

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement

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For questions specific to MONSE’s Language Access Plan, contact:

Cassidy Anderson

Cassidy.anderson@baltimorecity.gov

410-241-9060

For general questions related to language access in Baltimore City, contact:

Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs

language.access@baltimorecity.gov

410-396-8056

Introduction

Vision Statement

The Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) is committed to providing timely language access services to Baltimoreans who are identified as Limited English Proficient to advance Mayor Scott’s vision of creating a safer and more equitable Baltimore, where language barriers do not hinder anyone from receiving MONSE’s direct services.

Definitions

Limited English Proficient (LEP): Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

Meaningful access: Language assistance provided to LEP individuals that is accurate, timely, and effective.

Translation: The conversion of **written** materials from one language to another.

Interpretation: The conversion of **oral** interactions from one language to another.

“Ad hoc” interpreter: A person who provides interpretation services when necessary or needed, for whom interpretation is not part of their job responsibilities.

Vital Documents: Any form, permit, record, or other document that individuals applying for services or benefits from an agency must understand, respond to or complete, to access the services/benefits or continue to receive those services or benefits.

Vital Programs or Services: Those services or programs of such importance that an individual or requestor would experience serious consequences if language barriers prevented access to these services or programs.

LEP Demographics

Baltimore City is home to almost 57,000 individuals (10.3% of the City's population) who speak a language other than English at home, and nearly 20,000 of those individuals speak English less than very well (3.7% of the population).¹ These individuals are *Limited English Proficient* (LEP), meaning that they do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to speak, write, or understand English.² Currently, the top five languages spoken by LEP individuals in Baltimore are: Spanish or Spanish Creole (8,837), Arabic (1,581), Chinese (1,356), French (1,065), and Korean (839).

Baltimore is also committed to welcoming its refugee population. Since 2015, over 2,500 refugees have come to call Baltimore home. Specifically in 2017, the International Rescue Committee (known as "IRC", Baltimore's local resettlement agency) resettled 587 refugees, and the languages most frequently spoken by those resettled that year were Arabic (12), Tigrinya (47), and Kiswahili (35). In 2018, the IRC resettled 338 refugees, with the languages spoken most frequently by those resettled being Kiswahili (58), Kibembe (37), and Dari (27).

Baltimore's immigrant & refugee populations benefit from language access services in the City of Baltimore, as these services enable New Americans to better navigate and access the City of Baltimore's programs & services.

Languages most frequently encountered by MONSE: Drawing upon data collected by our respective departments, which include the frequency of LEP individual encounters based on language, documents translated and language service expenditures, MONSE most often engages with LEP individuals speaking the following languages: Spanish, Korean, Chinese, and Arabic. This data informs our strategic approach to effectively address the language access needs of our diverse community.

¹ [American Community Survey 2021 5-yr estimates](#)

² Definition from [LEP.gov](#)

Legal Framework

The legal precedent for Language Access originates from Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. National origin has been interpreted to include language, and thereby, programs receiving federal funds cannot impede access to individuals who speak a language other than English.

Title VI was strengthened by Executive Order 13166, signed by Bill Clinton in 2000, which mandates certain language assistance in federal and federally funded programs. Thus, language access is particularly important for Baltimore City agencies that leverage receive federal funds for programming.

The Baltimore City Chief Administrative Officer's (CAO) directive, effective April 1, 2024, requires certain City Agencies that provide constituent-facing services to take steps to provide LEP persons with meaningful access to services and programs in their primary language, as well as to inform the public of the availability of language access services to assist them in obtaining and utilizing services.

Contact with LEP Individuals

MONSE has several points of contact with the public:

- (1) Victim Services Encounters – Occasionally, MONSE's victim services team will interact with an LEP individual. In these instances, if there is no bilingual staff available to interpret, staff uses telephonic interpretation or relies on online platforms such as Google Translate.
- (2) Community Engagement Activities – MONSE regularly engages in community-based activities, such as door knocking, community walks, community forums, etc. When there is a known population of LEP individuals in the area the team is in, efforts are made to have onsite interpreters, by pairing those proficient in the commonly spoken language with English only speakers for support. Additionally, interpreters may be retained. In the case of not having an interpreter available, telephonic interpretation would be used.
- (3) Supervised Visitation – those utilizing the services at the Baltimore City Visitation Center can frequently be LEP individuals. Onsite, there are interpreters available, as well as telephonic interpreters as needed. MONSE is in the process of hiring a bilingual (English/Spanish) visitation monitor to better meet these needs.

- (4) Group Violence Reduction Strategy (GVRS) Custom Notifications – as we expand GVRS into districts with higher levels of LEP individuals, we will leverage bilingual Community Moral Voices to assist in onsite translation / interpretation services.

