

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

MASSACHUSETTS

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

COUNCIL



January, 2013

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council
Language Access Plan

I. Introduction

Most individuals living in the Commonwealth read, write, speak and understand English. There are many individuals, however, for whom English is not their primary language. Based on the 2010 census data, approximately 1.38 million or 21% of residents speak a language other than English at home. Persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can be defined as limited English proficient, or “LEP,” and are eligible to receive language assistance with respect to accessing a particular type of service, benefit provided by the state.

Language for non-English speakers and LEP individuals can be a barrier to accessing important benefits or services, understanding and exercising important rights, complying with applicable responsibilities, and/or understanding other information provided by state programs and activities. State agencies provide (in English) an array of services that can be made accessible to otherwise eligible LEP persons. State government is committed to improving the accessibility of these programs and activities to eligible non-English speakers and LEP persons, a goal that reinforces its equally important commitment to promoting programs and activities designed to help individuals learn English. State agencies have an obligation, when reasonably possible, to reduce language barriers that can preclude meaningful access by non-English speakers and LEP persons to important government services.

The Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC) is committed to ensuring equal access to its programs and services by all residents, regardless of language spoken or English proficiency.

The MDDC has prepared this Language Access Plan (“LAP” or “Plan”), which defines the actions to be taken by MDDC to ensure meaningful access to MDDC services, programs and activities on the part of persons who have limited English proficiency. The MDDC will review and update, on a biannual basis, this LAP in order to ensure continued responsiveness to community needs and compliance with the Executive Office for Administration and Finance (“ANF”) Administrative Bulletin #16.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to ensure clients of the MDDC meaningful access to services, programs and activities although they may be limited in their English language proficiency.

The MDDC is committed to this Language Access Plan as the appropriate response to meeting our clients' needs. The Plan is consistent with the requirements of Administrative Bulletin #16 as promulgated by the Executive Office of Administration and Finance.

Consistent with the guidance of ANF Administrative Bulletin #16, 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 MDDC staff. A client maintains the right to self-identify as a LEP person.

III. MDDC Description

The mission of the MDDC is to provide opportunities for people with developmental disabilities and their families to enhance independence, productivity and inclusion.

The MDDC is an independent agency, funded by the Federal government, dedicated to empowering people with developmental disabilities and their families to enjoy full and productive lives. The Council brings together policymakers and legislators with advocates to improve opportunities and the system of community supports for people with developmental disabilities. The Council creates initiatives that give voice to people with developmental disabilities and their families by promoting leadership and self-advocacy; and developing coalitions to improve public policy.

IV. Language Access Plan:

Approach: The MDDC Language Access Plan shall be fully implemented subject to the availability of fiscal resources to implement said language access plan. This Language Access Plan has been developed to adhere to the Language Access Guidelines of ANF Administrative Bulletin #16. This Language Access Plan represents MDDC administrative blueprint to provide meaningful access to MDDC services, programs and activities on the part of LEP individuals. This Language Access Plan outlines the tasks MDDC will undertake to meet this objective.

Language Access Plan:

(1) MDDC Language Access Coordinator:

Cathy Jackson
1150 Hancock Street, Suite 300
Quincy, MA 02169
617-770-7676 ext. 120
Cathy.jackson@state.ma.us

(2) MDDC Language Access Needs Assessment:

The MDDC helps people with developmental disabilities and their families have the opportunity to enjoy full and productive lives. The Council provides limited direct service to the public, including but not limited to:

- **Council Empowerment Funds** to promote the empowerment of Massachusetts individuals with developmental disabilities and their families by assisting them in their efforts to achieve independence, productivity and inclusion.
- **Gopen Fellowship Program** gives opportunity for a person with a developmental disability or a family member to gain valuable knowledge and experience by working with members of the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Network Programs.
- **Grants** available to individuals and grassroots organizations
- **Self-Advocacy Leadership Series** program provides education and training support to people with disabilities. This series seeks to help people improve their skills in the areas of decision-making and leadership.

Based on the limited services, programs and activities listed above, the MDDC will ensure meaningful access to the populations whose language meet or exceed the 5% threshold.

(3) Language Resources Assessment:

The MDDC will utilize bi-lingual staff resources as well as services which demonstrate a high degree of training and professionalism and that have been approved as vendors by the Commonwealth in order to accommodate necessary and direct communications between MDDC staff and persons with LEP.

(4) Language Service Protocols:

The MDDC will provide upon request interpretation services. This will include additional language access information utilizing the Statewide Contract for foreign language interpretation and translation services.

Upon request, the MDDC will provide information on all forms available to the public.

(5) Vital Document Translation:

a. The following is a list of documents identified by the MDDC for translation. Translation will be completed if resources are available within a 10-day period:

- Council Empowerment Fund application
- Annual Barbara Gopen Fellowship Application
- Self-Advocacy Leadership Training application
- Mission Statement
- Council Membership application and recruitment brochures (*already translated in Spanish. Other languages available upon request*)

b. MDDC website content, including but not limited to the following to be translated as resources become available within a 10-day period:

- Council Empowerment Fund application
- Annual Barbara Gopen Fellowship application
- Self-Advocacy Leadership Training application
- Mission Statement
- How to become a member (*including Council Membership application – already available in Spanish*)

(6) Stakeholder Consultations:

The MDDC will consult with community-based organizations that provide services to non-English speakers and LEP persons.

(7) Staff Training:

The MDDC will ensure that all staff will be trained on their responsibilities in the implementation of this policy.

The MDDC will also ensure that its LAP is disseminated to all staff.

(8) Notice to Public.

The MDDC will provide information on the agency website on how to request free translation assistance.

(9) MDDC Monitoring:

The MDDC will monitor the progress of the plan and review and update on an as needed basis.

The review will assess:

- Whether there have been any significant changes or language needs of the population served;
- Review any issues or problems related to serving LEP persons which may have emerged during the past year;
- Review to determine if additional documents require translation; and

- Identification of any recommended actions to provide more responsive and effective language services.

(10) Complaints:

If the MDDC has been unable to provide information or language or (limited English proficiency) or other communication differences, additional language or communication resources may be available by contacting Cathy Jackson, Language Access Coordinator or the Office of Access and Opportunity.

MDDC will attempt to resolve your communication issue within 10 working days from receipt of complaint.

Individuals with disabilities who require accessible alternatives formats should contact the LAP Coordinator

Daniel M. Shannon, Executive Director
MDDC January 8, 2013

Secretary Date

Language Access Complaint Procedure

You may file a complaint with the MDDC Language Access Coordinator or the Office of Access and Opportunity if you believe you have been denied the benefits of this Plan. You must file your complaint within 6 months of the alleged denial. You must file a written complaint. To file a complaint with the Language Access Coordinator, submit the written complaint to:

Cathy Jackson
Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council
1150 Hancock Street, Suite 300
Quincy, MA 02169
Cathy.jackson@state.ma.us

To file a complaint with the Office of Access and Opportunity, please submit the written complaint to the attention of:

Office of Access and Opportunity
Executive Office of Administration and Finance
State House, Room 373
Boston, MA 02133
Email Address: Ronald.Marlow@state.ma.us