



STATE OF MICHIGAN
KENT COUNTY PROBATE COURT

DAVID M. MURKOWSKI
CHIEF JUDGE

SUITE 9500 C
180 OTTAWA AVENUE NW
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN 49503-2751

STATE OF MICHIGAN
IN THE PROBATE COURT FOR THE COUNTY OF KENT

Local Administrative
Order 2013 - 01

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

In accordance with Supreme Court Administrative Order 2013-8, the court establishes this Language Access Plan (LAP) to provide for the language access needs of court users.

This LAP is the plan for the court to ensure meaningful access to court services for persons with limited English proficiency (LEP). A limited English proficient person is a person who does not speak English as his or her primary language, and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English, and by reason of his or her limitations, is not able to understand and meaningfully participate in the court process.

The purpose of the plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and effective language assistance to LEP persons who come in contact with the court.

The court has appointed a language access coordinator to be a contact person for the public, court staff, and SCAO concerning this plan and its implementation. The language access coordinator may be contacted through the Probate Register's office.

IT IS ORDERED:

Section I. Needs Assessment

A. Census Data

The court will make every effort to provide service to all LEP persons in the court's service area. The following list shows the non-English languages most frequently spoken in the court's physical jurisdiction.

1. Spanish
2. Vietnamese
3. Serbo-Croatian
4. Chinese

B. Court Experience

Based on court usage, the following list shows other non-English languages spoken in the court

and not reflected in the US Census data: None.

C. Identification of LEP Persons

Court staff use the following methods to identify LEP persons

1. Courthouse staff will have access to “I Speak” cards
2. “I speak” posters will be displayed throughout the building instructing visitors to go to the help desk.
3. Bi-lingual employees will be utilized when available.
4. Phone calls from friends or family members.

Section II. Language Assistance Resources

A. Interpreters Used In the Courtroom

The court will offer assistance to LEP persons in the courtroom by providing foreign language interpreters as required by Michigan Court Rule 1.111.

B. Language Services Outside the Courtroom

The court will take reasonable steps to ensure that LEP persons have meaningful access to services outside the courtroom. This is one of the most challenging situations facing court staff, because in most situations they will encounter LEP persons without an interpreter present. LEP persons may come in contact with court personnel via:

1. Security/Help Desk
2. Personal appearance at Clerk’s Office
3. Telephone calls to the Clerk’s Office
4. Court Guardianship Specialist conducting adult or minor guardianship reviews

Court staff will consult with the court’s language access coordinator to determine what type of language service should be made available, based on the nature and importance of the court service to be provided and resources available. The following language services are available:

1. Foreign Language Signs (Spanish) will be present directing people with limited English proficiency to the help desk. Signs will be placed in common areas as well as outside courtrooms. The signs will be welcoming to the courthouse visitor. The help station staff person will contact the LAC and explain which language the visitor speaks.
2. Staff accessed routinely by the public will have “I speak” cards to identify the language needed. Other phrase cards in foreign languages will be provided to appropriate employees to facilitate common requests at the desk. If the employee is reasonably convinced that the customer is not getting the necessary information, the LAC will be contacted.
3. The Language Access Coordinator will:
 - Identify the language using an “I Speak” card.
 - Attempt to find out if the person has an appointment somewhere in the building using “cheat sheets” with typical phrases; such as, “What is your Name” and “Do you have any papers which were sent to you”; if unable to do so,
 - Either obtain a live interpreter or contact a telephonic interpretation service.

Court personnel who have contact with the public but usually in a more controlled environment,

or with the benefit of scheduling appointments (such as the Guardianship Specialist) will make every attempt to speak to the client while an interpreter is present. If there is no interpreter present, staff will utilize telephonic interpreters or contact the LAC to provide a live interpreter. Bi-lingual staff will be utilized if available.

C. Service Referrals

The court will make reasonable efforts to ensure that a non-federally funded entity to which the court refers LEP persons for services has provisions for addressing their needs. The court will consider viable alternatives if language access is not provided by such a non-federally funded entity.

D. Forms & Documents

The State Court Administrative Office (SCAO) makes select translated forms available to the courts at <http://courts.michigan.gov/Administration/SCAO/Forms/Pages/default.aspx>.

1. Additional translated forms available to court users include: None at this time

When in-person interpreters are hired for court proceedings, they are expected to provide sight interpretation of documents for LEP persons.

2. Courthouse translation for LEP:

- Telephonic Interpretation
- Live Interpreters (on occasion)
- Signage
- Bi-Lingual staff at Legal Assistance Center and Clerk's Office

E. Other Provisions

In an effort to provide LEP persons language access to court information, the court also provides the following:

1. While the courts in Kent County encounter a wide variety of languages, Spanish is by far the most likely to be heard in the Courthouse. Training will be provided to handle other languages but the most structured changes (signs, on-site interpreters) will be for the Spanish Language.
 - Telephonic interpreters will utilized when necessary
 - The court will work in conjunction with the county on outreach efforts to foreign language communities for future opportunities.

Section III. Training

The court is committed to training its judges and court staff, and coordinating with county clerks on providing LEP persons with meaningful access to court services. When the court provides training sessions, it will include a component addressing LEP policy and procedure and the court's LAP. The court is aware that staff members having contact with the public are more likely to need in-depth training on LEP policy and procedure.

The court will work with SCAO and MJI to ensure that all employees are trained on LEP policy and procedure. Training will be offered to assist judges and staff to: identify and respond to LEP persons, increase awareness of the types of language services available, guide when and how to access those services, and effectively use language services.

The court provides to judges and court staff the following training regarding language access:

1. Implementation training (required)
2. How to use I speak cards
3. Placement of signs
4. Identification of Language Access Coordinator
5. Documentation of LEP encounters
6. Annual refresher training (needs to be developed)

Section IV. Public Notification and Evaluation of Language Access Plan

A. Language Access Plan Approval and Notification

The court's LAP has been approved by the State Court Administrative Office. The court will post its LAP on its public website (if available) or public notification area within the courthouse and will make copies of the LAP available upon request.

The court consulted with the following members of the community in creating its LAP:

B. Evaluation and Review of the LAP

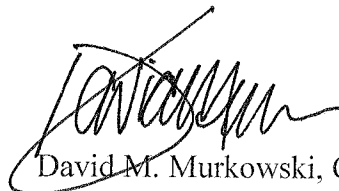
At the direction of SCAO, or on its own initiative, the court will assess whether the LAP needs updating. The LAP will remain in effect unless modified or updated. Review of the following areas may indicate a need to update the LAP:

1. Number of LEP persons requesting court interpreters or language assistance
2. Funding provided or available for languages services
3. Current language needs to determine if additional services or translated materials should be provided
4. Feedback from LEP communities within the county
5. Court staff (turnover, new hires, etc.)
6. Feedback from trainings provided by the court or SCAO/MJI
7. Viability of identified language services and resources
8. Problem areas and corrective action strategies
9. Updated census data

The language access coordinator for this court ensures this plan is followed, advises the court on potential updates to this plan, and coordinates the language access needs for the court as they arise. The court has identified the name and contact information of the language access coordinator and advised the State Court Administrative Office. The court will notify the SCAO regional office of any changes to the language access coordinator's contact information, or if a new language access coordinator is named.

Effective Date: December 11, 2013

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David M. Murkowski, Chief Probate Judge