

New Jersey Department of State 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 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.

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A. Our Agency and How We Interact with the Public

1. Agency Mission

The Department of State seeks to enhance the overall quality of life for all New Jerseyans by fostering civic engagement, advancing and supporting cultural and historical programs, and promoting economic vitality.

The Department promotes civic engagement and community development through entities responsible for volunteerism; Hispanic policy, research, and development; faith-based initiatives; and other integral programs. The Division of Elections also helps to build a robust and enduring culture of civic engagement in our communities and coordinates the safe and secure conduct of elections in all 21 of New Jersey's counties.

Through the Council on the Arts, the State Museum, the State Archives, and the Historical Commission, the Department harnesses New Jersey's rich cultural, historical and artistic assets to foster education and collaboration among diverse stakeholders while providing a source of sustainable funding for non-profit organizations.

To help strengthen the state economy, the Department mobilizes the Business Action Center to support the creation and growth of New Jersey businesses while the Division of Travel and Tourism works to promote and attract tourist visitation statewide.

2. How We Interact with the Public

The New Jersey Department of State engages with the public through a variety of programs and initiatives. How the Department interacts with its constituents varies with each division or program and its offerings. Interaction with the community is facilitated through multiple channels to ensure accessibility, transparency, and strong relationships. Below is a comprehensive list of the various methods used to communicate and interact with the public. These combined approaches allow us to maintain open communication, foster engagement, and build lasting connections with our diverse communities.

- Brochures: Available in printed form, downloadable for print, or accessible online.
- Flyers: Downloadable for print or online access.

- Marketing and Advertising: Leveraging broadcast media to reach wide audiences.
- Websites: Providing resource information with online translations available.
- Direct Telephone Access and Help Lines: Offering immediate assistance.
- Informational Webinars: Educating and informing through virtual sessions.
- Email Campaigns: Regular updates and communications sent directly to constituents.
- Grant Programs: Supporting community initiatives and development.
- Events, Conferences, and Public Meetings: Available both in-person and virtually to maximize participation.
- Manuals: Downloadable for print or accessible online.
- Forms and Applications: Available for download or online submission, including grant applications.
- Social Media Posts: Promoting programs and providing important advisory information.
- Annual Reports: Available in both printable and online formats for transparency.
- In-Person Appointments and Walk-Ins: Facilitating direct engagement.
- U.S. Postal Service: Traditional mail for communication and dissemination of information.

3. Participating Entities

- Business Action Center (BAC)
- Division of Elections
- Governor's Office of Volunteerism
- NJ Cultural Trust
- NJ Historical Commission

- NJ State Archives
- NJ State Council on the Arts
- NJ State Museum

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:

The New Jersey Department of State is committed to effectively communicating with its diverse constituencies, especially those with limited English proficiency. In line with the Language Access Law, we are dedicated to continually assessing the need for additional languages in our translation and interpreting services to ensure comprehensive accessibility.

Recognizing the diverse needs of our communities, several divisions and programs within our agency have identified additional language requirements beyond the seven most commonly spoken languages. These include European Portuguese, Hindi, and Punjabi, which have been highlighted due to their relevance in specific community interactions and program delivery.

Moreover, we are attentive to the needs of the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities. Certain of our programs offer services such as Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) captioning at large in-person public events. We also provide other language accessibility services upon request, including assistive listening devices, American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation, and more.

By proactively addressing these additional language needs, we aim to foster inclusivity and ensure that all individuals, regardless of their language proficiency, have meaningful access to our programs and services. Our ongoing commitment to language accessibility reflects our dedication to serving the diverse population of New Jersey effectively and equitably.

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

The New Jersey Department of State serves a diverse constituency that includes individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), such as immigrants, refugees, international students, tourists, and ethnic communities within our service area. We also address to the needs of the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities.

Spanish is the predominant language requiring translation services across New Jersey. For specific programs and services, we utilize U.S. Census data and other relevant datasets to guide our language translation efforts. For instance, the Division of Elections leverages this data to identify the four languages legally required for election materials: English, Spanish, Korean (specifically for Bergen County), and Gujarati (for Middlesex County).

As we implement the Language Access Law, our commitment to inclusivity and responsiveness remains unwavering. We continually monitor and assess language needs to ensure our communications are inclusive and responsive, expanding our language services as new needs arise to ensure comprehensive access and support for all individuals seeking our assistance. Our commitment to understanding and addressing the diverse language characteristics of our service area is integral to fulfilling our mission and serving our community effectively.

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

D-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)	
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	
Other: Certain staff speak Spanish. Brochures in Spanish.	(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: Certain staff speak Spanish and Korean	(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	
Multilingual chatbot on website	
Use of automated translation tools only to identify primary language	(X)
Other:	

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: Grantee agencies who are qualified, trained, and/or designated multilingual staff.	(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	
In-person interpreting services	
Video-remote interpreting services	
Other: Utilization of translation services including services for the deaf community and the hard of hearing.	(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:	
Trained multilingual staff can communicate with individuals with LEP in select languages, including:	
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: Certain individual staff speak Spanish and Korean	(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	
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:	

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	
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: Through any event registration process	(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	
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	

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	
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	
How requests were met	
Whether language assistance services were requested in languages other than the required seven	
How the agency intends to notify the populations with LEP of the available language assistance services	
How the agency documents the actual provision of language assistance services to individuals with LEP	
Other:	

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: The Inventory of Translated Vital Documents is a separate document located at <https://nj.gov/state/dos-language-access-plan.shtml>