

**Minutes
Of the
Committee on Limited English Proficiency
2:00 PM
Wednesday, October 4, 2023
Via Microsoft Teams and Livestreamed on YouTube at
<https://www.youtube.com/@connecticutjudicialmeeting6042>**

Members in Attendance: Hon. José A. Suarez, Co-Chair, Ms. Alejandra Donath, Co-Chair, Mr. Troy Brown, Ms. Daisy Rosado-Hack, Atty. Brittany Kaplan, Atty. Viviana Livesay, Atty. Richard Loffredo, and Atty. Brandon Pelegano. Also in attendance: Atty. Michelle Fica of Connecticut Legal Services. Support staff: Ms. Heather Collins.

- 1) Welcome: Judge Suarez welcomed the members, including new member Daisy Rosado-Hack of the Court Support Services Division. Judge Suarez, a member of the Appellate Court, noted that he is replacing the former Co-Chair Justice Maria A. Kahn, who is now a Federal judge. Judge Suarez then asked the members to introduce themselves. Judge Suarez thanked the members for the participation on the Committee.
- 2) Approval of minutes from the November 1, 2022 meeting: Atty. Loffredo made a motion to approve the minutes and it was seconded by Atty. Livesay. Members who were in attendance at the November meeting voted to approve the minutes.
- 3) Interpreter and Translator Services (ITS) Update: Ms. Donath provided an update on the Branch's Video Remote Interpretation (VRI) program. The Branch has been working over the last decade to improve how it provides remote language interpretation. The Branch's Information Technology Division (ITD) has been working with the ITS unit since the pandemic to improve the user experience. Branch interpreters for Spanish, Polish, and Portuguese speakers, appear remotely in certain proceedings. The interpreter is able to provide simultaneous interpretation to the party or parties as though they were in person. The process has been very well received by the Clerk's offices and those who have used it. VRI is currently used in the arraignment courtrooms and is being expanded to Juvenile and Housing matters. VRI allows the Branch to provide interpretation to more parties every day, as interpreters do not have to spend time traveling. The Branch will be expanding the program to include Chinese-Mandarin interpretation. Atty. Pelegano said VRI is very easy for staff to use, and Atty. Loffredo said the Branch's IT Division has done "an outstanding job" in developing this method of VRI. A demonstration of VRI will be scheduled for the membership.

Ms. Donath reported that audio translations of Advisements of Rights in Criminal courts were recorded in Spanish. The Spanish advisements are played after being provided in English, as needed.

In 2023, the Branch translated the Notices provided in Housing court into Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Chinese, Arabic, and Haitian-Creole. These notices were recorded and played in court, as needed, after being provided in English.

Ms. Donath reported that over the last year, the Branch has been able to hire and retain an additional four interpreters, with 28 permanent staff, but that more are needed to meet the demand for services, particularly for Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese-Mandarin and Haitian Creole speakers. The Branch has [a website dedicated to recruiting qualified interpreters](#), and the Human Resources unit has worked with ITS to brainstorm on recruitment ideas.

4) Language Access Plan (LAP): Atty. Loffredo began the discussion of the revisions to the Branch's Language Access Plan, which was provided to the members prior to the meeting for review. The Branch reviews and updates its LAP every two years. Among the highlights:

- The Judicial Branch finished with the second highest rating among all 50 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia in providing language access in its courts, according to an assessment conducted by the National Center for Access to Justice (NCAJ) at Fordham Law School.
- Last year, the Branch provided [more than 32,000](#) in-person or remote interpretations in 67 different languages/dialects. In addition, over-the-phone interpreting services for over-the-counter language needs were used over 23,000 times in 60 different languages/dialects.
- According to the 2020 Census, 20.3% of Connecticut residents five years old and over spoke a language other than English at home.
- Historical data from 2008 show that Spanish continues to be the most-requested language, followed by Portuguese and Polish. In the last half decade, there has been a shift such that Chinese/Mandarin and Haitian Creole requests are outpacing requests for Polish interpretation.
- The Branch requires every employee to annually complete an online course in limited English proficiency and how to ensure language access. A new course was created in 2022.
- The Judicial Branch is developing a process in which an LEP person can register a complaint regarding the language assistance services that were provided.

Atty. Loffredo will incorporate all the comments received by the membership and recirculate the draft to the Committee.

- 5) Next Steps: The Committee discussed suggested next steps for the coming year including:
- Interpreter complaint process: Atty. Loffredo said most of the framework is in place with the form's language approved by Legal Services, and approval has been granted by Human Resources. The members agreed to target 2024 for implementation.
 - Forms/Signage: Language forms and signs are going to be updated to reflect that there is no cost for the provision of language services. There was discussion about creating additional information on flip cards or flag cards for a person to indicate what language they need. This will be taken up by the Committee in the coming months.
 - Training: The Branch requires annual LEP training for staff. There was discussion about training for Judges, as there has not been formal training for all Judges in several years. Ms. Donath and Atty. Loffredo do provide training to all new Judges. There was also discussion about mandatory training for contractors who provide services as part of their state contracts. Contractors are any entity that does a service for the Branch, from elevator repairs to residential services, and direct services provided to clients via the Court Support Services Division. Mr. Brown asked what mechanisms are in place to ensure contractors are complying with their mandates. The Branch has a training portal that IT and Administrative Services monitor for contractor-specific training and every year a report is run on the numbers of contractors who have completed LEP training.
 - Self-assessment: Mr. Brown said that the Language Access Plan is a good self-assessment of what the Branch does to ensure compliance with federal standards, but asked if there is a mechanism in place to hear from the consumers and stakeholders about the plan or services we provide. Atty. Loffredo said a survey was done some years ago. The committee will discuss this further, going forward.
- 6) Next Meeting: Judge Suarez said he would like to meet in December to touch base on the final LAP, and to set up a schedule of meetings for 2024. A date will be circulated to the members.
- 7) Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.