



COMMITTEE ON LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

2020 REPORT

Committee on Limited English Proficiency

The Committee on Limited English Proficiency was 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 Connecticut Supreme Court Associate Justice Maria Araujo Kahn and Ms. Alejandra Donath, Program Manager for the Interpreter and Translator Services Unit (ITS), and is comprised of the following members¹:

Mr. Troy Brown
Attorney Brittany Kaplan
Attorney Richard Loffredo
Attorney Brandon Pelegano
Attorney Viviana Livesay (Legal Services advisor)
Ms. Heather Collins (Support Staff)

The Judicial Branch [is committed](#) to ensuring that limited English proficient (LEP) individuals are able to access its facilities, processes, and services.

The pandemic that engulfed the world in 2020 impacted greatly how the Connecticut Judicial Branch performed its functions. Many courthouses were closed. Certain proceedings were heard remotely. Many staff worked remotely. Through it all, however, the Judicial Branch [continued serving its stakeholders](#). The services provided to LEP stakeholders never stopped. Interpretation and translation services were provided whenever they were needed.

In 2020, ITS covered [over 13,000 files](#) that required oral language assistance in 70 different languages/dialects. This includes over 1,200 pre-scheduled events that were covered remotely by either staff and/or contracted interpreters through Microsoft Teams, CISCO and/or Telephonically. In addition, over-the-phone interpreting services for over-the-counter language needs were used over 11,000 times in 45 different languages/dialects. ITS translated 120 separate Judicial Branch forms as well as 67 case specific documents in 2020. ITS also translated 45 notices that were specific to the COVID pandemic into [Spanish](#), [Portuguese](#), and [Polish](#).

This report serves as an update of the work of the [Committee on Limited English Proficiency](#) in 2020.

¹The Committee would like to acknowledge Attorney Michelle Fica from Connecticut Legal Services. Her attendance and participation in the Committee meetings has been invaluable.

I. On-Going Initiatives

In its effort to ensure that LEP individuals can access the Judicial Branch's facilities, processes, and information, the Committee has been working over the past year on the following areas:

Continued LEP Training

In 2009, the Judicial Branch developed a mandatory LEP training program for all of its employees that provided information on the federal requirements of providing services to LEP individuals, explained the role of the interpreter, and detailed how to obtain language assistance and translation services. This program also offered cultural sensitivity education. Over 2,300 employees attended this half-day program.

In 2017, the LEP training moved to an online format. This 75-minute course provides an overview of the Judicial Branch's obligations to provide services to LEP individuals, details the role of an interpreter, the differences between an interpreter and a translator, and how Judicial Branch employees can obtain language assistance services 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Since its online launch, over 4,400 employees have taken the course. This training was revised and re-recorded to reflect updated information in 2020.

In 2018, the LEP Committee developed an online training for those entities that contract with the Judicial Branch and provide services to LEP stakeholders. The training covers the federal requirements regarding the provision of services to LEP individuals, the entity's responsibilities to LEP individuals under the terms of their contract with the Judicial Branch, how an entity can meet its responsibilities, the difference between interpretation and translation, and tips on how to work with interpreters. Since its online launch, over 850 individuals have taken the course.

Judges and family support magistrates were given LEP training in 2013. Additional LEP training was provided to judges in 2016. Since 2013, LEP training has been incorporated into the new judge and family support magistrate orientation program provided to all newly appointed judges and family support magistrates. An advanced LEP and cultural competency training program required for all judges and family support magistrates was prepared to be delivered at the annual judges training conference in the summer. Due to the pandemic, this training conference was postponed. The course will be provided once the conference is rescheduled.

Issues surrounding limited English proficiency and the requirement to provide services are also part of a larger training that is provided by Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson and Justice Kahn. This training also covers implicit bias, cultural competency and the Americans with Disabilities Act. In 2020, Chief Justice Robinson and Justice Kahn provided this training to the Connecticut Bar Foundation / Connecticut Bar Association.

In 2020, the Judicial Branch's contract for telephonic bilingual services changed. As a result, one vendor was removed and a new vendor was added. Interpreter and Translator Services developed new training materials for providing these services. These training materials were provided in-person to each open office within the Judicial Branch. In addition, in-person training was offered at each location if office personnel needed it.

Vital Documents

The ongoing identification and translation of vital documents has remained a priority of the LEP Committee and the Judicial Branch. In 2013 and again in 2017, the Chief Court Administrator requested the Judicial Branch's Executive Directors to identify the vital documents utilized by their Divisions. Interpreter and Translator Services continues the process of translating these documents into [Spanish](#), [Polish](#) and [Portuguese](#). In 2020, 120 vital documents were translated into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese.

