

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

Language Access Plan

I. Introduction

The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (“TDHCA” or “Department”) has prepared this Language Access Plan (“LAP” or “Plan”), which defines the actions to be taken by the Department to ensure meaningful access to agency services, programs, and activities for persons who have limited English proficiency. The Department will review and update, on a biennial basis or as needed, this LAP in order to ensure continued responsiveness to community needs and compliance with Executive Order 13166 (which may be found at <http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/cor/Pubs/eolep.php>), interpreting Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this Plan is to ensure persons interested in accessing any of the programs, services, or activities (“clients”) of the Department have meaningful access to such services, programs, and activities although they may be limited in their English language proficiency.

The Department is committed to this Plan as the appropriate response to meeting clients’ needs. The Plan is consistent with the guidance promulgated by all relevant federal agencies.

A Limited English Proficient (“LEP”) person is someone who is not able to speak, read, write, or understand the English language at a level that allows him/her to interact effectively with Department staff. A client maintains the right to self-identify as a LEP person.

III. Department Description

TDHCA's mission is to administer its assigned programs efficiently, transparently, and lawfully and to invest its resources strategically and develop high quality affordable housing that helps Texas communities to thrive.

The Department accomplishes this mission by acting as a conduit for federal and state funds and resources for affordable housing and community services. In addition, because several major housing programs require the participation of private investors and private lenders, TDHCA also operates as a housing finance agency.

Ensuring program compliance with the many state and federal laws that govern housing programs is another important part of the Department's mission. This ensures the health and safety of residents of TDHCA's housing portfolio and guarantees state and federal resources are expended in an efficient and effective manner.

TDHCA also serves as a financial and administrative resource that helps provide essential services and affordable housing opportunities to Texans who qualify for this assistance based on

their income level. Additionally, the Department is a resource for educational materials and technical assistance for housing, housing related, and community services matters.

HOUSING SUPPORT CONTINUUM

The Housing Support Continuum can be broadly characterized as a series of activities or phases that low-income households may experience at different times of their lives and the assistance provided through the network(s) of TDHCA-funded service providers in regard to each phase. The Housing Support Continuum has five phases as identified by the Department: (1) Poverty and Homelessness Prevention, (2) Rental Assistance and Multifamily Development, (3) Homebuyer Education and Assistance and Single-Family Development, (4) Rehabilitation, Barrier Removal, and Weatherization, and (5) Disaster Relief. For more information about the Department's efforts, please see the current State of Texas Low Income Housing Plan and Annual Report, which may be found at: <http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/housing-center/pubs-plans.htm>

IV. Language Access Plan

Approach: This Plan shall be fully implemented subject to the availability of fiscal resources. This Plan has been developed in consultation with all relevant guidance from federal agencies and with reference to Executive Order 13166 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This Plan represents a Departmental administrative blueprint to provide meaningful access to Department services, programs, and activities on the part of LEP individuals. This Plan outlines the measures the Department will undertake to meet this objective.

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

1. Agency Language Access Coordinator

Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs
Fair Housing, Data Management, & Reporting
221 East 11th Street
Austin, Texas 78701
P.O. BOX 13941
Austin, TX 78711-3941

Main: 512-475.3800
Toll-free: 800-525-0657
Fax: 512-482-8851
Toll Free Fax: 800-733-5120
TDD: 800-735-2989

2. TDHCA Language Access Needs Assessment

- a. At appropriate points throughout the housing support continuum, TDHCA shall make meaningful access available to each regularly encountered LEP group and specifically to the most prevalent LEP population in Texas: native Spanish-speaking individuals. Meaningful access, as used in this document, means language assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the LEP individual. For LEP individuals,

meaningful access denotes access that is not significantly restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to programs or activities provided to English proficient individuals.

b. Language Makeup of Client Population

The Department conducted an analysis of eligible program participants with LEP. The analysis was performed for households at 200% poverty, roughly equivalent to 80% area median income statewide in Texas. The overwhelming need, at 74% of LEP persons, was for Spanish language translation. The Department will translate vital documents into Spanish. The Department will analyze market areas for program beneficiaries to determine if documents should be translated into additional languages. The Department will apply four-factor analysis to consider the resources available and costs considering the frequency with which LEP persons come into contact with the program and the nature and importance of the program, activity, or service. The Department will make reasonable efforts to provide language assistance to ensure meaningful access to participation by non-English speaking persons.

c. Current Points of Contact between the Department and Client Population

Web Contact: Translated web content and vital documents are available on the Department's website for web-based access to Department programs, services and activities. The Department maintains a language assistance webpage that includes translations for the top 25 languages spoken by income eligible households with limited English Proficiency in Texas. For assistance households may call the agency's language service and utilize an interpreter to speak with TDHCA staff. The language assistance webpage is available at: <http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/lap.htm>. Written Contact Written communications, e.g., email, letters, etc., and responses, are routed to either internal resources or external translation service provider(s) for translation, as needed.

