

New Jersey Department of Veteran Affairs

Language Access Plan

Pursuant to P.L. 2023, c.263

Effective Date of Plan: January 09, 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.

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.

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.”

This document provides information about:

- Our agency and how we interact with the public
- The populations 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.

Table of Contents

New Jersey Department of Veteran Affairs Language Access Plan	1
Language Access Coordinator (LAC)	1
Introduction	1
Table of Contents	3
A. Our Agency and How We Interact with the Public	4
B. Populations with Limited English Proficiency that Our Agency Serves or is Likely to Serve	6
C. Determining the Need for Language Assistance Services and Language Identification	9
D. Provision of Language Assistance Services	10
E. Methods for Quality Assurance	12
F. Public Notice About the Availability of Free Language Assistance Services	13
G. Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach	13
H. Staff Training	14
I. Processes for Recordkeeping, Compliance Monitoring, and Reporting	15
Appendix 1: Inventory of Translated Vital Documents	16

A. Our Agency and How We Interact with the Public

1. Agency Mission

The New Jersey Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) delivers exceptional services, support, and advocacy for Garden State Veterans, families, caregivers, and survivors. DVA honors those who have served and the people who love them by delivering access to earned benefits, programs, and resources.

2. How We Interact with the Public

The Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) engages the public through a broad network of veteran-focused programs. Individuals with LEP may interact with DVA through:

- In-person services at Veterans Havens, Veterans Homes, Veterans Service Offices, and BG Doyle Cemetery.
- Phone communication, including direct calls to facilities and the VSO toll-free line (844-671-1019).
- Email exchanges between individuals the department serves and program staff for benefits assistance, scheduling, intake, and service coordination.
- Public-facing online content, including applications and forms hosted on the DMAVA website and Simpligov platform.
- In-person community outreach, led primarily by Veterans Service Officers statewide.
- Social media channels used to share public information and resources.

These communication pathways provide essential access for veterans, service members, families and the public seeking benefits, care, housing, burial services, and department specific support programs.

3. Participating Entities

The following DVA divisions and programs provide direct public-facing or service-based interaction and are therefore included in this Language Access Plan:

Veteran Affairs Programs

- **Veterans Services Division**
 - Veterans Service Offices (21 statewide)
 - Veterans Haven North and South
 - BG William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery
- **Veterans Homes Division**
 - Menlo Park Veterans Memorial Home
 - Paramus Veterans Memorial Home
 - Vineland Veterans Memorial Home

(Note: Additional public-facing or service-based DVA entities are being reviewed with leadership and may be added as appropriate.)

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:

At this time, the Department of Veteran Affairs has not identified a need to include additional languages beyond the seven most commonly spoken by individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) in New Jersey. While no additional languages have emerged through available data or service patterns, we recognize that the veterans, service members, and families served through the Veterans Service Offices, Veterans Homes, Veterans Havens, and the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery represent diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

In alignment with P.L. 2023, c.263, the Department will continue evaluating language needs through multiple avenues, including:

- Monitoring demographic trends, client data, and community feedback.
- Engaging with veteran-serving community partners, such as Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), community nonprofits, service providers, and advocacy groups who work closely with LEP veterans and families.
- Consulting with stakeholders who may identify language needs not captured in Census data or state-level datasets—particularly for smaller or emerging language communities.

If additional languages are determined necessary to ensure meaningful access, the Department will update its translation and interpretation strategy accordingly and incorporate those languages into future iterations of the Language Access Plan.

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

Describe the populations with LEP that interact or are likely to interact with our agency

or are otherwise in need or are eligible for our agency's services. This could include any efforts to identify specific language characteristics or needs through internal data or other relevant datasets, such as information from language services providers, school districts, community-based organizations, business associations, etc.

Populations with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) that may interact with the New Jersey Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) include veterans, service members, and their families across several public-facing programs. These interactions occur through services such as transitional housing for homeless veterans, long-term residential care provided at the three Veterans Homes (Menlo Park, Paramus, and Vineland), burial and interment services at the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery, and statewide benefits assistance delivered through the 21 Veterans Service Offices. DVA also engages with the public through in-person outreach events, phone and email inquiries, and communication via online platforms and social media.

DVA has identified an initial inventory of vital documents and anticipates that forms related to program entry, eligibility, intake, benefits applications, admission or discharge, authorizations, and termination of services will require translation to ensure meaningful access. This inventory will continue to be reviewed and expanded as needed. The Department will regularly assess service patterns, regional demographics, and community and stakeholder feedback to ensure that all documents meeting the criteria for "vital" under P.L. 2023, c.263 remain accessible to individuals with LEP.

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	X
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	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 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	X
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	
Over-the-phone interpreting services	X
In-person interpreting services	X
Video-remote interpreting services	X
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	X
Services through partner agencies that serve those who need auxiliary aids, including:	X
The Department of Human Services' Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	X
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	X
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	X
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	X
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
Having clear and measurable goals for program/service-specific outreach and communication to reach individuals with LEP from different language communities	X

Method	Check (X) all that apply
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	X
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	X
How to access and work with interpreters and translators	X
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: [Inventory List](#) (click the link to the left)