

# Department of Community Affairs

## Language Access Plan

Pursuant to P.L. 2023, c.263

**Effective Date of Plan:** December 15, 2025

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### Language Access Coordinator (LAC)

The best way for the public to [contact](#) the agency regarding language access efforts and services is to contact the LAC:

- Name: Dominic Giova
- Phone number: (609) 930-1005
- Email address: [Language.Access@dca.nj.gov](mailto:Language.Access@dca.nj.gov)
- Website: [www.nj.gov/dca/](http://www.nj.gov/dca/)

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### Introduction

This Language Access Plan (“Plan”) is in compliance with New Jersey’s Language Access Law, [P.L. 2023, c.263](#) (“Law”), as part of New Jersey’s commitment to making our government resources more accessible to our State’s diverse residents. The Law requires State agencies to provide language assistance services and publish a language access plan explaining how they will communicate with individuals with limited English proficiency, and what services they will offer to help.

A language access plan<sup>1</sup> is a document that describes the services that a state government entity<sup>2</sup> and its employees are required to provide to ensure individuals with limited English proficiency have meaningful access to its programs, services, and activities.

Having limited English proficiency means that a person does not speak English as their primary language and may have limited ability to read, write, speak, and/or understand English.

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<sup>1</sup> P.L. 2023, c.263 requires that “[e]ach State government entity in the Executive Branch that provides direct services to the public, in consultation with the Department of Human Services, Department of Law and Public Safety, and Office of Information Technology, shall develop and publish a language access plan that shall reflect how the entity will comply with the provisions of this act.”

<sup>2</sup> Pursuant to P.L. 2023, c.263, a “State government entity” is defined as “any State department or agency in the Executive Branch and any commission, board, bureau, division, office, or instrumentality thereof providing direct services to the public.”

This document provides information about:

- Our agency and how we interact with the public
- The populations with with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) that we serve or are likely to serve

It also outlines how our agency:

- Identifies language needs
- Provides language assistance services
- Makes sure language assistance services are high quality
- Informs the public about available free language assistance services
- Keeps the public informed about our efforts to follow the New Jersey's Language Access Law
- Trains staff on serving people with LEP
- Follows the New Jersey's Language Access Law.

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## **A. Our Agency and How We Interact with the Public**

### **1. Agency Mission**

The New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) is a state agency created to provide administrative guidance, financial support and technical assistance to local governments, community development organizations and individuals to improve quality of life in New Jersey. DCA offers a wide range of programs and services, including local government management and finance, affordable housing productions, fire safety, building safety, community planning and development, historic preservation, disaster recovery and mitigation and information privacy.

### **2. How We Interact with the Public**

DCA provides a number of services directly to members of the public. For example, the Division of Housing and Community Resources administers several federal- and state-sponsored programs directly to the public to assist with matters related to affordable housing, homelessness prevention, and utility assistance. The Division of Disaster Recovery and Mitigation similarly administers a number of federally funded programs to assist New Jersey residents in recovering from losses inflicted as a result of a natural disaster. The Division of Codes and Standards similarly provides direct services to the public by providing information on Uniform Construction Code (UCC) requirements and compliance, information on emergency shelters, and consumer information for new home buyers, amongst others. Additionally, DCA is home to the Government Records Council, which aids members of the public in adjudicating disputes over access to government records under the Open Public Records Act.

DCA's broad range of services necessitates a plan for well-rounded language access. Indeed, DCA interacts with every resident of the State in some way, shape, or form; whether it is ensuring that all residents are entitled to fair and affordable housing, ensuring that local governments are adequately staffed and budgeted and operating ethically and within the bounds of the law, or establishing and enforcing the standards by which New Jersey's buildings and structures must abide in order to remain structurally sound and safe from fire hazards. To adequately carry out its goals and provide the best possible level of service to New Jersey's residents, DCA must ensure that it is providing accurate language access services.