In 2020, the LEP Committee worked with the Legal Services Unit to develop a system to include an indicator on all forms that have been translated into other languages.

Telephonic Bilingual Services

The Judicial Branch has contracted with three vendors for telephonic language assistance services, enabling Judicial Branch staff and individuals who are limited English proficient to bridge the language gap by communicating through the use of a telephonic interpreting service. In 2020, the telephonic bilingual services contract was renewed and one vendor was added and one was removed. As a result, Interpreter and Translator Services (ITS) developed new training materials for the telephonic services. ITS also visited every open office within the Judicial Branch to provide the training materials and to offer in-person training if needed. As additional courthouses are opened, ITS will visit each office in the courthouse to provide the new training materials and offer training.

Telephonic Bilingual Services are available in more than 150 languages, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are available in all Judicial Branch facilities and are also available to staff working outside of Judicial Branch facilities, via a cell phone, when needed to communicate with LEP individuals. In 2020, Telephonic Bilingual Services were used over 11,000 times in 45 different languages/dialects.

Translating Pages on 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 Portuguese and Polish (approximately 3% each). Accordingly, the Judicial Branch continues to translate [pages on its website into Spanish, Portuguese and Polish](#).

Website Review

A subcommittee was created to review [the current LEP webpage](#) on the Judicial Branch website and to look at the LEP pages from other states. The subcommittee was charged with making recommendations to make the LEP webpage more accessible and user-friendly. The recommendations of the subcommittee were approved by the Committee and forwarded to the Judicial Branch's Web Board. The Web Board has also approved the recommendations. The recommendations have been forwarded to the Branch's Information Technology Division for implementation.

Video Remote Interpreting

The onset of the COVID pandemic fundamentally changed how much of our court business is conducted. Before the pandemic, the overwhelming majority of court cases and interviews were conducted in-person. As a result of the pandemic, it became necessary to shift proceedings to remote platforms. The Judicial Branch dramatically increased its usage of CISCO technologies and began utilizing the [Remote Justice platform](#). Equipment was purchased for the interpreters to allow their participation for all proceedings in which they are required. Utilizing the remote platforms has enabled Interpreter and Translator Services to cover court proceedings and interviews in a more efficient manner.

II. Future Plans

The LEP 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 has been underway since 2013. The Interpreter and Translator Services Unit will continue to translate vital documents into Spanish, Polish and Portuguese.

The LEP Committee will continue to work with Legal Services to implement a system to include an indicator on all forms that have been translated into other languages. The Legal Services' Forms Manager has identified an initial 125 forms that will be updated to include this indicator.

Translated Orders

The LEP Committee proposes to develop a pilot project to test the feasibility of issuing translated case specific court orders. This will allow LEP individuals to leave the courthouse with a written document containing the order of the court in their spoken language.

Training

Training on LEP issues is an ongoing priority of the LEP Committee and the Judicial Branch. The LEP Committee will develop an online refresher training on when and how to access interpreter services. The Committee will seek to make this refresher training mandatory for all Judicial Branch employees and that it be taken once every three years.

The Committee will also begin work on developing an online tutorial for external stakeholders on the services that the Judicial Branch provides to LEP individuals and how those services can be accessed.

Chief Justice Robinson and Justice Kahn will continue to provide the LEP, cultural competency, implicit bias and ADA training program to organizations and agencies that interact with the Judicial Branch.

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 Judicial Branch's LEP webpage and will be advertised to agencies working with LEP populations.

Additionally, the LEP Committee will review and prioritize responses received from its outreach survey in its continuing effort to address the needs of the Judicial Branch's LEP stakeholders.

Website

The LEP Committee will work with the Information Technology Division to launch the revised LEP webpage. Prior to its release, the webpage will be translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Polish.

Notice Regarding Interpreter Services

The LEP Committee will review the signage it has placed in facilities to ensure signage includes language that informs stakeholders that interpreter services are available at no cost to the LEP individual. The Committee will also look into the feasibility of adding similar language on court forms and publications.

The LEP Committee will also look into the feasibility of adding language to notices and forms about filing a complaint regarding language services.

Language Access Plan

The LEP Committee will review and update, as necessary, the Judicial [Branch's Language Access Plan](#). Once updated, the revised Language Access Plan will be sent to the Chief Court Administrator for final approval.