

# FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACCESS: TIPS AND RESOURCES

*Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (1964) protects persons from discrimination based on their race, color and national origin . Language is included under the banner of national origin. Organizations receiving federal assistance must provide meaningful access to their programs and services for individuals and families with limited English proficiency (LEP).*



## COMMUNICATING ACROSS THE LANGUAGE BARRIER

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*Regardless of LEP, you can encourage and participate in meaningful communication.*

*Consider the following:*

- ⇒ Greet the individual warmly and ask how they prefer to be addressed.
- ⇒ Speak clearly and concisely, slow down your rate of speech, and pause if needed.
- ⇒ Choose simple words and phrases, and avoid jargon or idioms (e.g. it's a piece of cake).
- ⇒ Explain procedures simply and offer to repeat.
- ⇒ Encourage questions and give time to respond.
- ⇒ Use active listening to clarify what you've heard.
- ⇒ Check for understanding and agreement; don't rely on a nod or smile.

## SERVING INDIVIDUALS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP)

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*Consider these steps, as an organization and an individual, to ensure quality service to LEP clients.*

- ⇒ Establish organization-wide language access protocols, policies, and resources.
- ⇒ Be prepared to identify LEP individuals and assess the need for language assistance services.
- ⇒ Offer language services free of charge to those with LEP needs in their preferred language.
- ⇒ Provide easy-to-understand print and signage in languages commonly used in your area.
- ⇒ Plan to use additional time during meetings for interpretation.
- ⇒ Employ bilingual staff and train or test for interpreter proficiency.
- ⇒ Form relationships with professional and volunteer language service providers.
- ⇒ Partner with specialists in ethnic and immigrant-serving organizations.
- ⇒ Find cultural moderators: Individuals who can bridge to cultures.

## WORKING WITH AN INTERPRETER

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*When working with an interpreter, consider the following:*

- ⇒ Use trained and certified adult interpreters; do not rely on children.
- ⇒ Speak with the interpreter prior to meeting with the client to discuss the purpose of the meeting. Be sure to clarify roles (e.g. the service provider, the interpreter and the LEP participant or client)
- ⇒ Allow for additional time.
- ⇒ Address the client, not the interpreter.
- ⇒ Use brief, concise sentences and pause periodically to give the interpreter time to interpret. Avoid using professional jargon or colloquialisms.
- ⇒ Understand that some words and concepts may not directly translate
- ⇒ Do not interrupt the interpreter.
- ⇒ Throughout the meeting, check with the interpreter to ensure you are not speaking too fast or slow.
- ⇒ Be mindful of non-verbal communication and body language.
- ⇒ Debrief the meeting and discuss difficulties that arose.

### **MORE INFORMATIONAL RESOURCES**

[WWW.LEP.GOV](http://WWW.LEP.GOV)

The LEP.gov website acts as a clearinghouse, providing and linking to information, tools, and technical assistance regarding limited English proficiency and language services for federal agencies, recipients of federal funds, users of federal programs and federally assisted programs, and other stakeholders. LEP.gov promotes a positive and cooperative understanding of the importance of language access to federally conducted and federally assisted programs.