

KNOXVILLE'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION'S LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN FOR LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT PERSONS

INTRODUCTION

Knoxville's Community Development Corporation (KCDC) is committed to ensuring equal access to its programs and services by all residents, regardless of primary language spoken. Title VI and Executive Order 13166 require recipients of federal financial assistance to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and services by Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons. Persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English can be considered LEP persons.

On January 22, 2007, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issued Final Guidance to recipients of HUD funding concerning compliance with the Title VI prohibition against national origin discrimination affecting LEP persons. HUD's Final Guidance defines a four-factor self-assessment method which assists agencies receiving HUD funds in determining the extent of their obligations to provide LEP services. Based on the Final Guidance and the Voluntary Compliance Agreement dated September 27, 2007, KCDC completed an LEP self-assessment.

Using the LEP self-assessment as a guide, KCDC has prepared this Language Assistance Plan (LAP) which defines the actions to be taken by KCDC to ensure Title VI compliance with respect to LEP persons. KCDC will periodically review and update this LAP in order to ensure continued responsiveness to community needs and compliance with Title VI.

GOALS OF THE LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN

The goals of KCDC's Language Assistance Plan include:

- To ensure meaningful access to KCDC's public housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs by all eligible individuals regardless of primary language spoken.
- To ensure that all LEP individuals are made aware that KCDC will provide free oral interpretation services to facilitate their contacts with and participation in KCDC programs.
- To provide written translations of vital documents to LEP individuals
- To ensure that KCDC staff are aware of available language assistance services and how these services need to be used when serving LEP individuals.
- To provide for periodic review and updating of language assistance plans and services in accordance with community needs.

LEP INDIVIDUALS WHO NEED LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

Knoxville is becoming a more diverse community and is beginning to see more LEP households than in previous years. According to census data, it is estimated that between 6 and 7 percent of all Knoxville residents over age 5 speak a language other than English at home. This equates

to approximately 8,600 individuals. Of non-English speaking households, 40% speak Spanish, 30% speak Indo-European languages, approximately 21 % speak Asian and Pacific Island languages, and around 9% speak languages other than these. A table below breaks this information down between language groups.

KNOXVILLE, TN LANGUAGE DATA

Total Population Over 5 Years of Age = 163,524

Language Spoken	Number of Knoxville Residents
English	154,875
Spanish	3,488
Other Indo-European	2,693
Asian/Pacific Island	1,839
Other/Unidentified	629

TYPES OF ASSISTANCE NEEDED BY LEP PERSONS

The majority of contacts between KCDC and LEP persons are meetings, written communications and phone calls where information is exchanged. Examples include interactions by applicants with KCDC Admissions during the application process leading up to housing, as well as periodic contacts between residents and KCDC staff related to management, maintenance and lease compliance issues. Oral interpretation services may be needed for these contacts.

Other contacts involve the exchange and review of printed materials, some of which may be considered "vital documents". HUD's Final Guidance defines vital documents as, "any document that is critical for ensuring meaningful access to the recipients' major activities and programs by beneficiaries generally and LEP persons specifically". The list of documents considered vital by KCDC includes the following for public housing and HCV as applicable:

- Application(s) for housing and related notices*
- Consent forms
- Lease including lease addenda*
- Grievance Procedure and related notices*
- Recertification related forms and related notices
- Rent change notices
- Transfer policies and procedures*

KCDC will periodically review and update this list to reflect those documents which are considered vital to applicants and/or residents. With respect to these vital documents, KCDC will endeavor to maintain items with an asterisk in Spanish, since it is the predominant non-English language spoken in Knoxville, with the aim of gathering other Spanish translation documents within 24 months of the initial LEP/LAP effective date.

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE TO BE PROVIDED

In order to promote equal access to KCDC programs and services by LEP individuals, KCDC will implement the following array of language assistance services.

A) Identification of LEP Persons and Notices

Use of "I Speak Cards": In order to help identify LEP individuals and determine the appropriate language assistance, KCDC will post and make available ISpeak Cards at its central office reception area and site based management offices. Applicants, public housing residents and HCV participants can use these cards to indicate their primary language. KCDC staff at the point of entry will then make appropriate arrangements for interpretation services, generally using language service via the internet, bilingual staff, or a telephone interpretation service.

Notices of Oral Interpretation Services: KCDC will provide free access to language service via the internet, bilingual staff, or a telephone interpretation service for LEP individuals. Multi-lingual notices will be posted at its central office and KCDC site -based management offices. The KCDC website shall indicate that free oral interpretation services are available upon request.

