



COMMITTEE ON LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

2019 REPORT

Committee on Limited English Proficiency

The Committee on Limited English Proficiency was formed in 2008 under the Access goal of the Judicial Branch's Strategic Plan and charged with "eliminating language barriers to facilities, processes and information that are faced by individuals with limited English proficiency." The committee is co-chaired by Justice Maria Araujo Kahn and Alejandra Donath, Program Manager for the Interpreter and Translator Services Unit (ITS), and is comprised of the following members¹:

Troy Brown
Brittany Kaplan
Richard Loffredo
Brandon Pelegano
Viviana Livesay (Legal Services advisor)
Heather Collins (Support Staff)

The Judicial Branch is committed to ensuring that limited English proficient (LEP) individuals are able to access its facilities, processes, and services.

In 2019, ITS received over 41,000 requests to provide in-person oral language assistance in 72 different languages/dialects and over 18,000 requests to provide over-the-phone interpreting services in 46 different languages/dialects. In addition, ITS translated 175 separate Judicial Branch forms as well as 95 case specific documents in 2019.

This report serves as an update of the work of the Committee on Limited English Proficiency in 2019.

¹The Committee would like to acknowledge Attorney Michelle Fica from Connecticut Legal Services. Her attendance and participation in the Committee meetings has been invaluable.

The Committee would also like to acknowledge the work of Doreen Del Bianco, Eduardo Palmieri, and Katherine Casaubon, who are no longer on the Committee. Doreen, Ed and Kate were great assets to the work of the Committee and will be missed.

I. On-Going Initiatives

In its effort to ensure that LEP individuals can access the Judicial Branch's facilities, processes, and information, the Committee has been working over the past year on the following areas:

Continued LEP Training

In 2009, the Judicial Branch developed a mandatory LEP training program for all of its employees that provided information on the federal requirements of providing services to LEP individuals, explained the role of the interpreter, and detailed how to obtain language assistance and translation services. This program also offered cultural sensitivity education. Over 2,300 employees attended this half-day program.

In 2017, the LEP training moved to an online format. This 75-minute course provides an overview of the Judicial Branch's obligations to provide services to LEP individuals, details the role of an interpreter, the differences between an interpreter and a translator, and how Judicial Branch employees can obtain language assistance services 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Since its online launch, over 4,400 employees have taken the course.

In 2018, the LEP Committee developed an online training for those entities that contract with the Judicial Branch and provide services to LEP stakeholders. The training covers the federal requirements regarding the provision of services to LEP individuals, the entity's responsibilities to LEP individuals under the terms of their contract with the Judicial Branch, how an entity can meet its responsibilities, the difference between interpretation and translation, and tips on how to work with interpreters.

Judges and Family Support Magistrates were given LEP training in 2013. Additional LEP training was provided to judges in 2016. Since 2013, LEP training has been incorporated into the new Judge and Family Support Magistrate orientation program provided to all newly appointed Judges and Family Support Magistrates. In 2019, one new Family Support Magistrate was appointed and received LEP training.

Issues surrounding limited English proficiency and the requirement to provide services are also part of a larger training that is provided by Chief Justice Robinson and Justice Kahn. This training also covers implicit bias, cultural competency and the Americans with Disabilities Act. In 2019, Chief Justice Robinson and Justice Kahn provided this training to lawyers who represent juveniles at the Child Welfare Symposium, the Eastern Connecticut State University Forensic Social Worker Conference, the Office of the Public Defender, the Democratic Caucus at the Connecticut Legislature, the South Asian Bar Association and the state of Idaho Judicial Branch. In addition, Justice Kahn presented on LEP requirements and issues at the New England Regional Conference of State Court Administrators.

Revised Language Access Plan

The LEP Committee reviewed and revised the Judicial Branch's Language Access Plan. The revised Language Access Plan, which was approved by the Chief Court Administrator, has been translated into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese and posted on the Branch's Internet and Intranet websites.

Vital Documents

The ongoing identification and translation of vital documents has remained a priority of the LEP Committee and the Judicial Branch. In 2013 and again in 2017, the Chief Court Administrator requested the Judicial Branch's Executive Directors to identify the vital documents utilized by their Divisions. Interpreter and Translator Services continues the process of translating these documents into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese. In 2019, 175 vital documents were translated into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese. To date, over 750 vital documents have been translated.

Telephonic Bilingual Services

The Judicial Branch has contracted with three vendors for telephonic language assistance services, enabling Judicial Branch staff and individuals who are limited English proficient to bridge the language gap by communicating through the use of a telephonic interpreting service.

Telephonic Bilingual Services are available in more than 150 languages, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are available in all Judicial Branch facilities and are also available to staff working outside of Judicial Branch facilities, via a cell phone, when needed to communicate with LEP individuals. In 2019, Telephonic Bilingual Services were used over 18,000 times in 46 different languages/dialects.

Translating Pages on the Judicial Branch's Internet Site

The overwhelming majority of interpreter requests continue to be for the Spanish language (approximately 88%). The next most requested languages are Portuguese and Polish (approximately 3% each). Accordingly, the Judicial Branch continues to translate pages on its website into Spanish, Portuguese and Polish.

II. Future Plans

The LEP Committee recognizes the continuing need for the Judicial Branch to provide access to its facilities, processes, and information to all limited English proficient individuals. In the coming year, the Committee intends to focus on the following areas:

Vital Documents

The translation of vital documents is an important initiative that has been underway since 2013. The Interpreter and Translator Services Unit will continue to translate vital documents into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese.

The LEP Committee will look into ways to better inform Judicial Branch staff and external stakeholders of the documents that have been translated.

Translated Orders

The LEP Committee proposes to develop a pilot project to test the feasibility of issuing translated case specific court orders. This will allow LEP individuals to leave the courthouse with a written document containing the order of the court in their spoken language.

Video Remote Interpreting

Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) is an effective and efficient mechanism to provide interpreting services to LEP individuals. A subcommittee should be created to further explore the options available. The subcommittee should include, at a minimum, representation from the Superior Court Operations Division and the Information Technology Division. The subcommittee should present recommendations to the committee on how best to utilize VRI for in-court settings.

Training

Training on LEP issues is an ongoing priority of the LEP Committee and the Judicial Branch. The LEP Committee will explore different means of providing additional training opportunities to Judicial Branch employees, including in person training on how to utilize telephonic bilingual services and an online refresher training on when and how to access interpreter services.

The Committee will begin work on developing an online tutorial for external stakeholders on the services that the Judicial Branch provides to LEP individuals and how those services can be accessed.

Chief Justice Robinson and Justice Kahn will continue to provide the LEP, Cultural Competency, Implicit Bias and ADA training program to organizations and agencies that interact with the Judicial Branch.

Outreach

The LEP Committee will create an email account to allow stakeholders to provide suggestions on how the Judicial Branch can better meet the needs of the LEP population. The email account will be added to the Judicial Branch's LEP webpage and will be advertised to agencies working with LEP populations.

Additionally, the LEP Committee will review and prioritize the responses it received from its outreach survey in its continuing effort to address the needs of the Judicial Branch's LEP stakeholders.

Review Website

The LEP Committee will review the LEP and the LEP Committee webpages on the Judicial Branch's website to see if any improvements can be made to make it more user-friendly.