

DC LANGUAGE ACCESS: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Language Access and Advocacy Program
Office on Latino Affairs, Executive Office of the Mayor, District of Columbia
Updated December 2013

Language Access Complaints –Please see below on how we recommend you to submit a complaint for a Language Access issue with a DC government agency, such as problems accessing interpretation services or translated information.

If a Language Access issue arises with a DC government agency, the first step is to file a formal complaint at the [Office of Human Rights](#)– their main phone is (202) 727-4559 and address: 441 4th St NW, Room 570 North. Or complaints can be submitted [online](#).

If a resident needs help in filing a formal complaint to the Office of Human Rights, the individual can seek assistance from the [Legal Aid Society of DC](#) – for their intake hours, please call: (202) 628-1161. Their address is: 1331 H Street NW, Suite #350.

In addition, if a Language Access issue arises, complaints may also be submitted via email to the Office of Human Rights with all three consultative agencies cc'd:

If the message could include a brief summary of the issue encountered, the time/date, the location, the agency, and if possible the name of the particular employee at the agency with whom the issue arose, this would be very useful information to document the incident.

Send an email message directly to:

The Office of Human Rights:

Winta Teferi, Interim Director of the Language Access Program (Winta.Teferi@dc.gov)

The Language Access Coordinator at the agency where the issue was encountered

– For a full directory please visit: <http://ohr.dc.gov/publication/language-access-coordinator-list>.

The Office on Latino Affairs:

Cecilia Castillo Ayometzi, Ph.D., Language Access Coordinator (Cecilia.Castillo@dc.gov)

& Kelsey Chatlosh, Language Access Monitor (Kelsey.Chatlosh@dc.gov)

The Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs:

Neel Saxena, Language Access Coordinator (Neel.Saxena@dc.gov)

The Office on African Affairs:

Ngozi Nmezi, Director (Ngozi.Nmezi@dc.gov)



Directory of DC Government Language Access Coordinators—Each of the thirty-four DC government agencies named under the Language Access Act has a designated Language Access Coordinator, who oversees all of the language services for that agency. For any agency-specific questions, we recommend to contact that agency’s Language Access Coordinator directly. [To view a directory of all the current Language Access Coordinators in District government and their contact information, please click here.](#)

For Free “I Speak ____” Cards, either the cards in Spanish or the cards in Amharic, French, Korean, Vietnamese, or Chinese, you may request these directly from the [Office of Human Rights](#) – their main phone is (202) 727-4559 and address: 441 4th St NW, Room 570 North. The cards are a useful resource for limited and non-English proficient residents to keep on hand and present to District government employees, in order to self-identify language preference and direct the government agency to provide services in the client’s preferred language.

Language Line Telephonic Interpretation Complaints—Any customer, representative of a customer, or client, patient, member or provider of a customer may submit a [Voice of the Customer \(VOC\) online](#), to provide feedback to the Language Line company regarding a positive or negative experience with a telephonic interpretation service provided over the phone. Be sure to include the identification numbers of the interpreter and the client.

DC Metropolitan Police Department (MPD)—If a [Language Access issue arises for a Spanish-speaking client](#), one may contact the [MPD Latino Liaison Unit](#) at 1800 Columbia Rd NW or by phone (202) 673-4445.

MPD has a large number of certified bilingual officers – the majority of whom speak Spanish.

If you work at a nonprofit or government organization and would like to request attention to a particular issue on behalf of a client, or request to arrange an outreach event with MPD, you may contact [Captain Delgado](#) directly. Captain Delgado supervises the entire Special Liaison Division and is MPD’s Language Access Coordinator – his phone is (202) 576-6600 and email is Edward.Delgado@dc.gov.

DC Public Schools (DCPS)—All [DC Public Schools \(DCPS\)](#), *not* including charter schools, are named under DC Language Access. All interpretation and translation services and other resources and information for LEP/NEP students and their parents or guardians are centralized at the [Office of Bilingual Education \(OBE\)](#). OBE provides translation and interpretation services to central offices and local public schools to enable parents of other language backgrounds to fully participate in the education of their children.

The Language Access Coordinator for DCPS is also the Director of OBE: Ms. Elba Garcia, please feel welcome to contact her via email Elba.Garcia@dc.gov or phone (202) 671-0757. For interpretation and translation services please contact Ms. Ivy Chaine, Language Access Coordinator at OBE, via email Ivy.Chaine@dc.gov or phone (202) 671-0755.

Sign Language Interpretation—If a DC resident is in need of interpretation services for American Sign Language (ASL) in order to receive a service or information from a DC government agency, we recommend you to contact the [DC Department of Disability Services](#) (DDS), via phone (202) 730-1700. DDS has a bank of ASL interpreters and you may request their services directly. Please note that American Sign Language is not one of the languages named under the DC Language Access Act.

