

New Jersey Department of Health 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.

Having Limited English Proficiency (LEP) 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 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

Consistent with P.L. 2023, c.263 (Bill S2459/A3837), the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) is committed to enhancing and building capacity of effective language access in its policies, programs, and practices. Language access services are important tools to address health disparities and advance equitable public health.

1. Agency Mission

NJDOH's mission is to protect the public's health, promote healthy communities, and continue to improve the quality of health care in New Jersey. In fulfilling its mission, NJDOH is committed to providing meaningful language access for individuals with limited English proficiency. Through clear communication and inclusive services, NJDOH strives to ensure that everyone, regardless of the language they speak, read, or write, can fully understand, participate in, and benefit from our programs, services, and health initiatives across the State.

2. How We Interact with the Public

NJDOH engages with the public through two principal modes of communication. One-way communication includes program advertising, press releases, online and website resources, social media outreach, and related initiatives. Two-way communication is carried out through the provision of direct services delivered by the Department's clinical and health care divisions, and main office phone line from constituent services.

3. Participating Entities

The NJDOH Language Access Plan operates as a department-wide mandate, requiring coordinated participation from all divisions, programs, and offices.

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.

Currently, NJDOH has not identified the need to include additional languages. However, NJDOH will continue to regularly assess the demand for translation and interpretation services and will adjust language offerings as new needs arise.

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

American Community Survey (ACS) data, combined with internal assessment findings, enables NJDOH to better understand the language characteristics of the communities it currently serves or is likely to serve, thereby supporting more effective language access planning. NJDOH is committed to using reputable data sources and collaborating with language service providers and community organizations to ensure language needs are met across all benefits, programs, and services.

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: complexity of encounter (e.g., legal, psychological assessments), symptom presentation based on cultural distress or delusions; low literacy level or cognitive impairment; or distrust of virtual methods; and admission reports of state language assistance	X

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: past use of phone or remote interpreters; if in-person interpreters are unavailable during the encounter; and request from a local health department	X

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	X
Use of automated translation tools only to identify primary language	X
Other: non-English communications, and patient history of negative experience with video-interpreting	X

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	X
Contractors	X
Other: Bilingual staff (i.e., native foreign language speakers) employed by grantees; foreign language testing during employment application process; the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) provide access to translation services; through internal NJDOH offices; staff and contracted American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, certified through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID), work in a separate dedicated statewide Specialized Inpatient Program for the Deaf	X

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	X
Other: ASL services available upon request, including face-to-face contract interpreters; and MasterWord tablets for 24-hour, real-time interpreting	X

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: Arabic, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Turkish	X
Trained multilingual staff can communicate with individuals with LEP in select languages, including: Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, French/Haitian Creole, Greek, Hindi, Igbo, Korean, Ghanaian languages (Twi, Ewe, Ga, Krobo, and Fante), Gujarati, Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Spanish, Swahili, and Urdu	X
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

Equipment or Service	Check (X) all that apply
The Department of Human Services' Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	X
Other: virtual interpretation, teletypewriter (TTY), Sorenson services, video remote interpreting (VRI), and MasterWord tablets	X

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	X
Other: N/A	

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	X
Public service announcements	X
Other: Hospitals provide signs in foreign languages upon request; public websites are available in Spanish; entrance signage notifies patients of interpreter availability; intake processes and wall posters inform patients of services; and families are informed of accessibility to language services during coordination meetings or by providers	X

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
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: N/A	

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: <https://www.nj.gov/health/about/njdoh/health-equity/>