



## **City of Portland's Language Access Policy**

The City of Portland ("City") provides timely, meaningful access to its programs and services for individuals with limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English ("LEP persons"). In order to reduce barriers posed to LEP persons, the City will make language access services available at no cost to individuals applying for, receiving, or participating in any City program, services, or benefits. The City adopted the following procedures for interacting with a customer or community member who is a LEP person or has a disability affecting communication and who needs assistance accessing these services.

### **Identifying LEP Persons Who Need Language Assistance**

Interpretation is the act of listening to something in one language and verbally translating it into another language. In the case of American Sign Language ("ASL"), interpretation is the act of viewing language in sign language and verbally translating it into another language or vice versa. The City makes available (at no cost to the LEP person) qualified interpreters and auxiliary aids and services to help customers communicate with the City.

The City will promptly identify the language and communication needs of the LEP person. The City will post, in publicly-accessible areas, signs that are designed in a format that enables the LEP person to point to the language he or she speaks so that the City staff member can access the appropriate interpreter. City staff will direct individuals to these signs when it is apparent that the individuals are having difficulty speaking or understanding English. City staff will then utilize the interpreter services described in this document.

City staff will offer an interpreter as soon as it is apparent that a person has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. City staff will additionally inform members of the public that language assistance services are available to LEP persons free of charge. An LEP person who is a companion of a person seeking services from the City may also request interpreting assistance.

## **Types of Interpreter Services Available**

There are four primary types of interpreter services that the City offers LEP individuals:

**1. Telephonic Interpreter Services**

**2. In-Person, Face-to-Face Interpreters**

**3. American Sign Language Interpreters or Video Remote Interpreting (“VRI”) Services for use with individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired**

**4. Use of Multilingual City of Portland Staff:** The City employs a number of multilingual staff who have volunteered to assist their colleagues when an interpreter may be needed for a brief interpretation.

The City provides City staff a list of interpreter services companies with which the City has contracts. Some LEP persons may prefer or request to use a family member or friend as an interpreter. However, family members and friends of the LEP person should not be used as interpreters unless specifically requested by that individual and after the LEP person has been offered an interpreter at no cost. The City will insist upon use of one of its approved vendors if the City has concerns about the competency of the interpretation, confidentiality, privacy, and/or a conflict of interest.

## **Written Language Assistance - Translation**

Translation is the act of converting written text in one language into the equivalent written text of another language. The City uses Google Translate on its website to allow users to translate any page or document on the website into a foreign language. Recognizing there are limitations to this usage, the City provides a list of translation services companies with which the City has contracts, which the City encourages staff to use if they would like a document or webpage translated into another language or provided in an accessible format.

“Vital documents” will be translated when a significant number or percentage of the population eligible to be served, or likely to be directly affected by the program/activity, needs services or information in a language other than English to communicate effectively. The City will work with its departments to determine which of its documents are vital documents that will be translated into languages spoken most frequently by LEP persons with whom the department has contact. A document will be considered vital if it contains information that is critical for obtaining City services and/or benefits or is required by law. The City will provide translation of other, non-vital written materials, if needed, as well as written notice of the availability of translation, free of charge, to LEP individuals.

## **Training and Internal Resources for Interpretation- and Translation- Related Questions**

The City will conduct a regular review of the language access needs of its customers and update and monitor the implementation of this policy and procedures as needed. Records of the language services provided will be obtained through surveys and billing statements. The City will also provide periodic training to new and existing employees on the content of this policy, how staff can identify the language needs of an LEP individual, how to access and provide the necessary language assistance services, how to work with interpreters, how to facilitate document translations, and how to track the use of language assistance services.

Please contact Gina Tapp, Director of Human Resources at 207-874-8624 or [gmt@portlandmaine.gov](mailto:gmt@portlandmaine.gov) with any questions about this policy or its procedures.

**Signed by Jon Jennings**

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Jon P. Jennings, City Manager