If your organization encounters a client in need of interpretation services for a deaf or hard of hearing individual who is both limited English proficient and speaks Spanish or another language— either a trilingual interpreter (e.g. spoken Spanish, American Sign Language, spoken English) or an interpreter for another signed language (e.g. Spanish Sign Language), we recommend you to contact [Gallaudet Interpreting Service \(GIS\)](#), via email GIS@gallaudet.edu or phone (202) 651-5199 to hire an interpreter.

ESL or Spanish Literacy Classes—For DC residents in need of English as a Second Language (ESL) or Spanish Literacy classes, we recommend you to contact any of the following nonprofits:

For English as a Second Language (ESL) Classes:

Carlos Rosario School, 1100 Harvard St NW	(202) 797-4700
Language ETC, 2200 California St NW	(202) 387-2222
VIDA Senior Center [55yr.s+], 1842 Calvert St NW	(202) 483-5800
The Family Place [for parents], 3309 16 th St NW	(202) 265-0149
Georgetown University's Center for Social Justice	(202) 687-5330

For Spanish Literacy Classes:

El Centro de Alfabetización en Español (CENAES)	(202) 607-3901
Language ETC, 2200 California St NW	(202) 387-2222

DC Courts – The DC Courts are named under the federal legislation of Title VI and are thus exempt from the local legislation of the DC Language Access Act. The DC Courts provide free interpretation services for all in-court proceedings, when the individual appears before a judge in court, but the DC Courts do *not* provide interpretation services for any out-of-court proceedings.

If there is an issue with interpretation for an in-court proceeding, one may contact [Mr. James Plunkett, Coordinator of the Office of Court Interpreting Services at the DC Superior Court](#), phone: (202) 879-4828 and address: 500 Indiana Avenue NW, Room 3127.

If an interpreter is needed for an out-of-court proceeding, we recommend you to contact the [Community Legal Interpreter Bank at Ayuda](#). The main phone number at Ayuda in DC is (202) 387-4848 and address: 6925 B Willow St NW.

Hospitals—Hospitals in the District are also named under the federal legislation of Title VI and are thus exempt from the local legislation of the DC Language Access Act. For language services issues at a hospital, you may contact the specific hospital’s management directly.

If a DC resident needs a medical interpreter at a local medical facility, we recommend you to contact the [Language Services department of La Clínica del Pueblo](#). For more information on Language Services available through La Clínica, please contact Isabel Van Isschot at iisschot@lcdp.org or via phone (202) 464-0158.

Social Security—The [Social Security Administration \(SSA\)](#) is named under the federal legislation of Title VI and is thus exempt from local legislation of the DC Language Access Act. In accordance with Title VI, SSA provides interpreters free of charge to any individual requesting language assistance or when it is evident that such assistance is necessary to ensure that the individual is not disadvantaged.

To request free interpretation services, please call 1-(800) 772-1213, Monday through Friday between 7am and 7pm. Their website is also available translated into Spanish: www.ssa.gov/espanol/ (as well as [additional languages](#)).

Public Transit—The [Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority \(WMATA\)](#), including the Metro rail and bus systems in the DC Metropolitan Area, is named under the federal legislation of Title VI and is thus exempt from the local legislation of the DC Language Access Act. In accordance with Title VI, WMATA provides language services to ensure access to programs and activities by LEP and NEP Metro bus and rail riders.

Translated information on WMATA services is made available online. One may visit www.wmata.com and click the “Languages” tab on the bottom right-hand corner to select to view materials available in: Spanish, French, Korean, Chinese, and Vietnamese, in addition to English.

If a client wishes to file a Title VI Complaint to WMATA, please visit for more information: http://www.wmata.com/about_metro/civil_rights.cfm.

For any additional questions or concerns on services and resources for LEP/NEP Metro bus and rail riders, one may contact Ms. Diana Montero, Workforce Diversity and Compliance Specialist, Office of Civil Rights, WMATA – via email dmontero@wmata.com or phone: (202) 962-1309.



If you have any additional questions or concerns regarding DC Language Access, please feel welcome to contact the Office on Latino Affairs, Language Access and Advocacy Program:

Cecilia Castillo Ayometzi, Ph.D.

Language Access Coordinator
Email: Cecilia.Castillo@dc.gov
Phone: (202) 671-2824

Kelsey Chatlosh

Language Access Monitor
Email: Kelsey.Chatlosh@dc.gov
Phone: (202) 671-3005



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Watch videos on Language Access at www.vimeo.com/languageaccess/videos!