



Language Access Plan

Houston Police Department

Policy Statement

The Houston Police Department (HPD) recognizes the diverse nature of the greater Houston community and strives to provide prompt and effective communication between Department personnel and those individuals in need of police services, including those persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) or limited English proficient (LEP).

The Department strives to be in compliance with all local, state, and federal laws consistent with its obligations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and by Part A, Title II of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Title VI requires governmental entities to ensure that individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access to HPD's services, programs, and activities. The term LEP does not refer to people who are bilingual, but rather to individuals who have a limited ability to read, write or understand English well or at all.

Purpose

The purpose of this Language Access Plan is to make reasonable efforts to eliminate or reduce barriers to Houston Police Department programs and activities for people who have a limited ability to speak, write, and/or understand the English language.

This Plan along with General Order 500-13 provides instruction and guidance to improving access to services for persons with limited English proficiency.

Definitions

1. **Bilingual** – Any Individual who is able to read, speak, or write two languages fluently and communicate directly and accurately in both English and another language.
2. **Essential Public Information (Vital Document)** – Any information developed or used by the Houston Police Department and deemed vital for purposes of public safety, public health, and economic development.
3. **Limited English Proficient (LEP)** – Describes an individual whose primary language is not English and who possesses a limited ability to read, speak, write, or otherwise understand the English language.
4. **Informal Interpreter** – An HPD employee or an age appropriate friend or family member of a DHH or LEP person who is able to effectively communicate.
5. **Professional Interpreter or Translator** – Any person hired for a fee to interpret or translate.
6. **Qualified Employee Interpreter** – Any employee who has passed the appropriate language proficiency test and is therefore qualified to serve as an interpreter. These employees are paid for their proficiency in a language other than English.

Scope of Policy

The Department strives to foster positive interactions with all members of our community. Therefore, the Department shall take reasonable steps to provide language assistance services to LEP individuals. Subject to the guidelines of this plan and General Order 500-13, Department staff should take reasonable steps to provide language assistance services upon request by an LEP person.

Field Response

1. All members of the Department who must communicate with an individual whose primary language is not English should determine if the individual is LEP.
2. If the individual is LEP the employee may ask an age appropriate citizen for assistance.
3. If no one is able to assist, the employee shall ask dispatch to send out a request for an on-duty employee who knows how to interpret or translate the needed language to assist with general information gathering.

Department employees shall focus on establishing effective communication upon becoming aware that a member of the public is DHH or LEP. When an employee is unable to communicate effectively with a DHH or LEP person, the officer may ask an age appropriate citizen for assistance. If no one is able to assist, the employee shall ask dispatch to send out a request for an on-duty employee who knows how to interpret or translate the needed language to assist with general information gathering.

Arrest

If the arresting and/or the transporting officer is aware that the suspect is DHH or LEP the employee shall;

1. Be responsible for advising the suspect of the reason for the arrest in the most effective means of communication reasonably available, and
2. Verbally advise a Joint Processing Center supervisor that the suspect is DHH or LEP when placing the suspect in jail.

Documentation

In regards to a routine traffic crash investigation involving a DHH or LEP person, employees shall list the following within the body of a report or traffic citation:

1. The language and dialect used or needed to communicate with the DHH or LEP person,
2. That an interpreter was used or is needed for further investigation, and
3. Pertinent information about the interpreter, including the person's name, address, telephone contact information, and license or certificate numbers.

Investigation

Investigators who need an interpreter shall follow the guidelines set forth in General Order 500-13.

Translation of Department Text

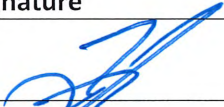

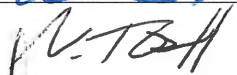

In order to ensure effective and efficient implementation of document translation, HPD plans to conduct the following routine monitoring and evaluation of Vital Documents.

1. On an annual basis, each Division Commander shall submit documents they deem to be Essential Public Information to the Office of Planning & Data Governance.
2. The Office of Planning will review and confirm approval for translation.
3. The department shall use the City-wide translation vendor to translate approved documents.
4. Essential Public Information/Vital documents will be reviewed annually by the Office of Planning to determine if additional documents should be translated and/or if the information is still relevant or up to date.
5. When feasible, the documents in print format will be made available in public areas.
6. Once documentation is translated it will be given to:
 - a. The concerned division
 - b. The Print Shop to print vital documents
 - c. Community Affairs to put on the department's website.

Training

HPD shall provide training for department employees in language access policies and procedures including protocols for assisting LEP individuals. In addition, the training should include how to access telephonic and in-person language assistance. HPD shall conduct such training for new recruits and on a periodic basis as deemed necessary by the Chief of Police.

Contacts

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