

Cause Number D-1-GN-61-121012

Travis County Civil Courts

Language Access Plan

Filed In The District Court
of Travis County, Texas

MAY - 9 2018 JC
At 3:50 p.m.
Velva L. Price, District Clerk

I. Legal Basis and Purpose

This document serves as the plan for the Travis County Civil Courts to provide to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) services that are in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.; 45 C.F.R. § 80.1 et seq.; and 28 C.F.R. § 42.101-42.112) and the U.S. Department of Justice's guidance on Language Access in State Courts. The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and reasonable language assistance to LEP persons who come in contact with the Travis County Civil Courts.

This LEP plan was developed to ensure meaningful access to court services for persons with limited English proficiency. Although court interpreters are provided for persons with hearing needs, access services for those individuals are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act rather than Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and therefore are not addressed in this plan.

II. Needs Assessment

The Travis County Civil Courts make every effort to provide services to all LEP persons. The foreign languages that are most frequently used in the courts' geographic area are Spanish, Arabic, Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean.

This information is based on data collected from the U.S. Census Bureau and from the experience of court staff, and the plan is intended to address access to any LEP group that constitutes 5% of the community or more than 1,000 people, whichever is less.

III. Language Assistance Resources

A. Interpreters Used in the Courtroom

1. Providing Interpreters in the Courtroom

The Travis County Civil Courts provide spoken-language interpreters in court proceedings in accordance with both state and federal law.

For indigent litigants and witnesses in any case that implicates a due process right, such as housing, children, or personal safety, the court will provide an interpreter at no cost to the litigant or witness. Cases involving personal safety include, but are not limited to, hearings involving domestic violence and elder abuse. In juvenile hearings and all contempt proceedings, which are quasi-criminal, the court is mandated to provide interpreters and will provide interpreters at no cost to court users.

Responsibility for the cost for spoken-language interpreters for non-indigent litigants and witnesses in other civil proceedings will be determined at the discretion of the presiding judge and will include analysis of the issues involved in the case, the level of need, and the funding available to the courts. Additionally, courts may use interpreters who are providing mandated interpreting services for criminal or juvenile cases for incidental use in civil courtrooms. The Travis County Civil Courts recognize that true access to courts necessarily means providing interpreters in civil cases and will make every effort to provide such interpreters whenever possible.

2. Determining the Need for an Interpreter in the Courtroom

The Travis County Civil Courts may determine whether an LEP court participant needs an interpreter for a court hearing in various ways. The need for a court interpreter may be identified prior to a court proceeding by the LEP person or by anyone acting, with permission, on his or her behalf. The need for an interpreter also may be made known in the courtroom at the time of the proceeding. Also, the presiding judge may determine that it is appropriate to provide an interpreter for a given court matter.

Many people who need an interpreter will not request one because they do not realize that interpreters are available or because they do not recognize the level of English proficiency or communication skills needed to understand the court proceeding. Although the court does not have funding to provide interpreters for non-mandated proceedings, the court may be able to provide some assistance within existing funding restrictions and will endeavor to do so for non-mandated proceedings.

In a case where the court is mandated to provide an interpreter, but one is not available at the time of the proceeding, even after the court has made all reasonable efforts to locate one, as previously outlined in this plan, the case will be postponed and continued on a date when an interpreter can be provided.

3. Court Interpreter Qualifications

The Travis County Civil Courts hire interpreters for courtroom hearings in compliance with the rules and policies set forth by Chapter 57 of the Texas Government Code. The Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation maintains a statewide roster of licensed

Travis County Civil Courts
LAP Plan

interpreters who may work in the courts. This roster is available to court staff and the public on the Internet at www.license.state.tx.us/licensesearch/.

For uncontested matters, the presiding judge may permit use of an unlicensed interpreter, as long as state and federal requirements are met.

B. Language Services Outside the Courtroom

1. Coordination of Language Services

The Travis County Civil Courts have designated the Court Administrator's Office as the primary point of contact for all LEP services. The Civil Courts staff members are trained to direct questions about LEP services to that office.

2. Language Resources Available at the Civil Courthouse

- a. "I Speak" cards to identify the individual's primary language;
- b. Written information in Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese and Korean on how to access and navigate the court;
- c. Third party providers to provide language services in over 170 languages;
- d. Interpreters at monthly evening uncontested dockets; and
- e. Bilingual staff is available to answer questions and coordinate language access services.

