

**U.S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN (LAP)**



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# United States Attorney's Office Northern District of Alabama

## Language Assistance Plan (LAP)

### Introduction

In compliance with Section 2 of Executive Order 13166, this plan details the United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Alabama's initiatives and plans to improve access to its federally-conducted programs and activities by eligible individuals of limited English proficiency (LEP). For purposes of this Plan, the definition of "federally-conducted programs and activities" is identical to that used under the regulations implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

### Background

On August 11, 2000, the President issued Executive Order 13166, found in 65 FR 50121, titled "Improving Access to Services by Persons With Limited English Proficiency." On the same day, the Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights issued a Policy Guidance Document, found in 65 FR 50123, titled "Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - National Origin Discrimination Against Persons With Limited English Proficiency" (hereinafter referred to as "DOJ LEP Guidance").

Executive Order 13166 requires federal agencies to assess and address the needs of otherwise eligible persons seeking access to federally-conducted programs and activities who, due to limited English proficiency, cannot fully and equally participate in or benefit from those programs and activities. The DOJ LEP Guidance in turn advises each federal department or agency to "take reasonable steps to ensure 'meaningful' access [to LEP individuals] to the information and services they provide."

### Assessment

The United States Census Bureau indicates that approximately 108,000 Spanish-speaking individuals reside in the state of Alabama. According to the Bureau, approximately 56,500 of those individuals speak English "less than very well", and a large percentage reside in the Northern District of Alabama (NDAL).

Over the past three years, a number of Spanish-speaking individuals have come to the office seeking information, or have been witnesses or defendants. In essence, our exposure to Spanish-speaking individuals has significantly increased.

### Telephone Calls/Walk-ins

Security Guard Station. When visitors come to the United States Attorney's Office,

their first contact is with the Security Guards in the main lobby. Informational signs printed in Spanish are prominently displayed instructing LEP visitors how to proceed thru security procedures. Security Guards also have copies of language identification flash cards available for individuals who do not speak English. Once an individual's native language is determined, the Security Guard will contact the LEP Coordinator, or her designee, to determine which service should be utilized. If possible, in-house volunteers will be used. If necessary, the LEP representative will contact *Language Line Services*, at 1-866-874-3972, for assistance in determining the visitor's reason for coming to the office. In addition, visitors will be instructed to sign in and then proceed to the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor reception area to wait for the appropriate staff member. If additional interpreting services are needed, attorneys and other staff members have access to *Language Line Services*.

Reception Area. When an LEP individual telephones the office, the receptionist will try to determine what language the caller is speaking, and then contact the LEP representative. If the language cannot be determined, a telephone call-back number will be obtained if possible, and a qualified interpreter contacted to return the LEP's call. These procedures will be followed in the main office in Birmingham as well as in the Huntsville Branch Office.

Community Relations/Victim-Witness. The Birmingham and Huntsville offices have brochures available, in both English and Spanish, instructing LEP individuals on what to do if they are victims of crimes. In addition, the Victim-Witness Coordinator has access to *Language Line Services*, if needed.

## **Case Related Language Needs**

Criminal and Civil Cases. All translation/interpreting services for criminal and civil cases will normally be handled by interpreters certified by the District Court. This would include any meetings, depositions, debriefings and interviews with LEP individuals.

Financial Litigation Unit (FLU). All translation/interpreting services for FLU cases will normally be handled by interpreters certified by the District Court. This would include any meetings, depositions, debriefings and interviews with LEP individuals

All demand letters sent by the FLU shall include a notice in Spanish advising the individual that they may elect either to secure the assistance of an interpreter of their own choosing (at their own expense) or that an interpreter will be provided by this district. Any such election of the party shall be documented in writing and placed in the case file.

## **Staff Training**

The District will establish an LEP Orientation Program for all employees and security personnel, utilizing tapes, videos, DVDs, and/or a classroom setting. Employees will be surveyed annually by the LEP Coordinator to determine who, if any, speak or write a foreign language, and are willing to assist when called upon for translation and/or interpreting services. A list of employees who have volunteered to assist with the LEP Program is maintained by the LEP Coordinator.

New employee orientation includes training on the nature and scope of language assistance services, as well as the specific procedures through which employees can access those services.

During annual training sessions, Special Emphasis Program Managers are briefed on the LEP Program and/or any changes.

## **Outreach**

The NDAL's internet web-page contains information on the availability of language assistance through or by the United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Alabama (USAO/NDAL). Additionally, the Birmingham and Huntsville offices provide LEP brochures to the public outlining Executive Order 13166. Employees are encouraged to distribute brochures and make reference to the USAO/NDAL web-page when contacting individuals, participating in civic functions, or speaking to community groups.

## **Self-Assessment and Self-Monitoring**

This LAP will be reviewed on an annual basis and changes made as appropriate.

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