### 3. Participating Entities

There are primarily four divisions within DCA that provide direct services to the public:

(1) The Division of Housing and Community Resources

Contact: Scott Stroup  
(973) 766-2822  
Language.Access@dca.nj.gov

(2) The Division of Codes and Standards

Contact: Marie Daniels  
(609) 930-1338  
Language.Access@dca.nj.gov

(3) The Division of Disaster and Recovery Mitigation

Contact: Luciana DiMaggio  
(609) 930-1451  
Language.Access@dca.nj.gov

(4) Government Records Council

Contact: Frank Caruso, Director  
(609) 351-9124  
Language.Access@dca.nj.gov

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## **B. Populations with Limited English Proficiency that Our Agency Serves or is Likely to Serve**

The Law requires that State agencies provide language assistance services to individuals who have limited English proficiency (LEP). This involves identifying the needs of the populations they serve or are likely to serve, covering both written and spoken language support.

Under the Law, agencies must translate vital documents<sup>3</sup> and information into the seven (7) languages most commonly spoken by individuals with LEP in New Jersey. To determine these top seven languages, our agency uses U.S. Census data (including data from the American Community Survey) and consults with the Language Access Implementation Lead Agencies.

This data also helps our agency understand other language characteristics of the communities we currently serve or are likely to serve, ensuring effective language access planning.

At the time of this Plan, the top languages spoken by individuals with LEP in New Jersey are:

1. Spanish
2. Portuguese (preference for Brazilian dialect)
3. Korean
4. Gujarati
5. Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese)<sup>4</sup>
6. French Creole or Haitian Creole
7. Arabic

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<sup>3</sup> Vital documents are defined in P.L. 2023, c.263 as “documents that affect or provide legal information about access to, retention of, termination of, or exclusion from program services or benefits; which are required by law; or which explain legal rights.”

<sup>4</sup> While spoken Chinese primarily includes Mandarin and Cantonese, translation should be tailored to Simplified and Traditional Chinese for written communication.

## **1. Adding Languages Beyond the Top Seven at a State-level**

The Law also requires that State agencies translate vital documents into any other languages considered necessary by the agency based on the populations they serve.

At this time, the Department has not identified a need to include additional languages. The agency will continue to assess the need for additional languages needed for translation and interpreting services on a regular basis and as need arises.

## **2. Languages Available for Interpreting Services**

Under the Law, State agencies have to provide interpreting services between the agency and an individual in that person's primary language when delivering services or benefits.

## **3. Populations with LEP**

Describe the populations with LEP that interact or are likely to interact with our agency or are otherwise in need or are eligible for our agency's services. This could include any efforts to identify specific language characteristics or needs through internal data or other relevant datasets, such as information from language services providers, school districts, community-based organizations, business associations, etc.

The Department is still in the process of gathering data for each of its specific divisions. However, the Department's broad portfolio of programs and initiatives results in engagement with a number of LEP individuals across the State. Populations with LEP that may engage with the Department include:

- Homeowners, renters, rental property owners, and small business owners who apply for grants through the Division of Disaster Recovery and Mitigation or the Division of Housing and Community Resources. This could include LEP individuals that are homeowners in flood-prone areas that are impacted by severe and repetitive flooding damage and seek to take steps to mitigate future flooding damage, or those who are still seeking redress from damage to their primary residence caused by Superstorm Sandy or Hurricane Ida or other natural disasters that have impacted the State of New Jersey.
- Homeowners or other property owners who conduct outreach with or receive notice from the Division of Codes and Standards about the

requirements of the Uniform Construction Code. This could include LEP individuals or families that: are residents of a multi-family dwelling that is subject to inspection by the Division's Bureau of Housing Inspection or are residents of a rooming or boarding house subject to inspection by the Division's Bureau of Rooming and Boarding House Standards; are residents of units in planned communities such as retirement communities, condominiums, and cooperatives that are subject to regulation by the Division's Bureau of Homeowner Protection; or are new homeowners whose newly constructed home is subject to a warranty under the Division's New Home Warranty Program.