3. Language Resources for Mediation and Depositions

The Travis County Civil Courts anticipate that interpreters will be necessary for LEP participants during proceedings outside of the courtroom that may be vital to the participants' legal cases. For indigent litigants and witnesses in any case that implicates a due process right, such as housing, children, or personal safety, the Court will provide an interpreter at court ordered mediations or depositions at no cost to the litigant or witness.

C. Translated Forms and Documents

The Travis County Civil Courts understand the importance of translating forms and documents so that LEP individuals have greater access to the courts' services. The Travis County Civil Courts currently use forms and instructional materials translated into commonly used languages. These translated forms are available at the court's Web site for internal use and are available to the public at www.co.travis.tx.us/law_library as

well as at the court's self-help center.

Interpreters at court hearings are expected to provide sight translations of court documents and correspondence associated with the case.

IV. Court Staff and Volunteer Recruitment

A. Bilingual Staff for Language Access

1. The Travis County Civil Courts are an equal opportunity employer and often hire bilingual staff to serve its LEP constituents.
2. Bilingual staff members are on call to assist with contacts from LEP individuals, as needed.

B. Volunteers for Language Access

The courts also use volunteers to assist with language access in the following areas:

1. At self-help centers to assist LEP users;
2. At public counters to provide interpretive services between staff and the LEP public; and
3. To serve as interpreter trainees by helping LEP individuals in areas outside of the courtroom.

VII. Public Notification and Evaluation of Language Access Plan

A. Language Access Plan Approval and Notification

The Travis County Civil Courts' Language Access Plan is subject to approval by the Civil Judges. Any revisions to the plan will be submitted to the Civil Judges for approval. Copies of the Travis County Civil Courts' Language Access Plan will be provided to the public on request. In addition, the Travis County Courts will post this plan on its public Web site.

B. Evaluation and review of the Language Access Plan

The Travis County Civil Courts will routinely assess whether changes to the Language Access Plan are needed. The plan will remain in effect unless modified or updated. The Civil Judges will attempt to review the effectiveness of the Travis County Civil Courts Language Access plan annually and update it as necessary. The evaluation may include

**Travis County Civil Courts
LAP Plan**

identification of any problem areas and development of corrective action strategies. Elements of the evaluation may include:

1. Number of LEP persons requesting court interpreters or language assistance and funding provided;
2. Assessment of current language needs to determine if additional services or translated materials should be provided;
3. Solicitation and review of feedback from LEP communities within the county;
4. Assessment of whether court staff adequately understand LEP policies and procedures and how to carry them out; and
5. Review of feedback from court employee training sessions.

C. Language Access Policy Effective Date: *April 1, 2010;
Revised April 27, 2018.*

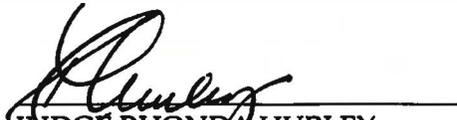
D. Approved by: Travis County Civil Judges.

Travis County Civil Courts
LEP Plan

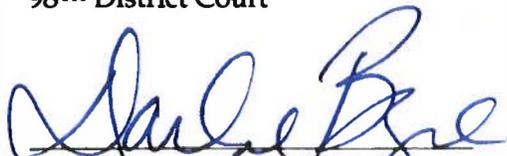
The revised Language Access Plan is effective as of April 27, 2018.


JUDGE SCOTT H. JENKINS
53RD District Court


JUDGE JAN SOIFER
345TH District Court


JUDGE RHONDA HURLEY
98TH District Court


JUDGE TIM SULAK
353RD District Court


JUDGE DARLENE BYRNE
126TH District Court


JUDGE ORLINDA NARANJO
419TH District Court


JUDGE GISELA D. TRIANA
200TH District Court


JUDGE DUSTIN HOWELL
459TH District Court


JUDGE AMY CLARK MEACHUM
201ST District Court


JUDGE TODD WONG
County Court at Law #1


JUDGE KARIN CRUMP
250TH District Court


JUDGE ERIC SHEPPERD
County Court at Law #1


JUDGE LORA J. LIVINGSTON
261ST District Court