

## **LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP) PLAN**

### **1. PLAN STATEMENT**

The Housing Authority of the County of Stanislaus (HACS) has adopted this plan to provide meaningful access to its programs and activities by persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). In accordance with federal guidelines the HACS will make reasonable efforts to provide or arrange free language assistance for its LEP persons, including applicants, recipients and/or persons eligible for public housing, Section 8/ Housing Choice Vouchers, homeownership and other HACS programs.

### **2. MEANINGFUL ACCESS; FOUR-FACTOR ANALYSIS**

Meaningful access is free language assistance in accordance with federal guidelines. Once every five years, the HACS will assess and update the following four-factor analysis, including but not limited to:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the HACS.
2. The frequency with which with LEP persons using a particular language come into contact with the HACS.
3. The nature and importance of the HACS program, activity or service to the person's life.
4. The HACS's resources and the cost of providing meaningful access. Reasonable steps may cease to be reasonable where the costs imposed substantially exceed the benefits.

### **3. LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE**

1. A person who does not speak English as their primary language and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English may be a Limited English Proficient (LEP) person and may be entitled to language assistance with respect to HACS programs and activities.
2. Language assistance includes interpretation, which means oral or spoken transfer of a message from one language into another language; and/or translation, which means the written transfer of a message from one language into another language. The HACS will determine when interpretation and/or translation are needed and are reasonable.
3. HACS staff will take reasonable steps to provide the opportunity for meaningful access to LEP persons who have difficulty communicating in English. If a client asks for language assistance and the HACS determines that the client is an LEP person and that language assistance is necessary to provide meaningful access, the HACS will make reasonable

efforts to provide free language assistance. If reasonably possible the HACS will provide the language assistance in the LEP client's preferred language.

The HACS has the discretion to determine whether language assistance is needed, and if so, the type of language assistance necessary to provide meaningful access. The HACS will periodically assess client needs for language assistance based on requests for interpreters and/or translation, as well as the literacy skills of persons.

#### **4. TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS**

- a. The HACS will weigh the costs and benefits of translating documents for potential LEP groups, considering the expense of translating the documents, the barriers to meaningful translation or interpretation of technical housing information, the likelihood of frequent changes in documents, the existence of multiple dialects within a single language group, the apparent literacy rate in an LEP group and other relevant factors. The HACS will undertake this examination when an eligible LEP group constitutes 5 percent of an eligible client group (for example, 5 percent of households living in the HACS's public housing) or 1,000 persons, whichever is less.
- b. If the HACS determines that translation is necessary and appropriate, the HACS will translate the public housing lease and selected mailings and documents of vital importance into that language. The HACS will provide translation and outreach materials to other language groups to the extent that HUD has developed and made available translation and outreach materials for those groups.
- c. As opportunities arise, the HACS may work with other housing authorities to share the costs of translating common documents, which may include language groups which do not (yet) reach the threshold level in the HACS's client population.
- d. The HACS will consider technological aids such as Internet-based translation services which may provide helpful, although perhaps not authoritative, translations of written materials.

#### **5. AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS**

- a. The HACS will make reasonable efforts to produce or obtain multiple translations of audiovisual and other training materials it uses to inform or educate applicants, residents and other client groups.

## **6. FORMAL INTERPRETERS**

- a. When necessary to provide meaningful access for LEP persons, the HACS will provide qualified interpreters, including HACS bilingual staff and contract vendors. At important stages that require one-on-one contact, written translation and verbal interpretation services will be provided consistent with the four-factor analysis used earlier.
- b. The HACS may require a formal interpreter to certify to the following:
  - i. The interpreter understood the matter communicated and rendered a competent interpretation.
  - ii. The interpreter is covered by any government “Data Practices Act” and will not disclose non-public data without written authorization from the client.
- c. Formal interpreters shall be used at the following:
  - i. Formal hearing for denial of admission to public housing and USDA-RD programs;
  - ii. Informal settlement conferences and formal hearing for termination of public housing and USDA-RD programs;
  - iii. Hearings or conferences concerning denial or termination of Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8) participation.
- d. A HACS staff interpreter may not be a subordinate to the person making the decision.
- e. The HACS has bilingual employees that can provide limited assistance to HACS staff and LEP persons as part of their regular job duties.

## **7. INFORMAL INTERPRETERS**

- a. Informal interpreters may include the family members, friends, legal guardians, service representatives or advocates of the LEP client. HACS staff will determine whether it is appropriate to rely on informal interpreters, depending upon the circumstances and subject matter of the communication. However in many circumstances, informal interpreters, especially children, are not competent to provide quality and accurate interpretations. There may be issues of confidentiality, competency or conflict of interest.
- b. An LEP person may use an informal interpreter of their own choosing and at their expense, either in place of or as a supplement to the free language assistance offered

by the HACS. If possible, the HACS should accommodate an LEP client's request to use an informal interpreter in place of a formal interpreter.

- c. If an LEP client prefers an informal interpreter, after the HACS has offered free interpreter services, the informal interpreter may interpret. In these cases, the client and interpreter should sign a waiver of free interpreter services.
- d. If an LEP client wants to use their own informal interpreter, the HACS reserves the right to also have an interpreter present.

## **8. OUTSIDE RESOURCES**

- a. Outside resources may include community volunteers, HACS residents or housing program participants.
- b. Outside resources may be used for interpreting services at public or informal meetings or events if a timely request has been made.
- c. The HACS will endeavor to create relationships with other organizations that assist specific cultural and ethnic groups living in its jurisdiction. To help their persons obtain or keep housing assistance through the HACS, these organizations may provide interpreters for LEP persons.

## **9. MONITORING**

1. The HACS will review and revise this LEP Plan as needed. The review will include:
2. Reports from the HACS's computer business systems on the number of HACS persons who are LEP, to the extent that the software and staff data entry can provide such information. Such reports may be supplemented by staff observations.
3. Reports from the computer business systems and other sources listing the languages used by LEP persons.
4. A determination as to whether 5 percent or 1,000 persons from a HACS client group speak a specific language, which triggers consideration of document translation needs as described above.
5. Analysis of staff requests for contract interpreters: number of requests, languages requested costs, etc.
6. The Resident Advisory Board (RAB) will be asked to review the LEP Plan as part of updating the Agency Plan.

## **10. LEP PLAN DISTRIBUTION AND TRAINING**

The LEP Plan will be:

1. Distributed to all HACS supervisors.
2. Available in HACS Management Offices and the Rental Office/Section 8 Office.
3. Posted on HACS's website, [www.stancoha.org](http://www.stancoha.org)
4. Explained in orientation and training sessions for supervisors and other staff who need to communicate with LEP persons.