- Members of the public who file a government records request that is denied in whole or in part or is otherwise unfulfilled to the requestor's satisfaction may contact or file a claim with the Government Records Council to seek redress;
- Those facing housing insecurity or those seeking affordable housing opportunities may contact or apply with the Division of Housing and Community Resources. This could include LEP individuals or families that: are experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity; are seeking affordable housing opportunities in terms of both rental opportunities and paths to homeownership; require assistance paying their monthly utility bills under the Division's energy assistance programs, which include the Home Energy Assistance (HEA) Program, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP); are seeking to rid their home of toxic lead-infused pipes under the Division's Lead Assistance Program; are seeking to avoid the termination of their utilities during the cold winter months under the Winter Termination Program; amongst others.

## C. Determining the Need for Language Assistance Services and Language Identification

When an individual with LEP contacts our agency, staff must assess whether language assistance is needed in the following ways (Tables 1–3).

**Table 1: In-Person**

Description	Check (X) all that apply
Voluntary self-identification by the individual or their companion	X
Use of multilingual language identification cards, posters or visual aids (for example, “I Speak” posters)	
Assistance from trained staff to identify the individual’s primary language	
Support from a qualified interpreter (in-person, over-the-phone and/or remote) to identify/confirm an individual’s primary language	X
Other (specify):	

**Table 2: Telephonic Communication**

Description	Check (X) all that apply
Voluntary self-identification by the individual or their companion	X
Assistance from trained staff to identify the individual’s primary language	
Support from a qualified interpreter (in-person, over-the-phone and/or remote) to identify/confirm an individual’s primary language	X
Other (specify):	

**Table 3: Electronic Communication**

Description	Check (X) all that apply
Notice of available language assistance services available on the agency website	
Multilingual taglines included in applicable forms, letters, and/or email communications	
Multilingual chatbot on website	
Use of automated translation tools only to identify primary language	X
Other (specify):	

## D. Provision of Language Assistance Services

### 1. Vital Document Translation

The Law requires translation of vital documents. Vital documents are defined in P.L. 2023, c.263, as “documents that affect or provide legal information about access to, retention of, termination of, or exclusion from program services or benefits; which are required by law; or which explain legal rights.”

Our agency has the following resources available for translation of vital documents (Table 4).

**Table 4: Resources for Translation of Vital Documents**

Resource	Check (X) all that apply
Qualified, trained, and/or designated multilingual staff	
Contractors	X
Other (specify):	

Translation of vital documents is an ongoing process. Appendix 1 provides an inventory of vital documents translated as of the date of this publication. This list will be maintained and updated at least annually as part of annual reporting.

## 2. Language Interpreting Services

Our agency has the following free resources available for spoken or sign language interpreting requests (Table 5).

**Table 5: Resources for Spoken or Sign Language Interpreting Requests**

Resource	Check (X) all that apply
Assistance from qualified, trained, and/or designated multilingual staff	
Over-the-phone interpreting services	X
In-person interpreting services	
Video-remote interpreting services	
Other (specify):	

## 3. Additional Accessibility Equipment and Services

**Table 6: Accessibility Equipment and Services**

Equipment or Service	Check (X) all that apply
Telephone voice menus for help with agency programs are available in the following languages (specify):	
Trained multilingual staff can communicate with individuals with LEP in select languages, including (specify):	
Access to auxiliary aids such as hearing induction loops, pocket talkers, captioning, video-remote interpreting and/or simultaneous interpreting equipment	
Services through partner agencies that serve those who need auxiliary aids, including:	
The Department of Human Services' Division of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	
Other (specify):	

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## E. Methods for Quality Assurance

To ensure language assistance services are accurate, high-quality, and culturally competent, activities underway or planned include (Table 7):