Language Preferences of Residents and Applicants: KCDC will ask applicants and residents to identify their primary language on a language preference form at initial application (for new applicants) and at recertification (for existing residents/participants), and to identify their language preference for receiving written communications. The language identification form will also ask the applicant, resident/participant if translations services are necessary. This information will be included in the paper files and in the electronic record (upon implementation of KCDC's next five-year agency plan to be enacted July 1, 2015.)

B) Language Assistance Measures

Oral Interpretation – Bilingual Staff: Where feasible, bi-lingual KCDC staff will be deployed to communicate with LEP individuals in their native languages and to assist them in reviewing KCDC materials, answering questions about KCDC programs, and responding to KCDC forms and information requests. Currently, KCDC employs only one staff member able to speak Spanish, the language spoken most frequently by eligible persons served by KCDC. Therefore there will be a heavy reliance on Internet and Person-to-person services.

Oral Interpretation – Internet Interpretation Services: KCDC will use a free, web-based translation service (Google Translate) when a staff person is not available. The LEP individual will use an ISpeak card to signify that they speak a non-English language and trained staff will assist them once the language has been identified through use of service. When these contacts involve submission of an application, lease signing, annual reexamination, grievance, eviction or termination, KCDC will schedule an appointment for the individual with an interpreter in person (see below).

Oral Interpretation - In Person Assistance: In instances where telephone interpretation services or the use of bilingual KCDC staff are determined insufficient to ensure meaningful access, KCDC will provide qualified in-person interpretation services at no cost to the LEP individual through the *Foreign Language Academy of Knoxville*, which provides interpreters in over 25 languages for a reasonable hourly fee. Examples of contacts where in-person assistance is likely to be required include submission of an application, lease signing, annual reexamination, grievance, eviction or termination. Due to the expense involved in providing in-person assistance, KCDC will generally strive to use such assistance for matters of potential significance or complexity impacting the applicant or resident's housing status, rent payments, or lease compliance issues. If the LEP person does not wish to use the KCDC-provided interpretation services, the LEP person may provide their own qualified interpreters at their own expense; however, see below regarding use of family and friends as interpreters.

Oral Interpretation - Use of Other Interpreters not provided by KCDC: As noted above, LEP individuals will be informed that KCDC will provide them with free access to oral interpretation services via bilingual KCDC staff or qualified, trained contractors as needed. If the LEP individual requests their own qualified, trained interpreter this will be allowed at the individual's own expense. Use of family members and friends, especially minor children, as interpreters will generally be discouraged. Exceptions may be made where the contact with the LEP person is of a routine nature, one that does not involve confidential matters, or significant/complex matters impacting the applicant or resident's housing status, rent payments, or lease compliance issues and the LEP person signs a release that indicates alternative services were offered and waived. Staff will be advised to be alert to the potential for any conflict of interest or competency issues that may arise from the involvement of family or friends. If staff has questions about the appropriateness of allowing family and friends as interpreters, they will consult with Compliance Office for guidance.

Written Translation: KCDC will translate the vital documents listed above into the most frequently used non-English languages.

Telephone Communication: For callers to KCDC's offices, Spanish callers will be transferred to bi-lingual KCDC staff when available. If needed, KCDC will attempt to place a three-party call to the oral interpretation telephone service to determine if the service is able to identify the language spoken and provide an interpreter.

C) Staff Training and Coordination

KCDC will provide training on LEP awareness and required assistance actions under the Language Assistance Plan for employees. This will include:

Mandatory training: A mandatory training will be scheduled for all employees to review the Language Assistance Plan elements, review new procedures related to the LAP, and to inform staff of their responsibilities relative to LEP persons. On an ongoing basis, periodic refresher training will be provided to staff that regularly interact with KCDC clients.

LEP Coordinator: KCDC will designate a staff member as LEP Coordinator, responsible for ongoing updates of the LEP analysis, addressing staff and public questions and issues related to LEP matters, and providing ongoing LEP training.

D) Providing Notice to LEP Persons

To ensure that LEP persons are aware of the language services available to them, KCDC will take the following actions:

- Post LEP notices in KCDC's offices and on website
- Partner with community agencies
- Inform resident associations of language assistance services.
- The LAP will be reviewed and updated annually as part of KCDC's annual plan process.
 - The review will assess:
 - Whether there have been any significant changes in the composition or language needs of the LEP population in Knoxville;
 - a review to determine if additional vital documents require translation;
 - a review of any issues or problems related to serving LEP persons which may have emerged during the past year; and,
 - identification of any recommended actions to provide more responsive and effective language services.