

## **Committee on Limited English Proficiency**

The Committee on Limited English Proficiency was initially formed in 2008 under the Access goal of the Judicial Branch's Strategic Plan and charged with "eliminating language barriers to facilities, processes and information that are faced by individuals with limited English proficiency." The committee is co-chaired by Judge Maria Araujo Kahn and Alejandra Donath, Program Manager for the Interpreter and Translator Services Unit (ITS), and is comprised of the following members:

Karen Chorney  
Richard Loffredo  
Katharine Casaubon (Legal Services advisor)  
Melanie Kerr (Support Staff)

In 2014, the Connecticut Judicial Branch was ranked second amongst all states by the National Center for Access to Justice at Cardozo Law School for the services it provides to its limited English proficient stakeholders. This ranking exemplifies the commitment the Judicial Branch has made to ensuring that limited English proficient individuals are able to access its facilities, processes, services and information.

In 2014, ITS received over 40,000 requests to provide in-person oral language assistance in 78 different languages/dialects and over 13,000 requests, through Language Line, to provide over-the-phone interpreting services in 48 different languages. See appendix A. In addition, ITS translated 123 separate Branch forms as well as 66 case specific documents.

This report serves as an update of the work of the Committee on Limited English Proficiency in 2014.

Over the past year, the Committee has been working on the following areas in its effort to ensure that limited English proficient individuals can access the justice system in Connecticut:

### **Continued and Expanded LEP Training**

The Branch has developed an LEP training program for all employees that provides information and materials regarding how to obtain language assistance and translation services. This program also offers cultural sensitivity education and provides information and materials regarding how to obtain language assistance and translation services when needed and explains the role of the interpreter. Sixteen sessions were offered in 2014, which were attended by 355 Judicial Branch employees. To date, over 2200 employees have attended this half-day program.

The Branch has also developed an LEP training program for its contractors so that they understand the Branch's obligations to provide meaningful access to persons who are limited English proficient. To date, 166 contractors have attended the program.

Judges and Family Support Magistrates were given LEP Training in 2013. Since 2013, LEP training has been incorporated into the new judge orientation program provided to all newly appointed judges. In 2014, two new classes of judges were appointed and received the LEP training.

In 2014, an LEP training session was provided to 65 of the Branch's Small Claims and Motor Vehicle Magistrates.

### **Video Remote Interpreting**

A video remote interpreting (VRI) pilot program was developed which will allow a Spanish-language staff interpreter situated in the main office of ITS in Hartford to be present in a courtroom via video technology to provide language assistance services. The pilot location selected is G.A. 5 at Derby. This location has been identified because ITS is occasionally required to provide language services on days interpreters are not regularly scheduled for that particular location. By using this technology, the time waiting for an interpreter to travel to that distant location will be greatly reduced. It also reduces the need to hire private providers at higher hourly rates to provide the service. Thus, it is a more timely and cost efficient means of providing interpreter services. The system has been tested in this location. The Judicial Branch's Information Technology Division, along with ITS, continue to work out the technology implications before the pilot is fully launched. Once fully implemented, ITS will evaluate its applicability statewide at other remote locations.

## **Universal Advisement of Rights**

In 2012, a pilot program was developed for the Hartford Family Court in which the advisement of rights given by Family Support Magistrates were translated into Spanish and recorded on a DVD. Instead of utilizing a staff interpreter to interpret the Magistrate's advisement of rights, the pre-recorded video is played in open court immediately after the Magistrate gives the advisement of rights. Since several courtrooms open simultaneously, this allows ITS to maximize its interpreter resources and to permit interpreters to provide services in multiple courtrooms and multiple parties.

In 2013, the program was expanded to New Haven.

Based on the success of Hartford and New Haven, a decision was made to extend the program statewide. In 2014, the program was rolled out to the remaining 11 Judicial Districts.<sup>1</sup> Monitors and DVD players were purchased for all courtrooms where Family Support Magistrate matters are heard. The Family Support Magistrates and courtroom staff were trained on the equipment and process. The program has been operational statewide since October 2014.