Phone Contact: Phone calls from persons of LEP may be transferred to internal staff with the required language fluency.

Colonia Self-Help Centers (SHC)	Albert Alvidrez	915-834-4925
Community Services Block Grants (CSBG)	Rita Gonzalez-Garza	512-475-3905
Compliance	Rosy Falcon	512-936-7810
Comprehensive Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)	Annette Cornier	512-475-3803
Contract for Deed Initiative (CFDC)	Glynis Laing	512-936-7800
Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG)	Jennifer Guzman OR Maria Cazares	512-475-1391 512-475-2669
HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME)	Maria Cazares OR Jennifer Guzman	512-475-2669 512-475-1391
Homeless Housing & Services Program (HHSP)	Jennifer Guzman OR Maria Cazares	512-475-1391 512-475-2669
Housing Resource Center (HRC)	Helen Barrera	512-936-7808
Housing Trust Fund (HTF)	Glynis Laing	512-936-7800
Loan Servicing	Gracie Garcia	512-475-1225
Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program (LIHTC)	Cris Simpkins	512-475-1676
Manufactured Housing Division (MHD)		512-475-2200, Option 2
Multifamily Bond Program (MF)	Cris Simpkins	512-475-1676
Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP)	Marie Esparza	512-936-7796
Policy and Public Affairs (DPPA)	Elena Peinado	512-475-3814
Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program (Sec 8)	Lupe Rojas	512-475-3921
Texas "Bootstrap" Owner-Builder Loan Program	Raul Gonzales	512-475-1473
Texas First Time Homebuyer Program (FTHB)	Dina Gonzalez	512-475-3993
Texas Statewide Homebuyer Education Program (TSHEP)	Dina Gonzalez	512-475-3993
Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)	Annette Cornier	512-475-3803

3. Language Resources Assessment

- a. Existing staff may provide assistance in Spanish. These internal resources provide Spanish translation services for technical discussion of programs and services.
- b. All staff who answer the Department's main phone numbers, which route through an Automatic Call Distributor ("ACD") to HRC and DPPA staff, are trained to follow the Language Service Protocols for accessing translation services for technical discussion of programs and services as needed by LEP persons.

4. Language Service Protocols

- a. The Department contracts with two vendors (one primary, one secondary) for telephone, document, and web content translation services for languages outside of Departmental staff's competency on an as-needed basis. The interpreting and translation contracts provide assistance, if needed, for over 240 languages.
- b. As appropriate, the Department will engage a qualified vendor to provide in-person translations for events where Department staff anticipates persons of limited English proficiency may be present and lack sufficient language competency.

5. Vital Document Translation

- a. Translation will be prioritized for those documents that are determined to be vital, and most needed to alleviate an immediate problem for an individual (e.g., CEAP bill-paying assistance, homeless assistance), to be determined at the Executive Director's or his designee's discretion.
- b. Website Content will use the same prioritization as noted above, translated web content and vital documents will also be added for web-based availability. For documents that come from the federal level, appropriate links to federal websites will be provided. Language assistance links are available on critical program web pages enabling LEP persons to access interpretation services to have web content read to them.

6. Stakeholder Consultations

- a. Stakeholders will be consulted through the annual development of program plans, to determine if further languages and document translations are needed.

7. Staff Training

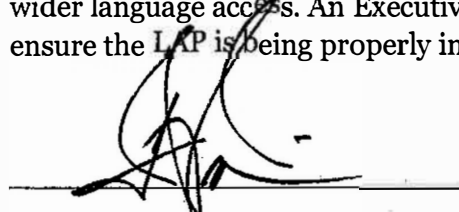
- a. Staff will be trained to recognize and work with persons of limited English proficiency, and the use of appropriate language translation services. Internal staff will have access to a list of all staff members with fluency in languages other than English.
- b. Staff training documents will also be revised in order to reflect a focus on training subrecipients and other administrators to recognize and work with persons of limited English proficiency.

8. Notice to Public

The Department will make clear on its website which languages are available for clients, and will prominently display the LAP Coordinator's contact information.

9. Agency Monitoring

A member of the Department's Executive Team will periodically review the Department's actions toward increasing access for LEP persons in order to ensure continued steps toward wider language access. An Executive will also receive any LAP-related complaints in order to ensure the LAP is being properly implemented by the LAP Coordinator.



Timothy K. Irvine
TDHCA Executive Director

Date