



State of Connecticut Judicial Branch

IMPLEMENTATION of THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Public Service and Trust Commission

Hon. Alexandra D. DiPentima, Chair

Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP)

Goal I **Access: The Judicial Branch will provide equal access to all of its facilities, processes and information through the identification and elimination of barriers.**

Strategy: I.2 Improve access to Judicial Branch facilities, processes and information by individuals who have limited English proficiency.

Activity: I.2.1 To provide multilingual signs, publications, public service announcements, forms and website pages.

 I.2.2 To develop and implement a system for tracking and scheduling cases in which an interpreter will be needed.

 I.2.3 To hire and retain an adequate pool of certified court interpreters.

These activities will be accomplished through the establishment of a cross-division committee to continue and expand upon the work commenced by a working committee established to address LEP requirements contained in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other federal laws. Those laws require the Judicial Branch as a recipient of federal funds to provide individuals with limited English proficiency meaningful access to programs and services. This cross-division committee will be charged with eliminating language barriers to facilities, processes and information that are faced by individuals with limited English proficiency. The inability of those with limited English proficiency to understand or be understood impacts all aspects of their interaction with the court system, potentially causing delays, frustration, and unequal access. The committee will stress the need for staff to assist these individuals in a professional manner, acknowledging the dignity of each person and recognizing that people coming into court have varied concerns which must be handled with fairness, efficiency and compassion. Since the Branch is currently developing a Language Assistance Plan, the committee will be involved in its refinement, implementation and monitoring.

It is suggested that the committee establish two subcommittees: one that will address issues faced by individuals with limited English proficiency in accessing facilities and information and the second, to address issues associated with obtaining adequate interpretive services.

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The first subcommittee will assess the current availability within the Branch of signs, publications, and web pages in languages other than English. A local review of signs is being conducted by the committee charged with enhancing physical access to facilities and courthouses. That committee will submit recommendations on specific languages for signs in local facilities to this LEP subcommittee for comment prior to submitting its recommendations to the chief court administrator. With respect to publications and web pages, the subcommittee should consider the expansion of available multi-lingual material to include court/calendar information, forms, and handouts. The subcommittee, in consultation with the main committee, should also make recommendations as to the languages that are most needed statewide based upon demographic and anecdotal information and consider prioritizing the translation of materials based upon the most frequently used or requested materials. In analyzing the feasibility of providing forms in multiple languages, the subcommittee should look at the experiences of other states and the federal government in providing and using multilingual forms. The subcommittee should also consider providing public service announcements on language-specific stations (i.e., Spanish language stations).

The second subcommittee will address issues connected to the interpreters, including an analysis of the demand for specific types of interpreters (i.e., languages spoken and ASL interpreters), an assessment of the numbers and location of interpreters, an evaluation of the current policies and procedures for assigning interpreters and for obtaining interpretive services in all areas- civil, family, housing, criminal, family relations, support enforcement, the development and implementation of a system for the efficient tracking and scheduling of interpreters statewide, and an analysis of the current and future hiring needs of the branch for interpreters. The subcommittee should also examine the current procedures for accessing interpretive services, consider standardization of those procedures statewide and consider ways of providing this information to staff and members of the public. The current use and possible expansion of the language line should be evaluated by the committee.

The Committee should be comprised of the following members:

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A judge from a GA/JD court (co-chair)

A representative from court operations administration (co-chair)

A representative from Administrative Services

A representative from CSSD

A representative from External Affairs

A representative from Legal Services

A representative from Support Enforcement Services

A representative from Judicial Marshal Services

Line staff from the JD and GA courts

A representative from the Interpreters (chair of subcommittee)

A member of the committee addressing physical access issues

A member of the committee addressing issues of self-represented parties

The committee will develop outcome indicators to measure the success of each intermediate activity included in this project. The committee will also develop outcome indicators that show the combined contribution of the individual activities included in this project toward attaining the specific strategy addressed and its accompanying performance measures as defined by the strategic plan.

The subcommittees are to submit their recommendations to the Chief Court Administrator by March 15, 2009.