## **Vital Documents**

The Judicial Branch has identified its vital documents and has begun the process of translating them into Spanish. In 2014, 123 vital documents were translated.

## **Telephonic Bilingual Services**

The Judicial Branch has contracted for telephonic language assistance services which enable Judicial Branch staff and individuals who are limited English proficient to communicate with the

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<sup>1</sup>The following locations were rolled out in 2014:

- 1) 106 Elizabeth St. Derby
- 2) 71 Main St. Danbury
- 3) 172 Golden Hill and Lafayette Circle Bridgeport
- 4) 15 West St. Litchfield
- 5) 1 Court St. Middletown
- 6) 20 Franklin Sq. New Britain
- 7) 54 West Main St. Meriden
- 8) 1 Courthouse Sq. Norwich
- 9) 123 Hoyt St. Stamford
- 10) 17 Belden St. Norwalk
- 11) 69 Brooklyn St. Rockville
- 12) 300 Grand St. Waterbury
- 13) 155 Church St. Putnam
- 14) 108 Valley St. Willimantic

use of a telephone. This language assistance is available in more than 170 languages, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It is available in various areas within all court locations and other Judicial Branch facilities. Language Line is also available to Judicial Branch employees, via a cell phone, when they need to communicate with limited English proficient individuals outside of Judicial Branch facilities. In 2014, it was used 13,251 times in 48 different languages.

### **Updating the Judicial Branch's Internet Site**

The overwhelming majority of interpreter requests continue to be for the Spanish language (approximately 88%). The next most requested languages are Polish and Portuguese (approximately 3% each). Accordingly, the Judicial Branch continues to translate pages on its website into Spanish, Portuguese and Polish.

The Judicial Branch's Web Board has identified which Frequently Asked Questions pages on the Internet have been the most viewed. ITS has undertaken the process of translating those pages and others into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese.

### **Interpreter Information Card**

In 2013, the LEP Committee developed an Interpreter Information Card (JDP-ES-285) as a way to inform the public regarding interpreting services provided by the Branch. Although the LEP pages on the Internet provide comprehensive information regarding the services offered by ITS, not all LEP individuals have access to the Internet. The card, initially translated into Spanish, Portuguese and Polish, was revised to include translations in Haitian-Creole and Chinese-Mandarin.

## **Future Plans**

The Committee recognizes the continuing need for the Judicial Branch to provide access to its facilities, processes, and information to all limited English proficient individuals. In the coming year, the Committee intends to focus on the following areas:

## **Vital Documents**

The translation of vital documents is an important initiative that is currently underway. ITS will continue to translate the initial list of identified vital documents, as well as, any newly created documents identified as vital to the operations of the Judicial Branch.

## **Video Remote Interpreting**

It is expected that the video remote interpreting pilot in Derby will be launched in the second half of 2015. Once that occurs, the committee will look into increasing the usage of remote interpreting in other courtrooms across the state.

## **Universal Advisement of Rights**

In the fall, a survey will go out to the beneficiaries of the advisement of rights program in the Family Support Magistrate courts. The survey will seek to determine the impact of the program and serve as a basis for determining whether or not the program should be extended into other case types.

## **Training**

Training on LEP issues is a continuous effort. The LEP Committee, with the assistance of the Judicial Branch's Information Technology Division, will work on transitioning the LEP training to an online format. Moving the training online will enable all Branch employees to go through the training in a short period of time. In addition, it will allow for the development of refresher courses. It is anticipated that the online training will be launched in the second half of 2015.

### **Revise Judicial Branch LEP Policy and Language Access Plan**

The LEP Committee will review and update, as necessary, the Judicial Branch's LEP policy and Language Access Plan. In addition to the Committee, outside stakeholders will be asked to be part of the review process. It is anticipated that an updated Language Access Plan will be submitted for review and approval.

### **Outreach**

The LEP Committee will create an email account to allow stakeholders to provide suggestions on how the Judicial Branch can better meet the needs of the LEP population. The email account will be added to the Committee's webpage and will be advertised to agencies working with LEP populations.