

**Minutes
Of the
Committee on Limited English Proficiency
2:00 PM
Thursday, December 7, 2023
Hartford Community Court
80 Washington St., Hartford CT**

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

- 1) Welcome: Judge Suarez welcomed the members.
- 2) Approval of minutes from the October 4, 2023 meeting: Atty. Pelegano made a motion to approve the minutes and it was seconded by Mr. Brown. The Minutes were unanimously approved.
- 3) Video Remote Interpreting Demonstration: Atty. Loffredo and Ms. Donath provided a real-time demonstration of the video remote interpreting process and equipment with assistance from Mr. Rolando Perez-Olivares, a Court Planner in the Interpreter Services Unit. Atty. Loffredo explained that the move to incorporate VRI came about due to Chief Court Administrator Judge Bozzuto's desire to implement simultaneous interpretation instead of consecutive interpretation by phone. The VRI essentially mirrors the in-person interpretation experience as the Spanish, Polish, Chinese-Mandarin or Portuguese interpreter is seen on a video monitor in person by the recipient, who listens to the simultaneous interpretation via headphones. This process allows the court process to proceed in real time, as opposed to having to wait for consecutive interpretation. VRI is now used in all arraignment courts, as well as Juvenile and Housing courts. In 2024, the service will be rolled out to include Family courts and Family Support Magistrate proceedings. The technology is only for use in court, and not for conference or interview room proceedings. Atty. Pelegano said the technology is extremely useful in the Hartford JD, and they use the videoconferencing equipment instead of the movable VRI carts. The Branch has purchased 60 VRI carts, which can be easily moved from courtroom to courtroom as needed. The carts are in addition to 60 videoconferencing televisions used in the field. Atty. Loffredo noted that the Branch still continues to utilize telephonic interpreting services in clerk's office, probation meetings, and family relations meetings. The Branch will also be setting up cameras in translation field office so staff can do 'queue work' as needed when they are not in court.

- 4) Language Access Plan: There were a few minor edits suggested to Atty. Loffredo by the membership. He will incorporate those suggestions and forward the report to Judge Bozzuto, and it will also be translated into Spanish, Polish, and Portuguese and posted to the Branch's website.
- 5) Scheduling 2024 Meetings: Judge Suarez suggested the Committee meet in the Spring. As there were several absences from the meeting, Atty. Loffredo suggested that staff circulate suggested dates before deciding on a Spring meeting.
- 6) The Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

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.

- 7) 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.

8) 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.

9) 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.

10) Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.