patients and caregivers, license applicants, business owners, and constituents seeking information. The CRC will conduct an annual analysis and utilize reporting from our language contractor as well as information gathered from internal sources to better understand which languages are most prevalent amongst these groups to determine whether additional actions need to be taken. Information will be collected from licensing applicants, medicinal registrants, as well as from requests for accommodation for public meetings and town halls, to help inform future language needs. For interpreting services, the law requires that

services be provided in the individuals primary language to guarantee proper access to services or benefits.

C. Determining the Need for Language Assistance Services and Language Identification

When an individual with LEP contacts our agency, staff must assess whether language assistance is needed in the following ways (Tables 1–3).

Table 1: In-Person

Description	Check (X) all that apply
Voluntary self-identification by the individual or their companion	
Use of multilingual language identification cards, posters or visual aids (for example, “I Speak” posters)	X
Assistance from trained staff to identify the individual’s primary language	
Support from a qualified interpreter (in-person, over-the-phone and/or remote) to identify/confirm an individual’s primary language	X
Other (specify):	

Table 2: Telephonic Communication

Description	Check (X) all that apply
Voluntary self-identification by the individual or their companion	X
Assistance from trained staff to identify the individual’s primary language	X
Support from a qualified interpreter (in-person, over-the-phone and/or remote) to identify/confirm an individual’s primary language	X
Other (specify):	

Table 3: Electronic Communication

Description	Check (X) all that apply
Notice of available language assistance services available on the agency website	X
Multilingual taglines included in applicable forms, letters, and/or email communications	
Multilingual chatbot on website	
Use of automated translation tools only to identify primary language	X
Other (specify):	

D. Provision of Language Assistance Services

1. Vital Document Translation

The Law requires translation of vital documents. Vital documents are defined in P.L. 2023, c.263, as “documents that affect or provide legal information about access to, retention of, termination of, or exclusion from program services or benefits; which are required by law; or which explain legal rights.”

Our agency has the following resources available for translation of vital documents (Table 4).

Table 4: Resources for Translation of Vital Documents

Resource	Check (X) all that apply
Qualified, trained, and/or designated multilingual staff	
Contractors	X
Other (specify):	

Translation of vital documents is an ongoing process. Appendix 1 provides an inventory of vital documents translated as of the date of this publication. This list will be maintained and updated at least annually as part of annual reporting.

2. Language Interpreting Services

Our agency has the following free resources available for spoken or sign language interpreting requests (Table 5).

Table 5: Resources for Spoken or Sign Language Interpreting Requests

Resource	Check (X) all that apply
Assistance from qualified, trained, and/or designated multilingual staff	X
Over-the-phone interpreting services	X
In-person interpreting services	
Video-remote interpreting services	
Other (specify):	

3. Additional Accessibility Equipment and Services

Table 6: Accessibility Equipment and Services

Equipment or Service	Check (X) all that apply
Telephone voice menus for help with agency programs are available in the following languages (specify):	
Trained multilingual staff can communicate with individuals with LEP in select languages, including (specify):	
Access to auxiliary aids such as hearing induction loops, pocket talkers, captioning, video-remote interpreting and/or simultaneous interpreting equipment	
Services through partner agencies that serve those who need auxiliary aids, including:	
The Department of Human Services' Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	
Other (specify):	

E. Methods for Quality Assurance

To ensure language assistance services are accurate, high-quality, and culturally competent, activities underway or planned include (Table 7):

Table 7: Methods for Quality Assurance

Method	Check (X) all that apply
Prioritizing the use of plain language	X
Using vetted contractors that implement quality assurance standards to ensure that its linguists are experienced, trained, and certified as appropriate and are linguistically and culturally competent	X
Monitoring and tracking the quality of interpreting and translation services provided by vendors, and training staff to monitor quality of those services	X
Including quality assurance requirements in vendor contracts, e.g., glossaries, translation review, use of translation memory, localization software, desktop publishing, etc.	X
Partnering with community-based organizations to periodically check quality of interpreting and translation services	
Conducting periodic testing of translated documents and interpreting services across languages	X
Ensuring quality and proper maintenance of auxiliary aids and equipment, such as hearing induction loops, pocket talkers, captioning, tablets, and/or simultaneous translation equipment	
Other (specify):	

F. Public Notice About the Availability of Free Language Assistance Services

Our agency informs individuals with LEP in required languages, including auxiliary aids and equipment, about their right to free language assistance services in the following ways (Table 8):

Table 8: Public Notice

Method	Check (X) all that apply
Signs and posters in areas highly visible to the public	X
Information on agency's website describing available language assistance services, processes, and documents required by the Law	X
Printed material, publications, and advertisements	
Telephone voice menu providing information in non-English languages	
Public service announcements	
Other (specify):	

G. Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach

Our agency's engagement with community or stakeholder entities representing populations with LEP regarding language access planning and implementation includes (Table 9):

Table 9: Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach

Method	Check (X) all that apply
Conducting stakeholder engagement to inform our language access planning, which may include public listening sessions with groups and/or one-on-one meetings	
Planning to conduct and maintain stakeholder engagement as this Plan is implemented and updated, which may include public listening sessions and/or one-on-one meetings	X

Method	Check (X) all that apply
Having clear and measurable goals for program/service-specific outreach and communication to reach individuals with LEP from different language communities	
Maintaining and utilizing distribution lists that include local, culturally, and linguistically diverse community-based organizations and media to disseminate information regarding the agency's language access services	
A website to receive feedback, and/or public email address for language access questions, feedback, and/or concerns	X

H. Staff Training

For staff involved in implementing P.L. 2023, c.263, annual training includes the following topics (Table 10):

Table 10: Staff Training

Topic	Check (X) all that apply
The agency's legal obligations to provide language assistance services	X
The agency's language access policies and protocols	X
The agency's resources and best practices for providing language assistance services	
How to access and work with interpreters and translators	
Cultural competence and cultural sensitivity	X
How to obtain translation and interpreting services	X
Maintaining records of language access services provided to individuals with LEP	X

I. Processes for Recordkeeping, Compliance Monitoring, and Reporting

1. Annual Internal Monitoring

Our agency monitors implementation of this Plan to ensure compliance with P.L. 2023, c.263 by (Table 11):

Table 11: Annual Internal Monitoring

Method	Check (X) all that apply
Supporting the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring the agency's implementation of this Plan	X
Collecting and compiling the data necessary for the agency's Annual Report on compliance with P.L. 2023, c.263	X
Submitting in a timely manner the Annual Report pursuant to P.L. 2023, c.263	X

2. Internal Recordkeeping

Our agency tracks language access-related data on an ongoing basis. The tracking underway includes [Table 12]:

Table 12: Internal Recordkeeping

Metric	Check (X) all that apply
Frequency of requests for language assistance services	X
How requests were met	X
Whether language assistance services were requested in languages other than the required seven	X
How the agency intends to notify the populations with LEP of the available language assistance services	X
How the agency documents the actual provision of language assistance services to individuals with LEP	X
Other (specify):	

Appendix 1: Inventory of Translated Vital Documents

Translation of vital documents is an ongoing process. As of the date of this publication, the following vital documents are available publicly in the following languages: [Access Your Language](#)