

Why Do Language Rights Matter?



- In MA, 22% of the population speaks a language other than English at home.
- Provides access to decision making.
- Without them a person may unknowingly waive rights; be discriminated against.

Who is an LEP person?



- “Individual with a limited ability to read, write, speak, and understand English.”
- Can be the family member of an English speaker who is involved in the care of that person.
- Person “does not have to be limited in all “speaking, reading, writing and comprehending.”
- “Flexibility” in addressing needs “should not diminish, and should not be used to minimize the obligation that those needs be addressed.” Must take “reasonable steps” to ensure access.

Other Important Terms



- **Interpretation** involves the oral communication from one language (the source language) into another (the target language).
- **Translation:** rendering of written text from the source language into the target language.
- **Vital Document:** A document that contains information that is critical for meaningful access to a program by LEP persons.

What are the Language Rights?



An Individual with a limited ability to read, write, speak, and understand English has the right to:

- Use **public** programs and **communicate in the preferred language**.
- Set a **language preference** to receive vital written materials.
- **Right to an interpreter** that is free, qualified, trained in subject, impartial, and ensures person understands what everyone says.

Even if the person has some command or knowledge of the language, if they understand their own language better, they can ask for services!

Who is an appropriate interpreter?

Appropriate:

- ✓ Professional
- ✓ Trained in subject
- ✓ Qualified
- ✓ Impartial



NOT Appropriate:

- ✗ Minor children
- ✗ Doesn't know subject or terms
- ✗ Unqualified to translate
- ✗ Partial



What an Interpreter Can and Cannot Do



An interpreter **should:**

- ✓ Treat you with respect
- ✓ Make sure they understand what you say
- ✓ Make sure you understand what they say
- ✓ Interpret everything you say and the program says

An interpreter **cannot:**

- ✗ Change your words
- ✗ Leave out information
- ✗ Talk about you
- ✗ Take sides
- ✗ Tell you what you should do

Questions



"I say to hell with it. If it can't be said in English, it ain't worth saying at all."