Language Access Services

Oral Interpretation Services

To ensure that the inability to communicate in English does not deprive the public of rights and privileges, our department will strive to provide an interpreter when possible, at no cost to LEP individuals. Services we are prepared to offer include telephonic interpretation and at times in-person interpretation.

Protocols

To ensure that the inability to communicate in English does not deprive the public of rights and privileges, our department will strive to provide an interpreter when possible, at no cost to LEP individuals, pursuant to the following protocols:



- (1) An individual approaches an employee and appears to be asking for help but has difficulty communicating what he or she needs, and/or
- (2) When a request for an interpreter is made either orally, in writing or by pointing to a language [iSpeak] card, the employee shall determine the availability of bi-lingual staff in the worksite who speak the language being requested.

Procedure

- (1) When bilingual staff is not available, the employee shall contact a telephone interpreter service to provide interpretation services, and the process to do so outlined below:

Telephonic Interpretation – Staff can get an over-the-phone interpreter by following the below procedure. This service is available 24/7.

To access a telephonic interpreter:

1. **(If you are using an interpreter for an in-person interaction, begin at Step 2.)**
Let the LEP customer know that you are connecting with an interpreter and place them on hold. Then press the transfer key  (or "Add Call" on a cellphone).
2. **Dial 1-855-412-6120.**
3. If prompted for your Client ID, **enter 525285.** (You will likely not be asked for this number)
4. **Select the language** you need:
 - a. Press **1 for Spanish**, or
 - b. Press **2 for all other languages.** When prompted, state the name of the language you are requesting and confirm the language (or press 1 to confirm).
 - c. Press **0 for unknown language**, if you are not able to identify the customer's language, to connect to a representative to assist with language identification.
5. **Enter the access code for your agency/department: 140**, followed by the pound (#) sign. You may be placed on hold while an interpreter is connected to the call, or you may be connected to an interpreter immediately.
6. **Record** the name and ID number of the interpreter.
7. **Brief the interpreter**, summarizing the purpose of the call and any special instructions.
8. **(Skip if in-person interaction)** When the interpreter is on the call, press the transfer key  again to have the interpreter join the call with LEP customer.
9. **Say "End of Call"** to the interpreter when the call is completed.

(2) When an LEP person requests in-person interpretation for a future meeting, telephonic or in person interpretation may be used, and the process for requesting in-person interpretation is below:

Request In-Person Interpretation – You can request an in-person interpreter via email at language.access@baltimorecity.gov or using the [General Language Access Request form](#).

Future Plans

- A) **Use telephonic interpretation and ensure that the public knows about the availability of these services.** MONSE staff has now been made aware that they are able to access the telephonic interpretation services. Agency wide, employees will strive to utilize this service when interacting with LEP individuals.
- B) **Grow in-person interpretation services.** MONSE will strive to grow capacity to provide in-person, on site interpretation services, especially when interacting with communities that are known to have a high population of LEP residents. The agency will work to do this by:
 - (1) Advanced surveying of communities to assess interpretation needs ahead of large-scale meetings and events;
 - (2) Strategic communications to educate the public on the availability of interpretation services.

Translation

To ensure that the inability to communicate in English does not deprive the public of rights and privileges, our department will continue to provide translations, at no cost, for LEP individuals. This includes translations of vital documents, signage, and portions of our website.

Translation of Vital Documents

A *vital document* is a document that is critical for obtaining services or benefits or is required by law. It also notifies a person of ineligibility for a particular service, if applicable. In the case of Baltimore City, vital documents must be translated into Spanish, French, Chinese, Arabic, & Korean.

MONSE has developed a list of the documents that are vital to the access of LEP persons to MONSE's programs. This list was developed with consideration of the applicable documents that are necessary to educate constituents about public safety initiatives and opportunities. Documents have also been identified that may contain important information on how to obtain MONSE's services. Identified vital documents were translated in the summer of 2024 and will be made available by request. Some documents can be found on MONSE's website. MONSE currently provides identified documents in the following languages: Spanish, French, Chinese, Arabic, & Korean.

- Coordinated Neighborhood Stabilization Response Letters
- Custom Notification Letters
- Human Trafficking Collaborative Information
- Safe Streets Collateral
- Victim Services Collateral and Information
- Visitation Center Collateral and Forms
- Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan Biennial Update One Pager
- Reentry Information
- Summer Youth Engagement and Programming Resources

Bilingual Staff Capacity

This list identifies the languages spoken by staff in the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement who are linguistically, culturally, and technically able to deliver services in a language other than English.

- Spanish (Victim Services Team)
- French (Policy and Research Team)
- Tagalog (Policy and Research Team)

Future Plans

The agency intends to increase in-house language capacity by:

1. Including language skills as a “desirable” qualification in job announcements.
2. Hiring a bilingual Visitation Center Monitor to better serve Spanish speaking clients of the Visitation Center (10/4/24).

