

POLICY STATEMENT REGARDING LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

(Revised and Approved May 2013)*

The Judicial Branch of the State of Connecticut is committed to providing meaningful access to the court system and its programs and services. The Branch prohibits discrimination on the basis of national origin, which includes discrimination against limited English proficient (LEP) persons. Limited English proficient (LEP) persons are individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English.

Federal law, specifically Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 and the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, prohibits discrimination on the basis of national origin. Title VI's prohibition of discrimination on the basis of national origin has been interpreted by courts to include discrimination on the basis of English proficiency. Individuals who are LEP are to be provided meaningful access to programs and services. Providing meaningful access will generally involve some combination of oral interpretation services and written translation of vital documents.

The Judicial Branch has taken steps to provide meaningful access to limited English proficient individuals who access the court system.

Committee on Limited English Proficiency

The Chief Justice appointed a Committee on Limited English Proficiency and charged it with "eliminating barriers to facilities, processes and information that are faced by individuals with limited English proficiency." The Committee conducted detailed surveys of internal and external users to craft numerous recommendations, many of which have been implemented. It is an ongoing Committee; detailed information about the work of this committee may be found at <http://www.jud.ct.gov/Committees/pst/lep/default.htm>.

Interpreter and Translator Services

The Judicial Branch has an Interpreter and Translator Services Unit within the Superior Court Operations Division. This unit was established by the Judicial Branch to service individuals who are limited English proficient in court and court-related proceedings at no cost. The State of Connecticut Judicial Branch is a member of the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) Council of Language Access Coordinators (CLAC) which evolved from its origins as the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts (established originally as the Consortium for State Court Interpreter Certification in 1995,) comprised of approximately 46 member states. The Council dedicates itself to fairness, integrity, service and collaboration by inspiring and enabling its members "to promote equal access to justice in courts and tribunals by eliminating language barriers for persons with limited English proficiency." One benefit, among many, is having access to proficiency examinations for certification purposes.

One of the goals of the Interpreter and Translator Services Unit is to ensure meaningful access to the courts by providing interpreters, who are highly qualified and trained, to all persons who are limited English proficient in all court proceedings and court-related proceedings. This access is extended to LEP parties and other LEP individuals whose presence or participation is appropriate to the justice process.

Court interpreters serve the Connecticut courts by helping to provide due process for persons who are limited English proficient. Court interpreters must not only be bilingual and bicultural; they must be educated speakers of English and another language, and be able to interpret all levels of discourse in court proceedings.

In addition to interpreter services, the Unit provides translation services. New technology is being used to expand and expedite the translation of information materials and documents.

Telephonic Language Services

The Connecticut 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 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 all court locations and other Judicial Branch facilities including, but not limited to, adult probation offices, support enforcement offices, and the centralized infractions bureau.

Internet and Intranet

The Connecticut Judicial Branch has information regarding limited English proficiency on its Internet and Intranet websites. Information on the Internet site includes the Branch's Language Access Plan, LEP policy statement, answers to frequently asked questions, complaint procedures and links to various resources. Information on the Intranet site provides employees with internal administrative procedures for accessing interpreter and translation services.

Additionally, the Connecticut Judicial Branch has translated a number of web pages into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese. See <http://www.jud.ct.gov/Committees/pst/lep/default.htm>. Publications and informational materials have also been translated.

Training

The Branch has developed a training program to increase awareness of federal non-discrimination rights, laws and guidelines and to ensure that all employees, Judicial officers and contractors understand the Branch's obligations to provide meaningful access to information and services to persons who are limited English proficient. This program also offers cultural sensitivity education and provides information and materials regarding how to obtain language assistance and translation services when needed immediately as well as for future dates.

Language Identification Materials

Language identification posters have been produced by the Judicial Branch for use in offices, lobbies, reception areas and other appropriate locations; they are available throughout Branch facilities.

Printed desk aids have been produced for employees to provide procedural information for accessing language assistance services.

*The policy will be reviewed by the LEP Committee, as it deems appropriate, on a periodic basis but not less than once every two years, and recommendations for changes will be submitted to the Chief Court Administrator for approval.