Table 7: Methods for Quality Assurance

Method	Check (X) all that apply
Prioritizing the use of plain language	X
Using vetted contractors that implement quality assurance standards to ensure that its linguists are experienced, trained, and certified as appropriate and are linguistically and culturally competent	X
Monitoring and tracking the quality of interpreting and translation services provided by vendors, and training staff to monitor quality of those services	
Including quality assurance requirements in vendor contracts, e.g., glossaries, translation review, use of translation memory, localization software, desktop publishing, etc.	
Partnering with community-based organizations to periodically check quality of interpreting and translation services	
Conducting periodic testing of translated documents and interpreting services across languages	
Ensuring quality and proper maintenance of auxiliary aids and equipment, such as hearing induction loops, pocket talkers, captioning, tablets, and/or simultaneous translation equipment	
Other (specify):	

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## F. Public Notice About the Availability of Free Language Assistance Services

Our agency informs individuals with LEP in required languages, including auxiliary aids and equipment, about their right to free language assistance services in the following ways (Table 8):

**Table 8: Public Notice**

Method	Check (X) all that apply
Signs and posters in areas highly visible to the public	X
Information on agency's website describing available language assistance services, processes, and documents required by the Law	
Printed material, publications, and advertisements	
Telephone voice menu providing information in non-English languages	
Public service announcements	
Other (specify):	

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## G. Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach

Our agency's engagement with community or stakeholder entities representing populations with LEP regarding language access planning and implementation includes (Table 9):

**Table 9: Stakeholder Engagement and Outreach**

Method	Check (X) all that apply
Conducting stakeholder engagement to inform our language access planning, which may include public listening sessions with groups and/or one-on-one meetings	
Planning to conduct and maintain stakeholder engagement as this Plan is implemented and updated, which may include public listening sessions and/or one-on-one meetings	X
Having clear and measurable goals for program/service-specific outreach and communication to reach individuals with LEP from different language communities	

Method	Check (X) all that apply
Maintaining and utilizing distribution lists that include local, culturally, and linguistically diverse community-based organizations and media to disseminate information regarding the agency's language access services	
A website to receive feedback, and/or public email address for language access questions, feedback, and/or concerns	X

## H. Staff Training

For staff involved in implementing P.L. 2023, c.263, annual training includes the following topics (Table 10):

**Table 10: Staff Training**

Topic	Check (X) all that apply
The agency's legal obligations to provide language assistance services	X
The agency's language access policies and protocols	X
The agency's resources and best practices for providing language assistance services	X
How to access and work with interpreters and translators	X
Cultural competence and cultural sensitivity	
How to obtain translation and interpreting services	
Maintaining records of language access services provided to individuals with LEP	X

## I. Processes for Recordkeeping, Compliance Monitoring, and Reporting

### 1. Annual Internal Monitoring

Our agency monitors implementation of this Plan to ensure compliance with P.L. 2023, c.263 by (Table 11):

**Table 11: Annual Internal Monitoring**

Method	Check (X) all that apply
Supporting the establishment of mechanisms for monitoring the agency's implementation of this Plan	
Collecting and compiling the data necessary for the agency's Annual Report on compliance with P.L. 2023, c.263	X
Submitting in a timely manner the Annual Report pursuant to P.L. 2023, c.263	X

### 2. Internal Recordkeeping

Our agency tracks language access-related data on an ongoing basis. The tracking underway includes [Table 12]:

**Table 12: Internal Recordkeeping**

Metric	Check (X) all that apply
Frequency of requests for language assistance services	X
How requests were met	X
Whether language assistance services were requested in languages other than the required seven	X
How the agency intends to notify the populations with LEP of the available language assistance services	X
How the agency documents the actual provision of language assistance services to individuals with LEP	X
Other (specify):	

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## Appendix 1: Inventory of Translated Vital Documents

Translation of vital documents is an ongoing process. As of the date of this publication, the following vital documents are available publicly in the following languages:

[DCA Document Inventory - 12.15.25](#)