Public Notice of the Right to Language Access

To support public awareness of language access services, the agency makes the following resources available to its customers:

1. Agency notices and flyers will also include information about the availability of language access services and simple instructions on how to request language assistance when appropriate. Flyers will be made available at community events and will be displayed in the Baltimore City Visitation Center.
2. Tag lines will be included in or attached to a document. Taglines in non-English languages can be used on documents written in English that describe how LEPs can obtain a translation of the document or can access an interpreter to read or explain the document.

Staff will also have access to “I Speak Bmore” language access cards. These come with a detachable wallet-size card that says in both English and a second language “I speak (language). I need assistance in (language).”

Staff Training

Training Protocol

- a. The agency’s Language Access Plan is included in the staff handbook, posted on the intranet, and provided as a hard copy to all staff members at the time of hiring.
- b. The agency will distribute the Language Access Plan to all staff and will keep a current electronic copy available, so all staff will be aware of LEP policies and procedures, and know where to access them.
- c. All staff providing technical assistance, training, or receiving in-bound calls will complete the Language Access 101 & 102 trainings in Workday annually, or complete the training upon employment, and then annually.
- d. The Language Access 101 & 102 trainings will include information on the following topics:
 - Legal obligation to provide language assistance,
 - Overview of the LEP community in Baltimore,
 - Summary of Language access policies,
 - Identifying and responding appropriately to LEP individuals,
 - Accessing interpreters (over-the-phone); and

- Using and working with interpreters.
- e. The agency will circulate this language access policy to all staff within 10 days after adoption. Every two years, the agency will circulate the revised policy and protocols to all staff after the revised policy is adopted.
- f. Orientation for New Staff– New staff will be provided training on the agency’s Language Access Plan at the time of the onboarding process, to ensure they are aware of language assistance protocols.
- g. The following departments, offices, teams, or other components will require language access training:
 - Victim Services team
 - Community Engagement and Opportunity team
 - Group Violence Reduction Strategy team
 - Community Violence Intervention team
 - Administrative team

Contracts

In instances where MONSE uses federal funds to contract or subcontract services to a third party, and those services may impact LEP individuals, MONSE ensures that the relevant third party acknowledges and affirms federal language access mandates.

Monitoring Plan & Compliance

The Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement will begin implementation of this language access plan as of September 30, 2024. Compliance with this plan will be demonstrated through:

- Language Access Liaison attendance at bimonthly, cross-agency liaison meetings convened by MIMA (MIMA will monitor attendance.)
- Posting this plan to your Agency’s website (monse.baltimorecity.gov) and cross-posting to MIMA's website (mima.baltimorecity.gov)
- Updating this plan by September 30, 2026 and resubmitting it to MIMA for review
- Responding to and resolving any complaints with the direction and support of MIMA
- Submission of an annual report to MIMA by October 31 of each year that will include the follow information:
 - Number of LEP Encounters (By Language)
 - Type of Language Services Provided to LEP Individuals
 - Number of Documents Translated
 - Language Services Expenditures
 - Number of Bilingual Staff

- Number of Staff Trained in Language Access
- Data on Services Offered to LEP Individuals
- Evidence of Outreach to LEP Communities
- List of Contracts that included the language access clause as described in the previous “Contracts” section.

Complaint Procedure

You may file a Language Access complaint if you believe you have been wrongly denied the benefits or services of this program due to language barriers. To file a complaint, you can contact 311 to file a “Language Access Complaint”. When describing the nature of your complaint or concern, include the name of the agency, the employee (if known), the date of the incident, and a description of the incident.

To contact 311:

- Dial 311
- Submit a Language Access Complaint online at <https://balt311.baltimorecity.gov/citizen/s/>.

Residents can also send complaints directly to MONSE at monse@baltimorecity.gov.

Data Collection

MONSE will collect the following information and submit as part of an annual report to MIMA:

- (1) Number of LEP Encounters (By Language) - To collect these data, the agency includes information on language preference in all intake forms and case notes.
- (2) Type of Language Services Provided to LEP Customers – To collect these data, the agency includes information in case notes on the language services provided to LEP customers.
- (3) Number of Documents Translated – MIMA’s Language Access team will provide a summary of document translations that were facilitated by MIMA. The agency will also include documents that were translated internally or by a professional vendor, apart from projects facilitated by MIMA.
- (4) Language Services Expenditures – To collect this information, the Agency Fiscal Officer reviews information on expenditures for the following translation and interpretation vendors: Ad Astra Inc. and Language Line Solutions. MIMA’s Language Access team additionally provides information on expenditures for these services that were paid for by the City’s centralized translation and interpretation accounts.

To report on the number of bilingual staff in the agency and the number of staff trained in language access, the agency's human resources manager will provide the requested information.