

Town of Thurston Language Access Policy

1. Purpose and Authority

- a. In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, this policy establishes guidelines for providing language accessible services to individuals that are limited English Proficient and/or Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

2. Definitions

- a. Limited English Proficient individual means any individual whose primary language is not English, and has limited or no ability to speak, understand, read, or write English.
- b. Interpretation is the process of orally rendering a spoken or signed communication from one language into another language.
- c. Primary language means the language that an individual communicates most effectively in.
- d. Translation is converting written text from one language into written text in another language. 'Translation' is often misused to mean interpretation, but it is a written medium.
- e. A qualified interpreter or translator is a trained professional who is a neutral third party with the requisite language skills, experienced in interpretation or translation techniques, and knowledgeable in specialized content areas and technical terminology to effectively facilitate communication between two or more parties who do not share a common language.
- f. Simultaneous interpretation is the process of orally rendering one language into another language virtually while the speaker is speaking with only a very short lag time.
- g. Consecutive interpretation is the process of orally rendering one language into another language after the speaker has completed a statement or question and pauses. The interpreter then renders that statement into the other language.
- h. Sight Translation is the rendering of material written in one language, completely and accurately into spoken speech in another language.

- i. Vital Documents are any materials that are essential to an individual's ability to access services provided by the organization or are required by law.

3. How to determine the need for language assistance

- a. The public official at the initial point of contact will conduct an assessment for the need for language assistance and notify the individual of the right to an interpreter at no cost. Public officials who have subsequent contact will continue to assess the need for language assistance.
- b. To assess the need for language assessment, staff should ask open-ended questions and avoid asking questions that would allow for yes or no responses. For example, asking: "how may I be of assistance?" instead of "do you need help?"
- c. The LEP individual may speak more than one language or may have limited proficiency in a secondary language. Public Officials shall identify the primary language of the LEP individual, and work to provide language assistance in the primary language of the individual.
- d. A Deaf individual may also be limited English proficient and not be proficient in American Sign Language. Staff shall work to identify the primary language of the Deaf individual and provide language assistance in the primary language of the individual.

4. Identifying Language

- a. Public officials shall request the individual or companion identify the language of the LEP or Deaf individual.
- b. Use in-person, video remote interpreters, or telephonic interpreters to identify the language.
- c. Use an "I speak" card or poster to identify the primary language.
- d. Public officials should determine of the preferred mode of communication for a Deaf or Hard of Hearing individual is interpretation or Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART).

5. Language Services

- a. The Town of Thurston will make available vital forms and materials in the most frequently encountered languages.

- b. For other languages, staff should use an interpreter to sight translate the document into the individual's primary language.
- c. Written communication to the LEP individual should be translated into the primary language of the LEP individual.

6. Notice of Language Services

- a. Signage will be placed on the bulletin board of the Town Hall notifying individuals of the right to request an interpreter at no cost to the individual. Signage will be translated into the languages most frequently encountered by the organization.
- b. Public Officials at the initial point of contact will notify individuals of their right to an interpreter at no cost.

7. Training

- a. Public Officials will receive training on the content of the language access policy; how to identify the need for language access services; working with an LEP and Deaf individuals; providing language accessible service in a culturally sensitive manner; working with an interpreter; and interpretation best practices.

8. Evaluation

- a. The Town Supervisor shall be responsible for monitoring compliance with the Town of Thurston's language access policy.
- b. Organization shall collect information on language use and need, including primary language of clients; use and language of interpretation services; distribution of translated documents; frequency of contact with LEP or Deaf individuals seeking services; and referrals of LEP or Deaf individuals and the language of the referred LEP or Deaf individuals.
- c. The Town Board shall conduct an annual review of the effectiveness of the language access policy and make changes as needed at the Organizational Meeting.

Adopted on 8/20/2025 by a unanimous vote of the town board of the Town of Thurston.