

**FRANKLIN COUNTY
COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
DIVISION OF DOMESTIC RELATIONS AND JUVENILE
LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN
[EFFECTIVE AUGUST 25, 2023]**

I. LEGAL BASIS AND PURPOSE

This document serves as the Language Access Plan (LAP) for the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions to provide services to limited English proficient (LEP) individuals in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; 45 C.F.R. § 80 et seq; and 28 C.F.R. § 42 et seq. The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and reasonable language assistance to LEP persons who come in contact with the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions.

The Supreme Court of Ohio provides the following advisement:

In order to comply with the prohibition against national origin discrimination in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, et. seq., the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, 42 U.S.C. 3789d(c), and 28 C.F.R. Part 42, Subparts C and D, recipients of federal funds must provide meaningful access to limited English proficient (LEP) individuals. *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974). The U.S. Department of Justice advises that practices, such as charging for interpretation and translation services or seeking recoupment for those costs, significantly impair, restrict, or preclude the participation of LEP individuals in the judicial system and are inconsistent with recipients' Title VI obligations. For more information, please refer to Guidance from the U.S. Department of Justice to state court justices and administrators' Letter from Assistant Attorney of the Civil Rights Division to Chief Justices and State Court Administrators (Aug. 16, 2010); Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons, 67 Fed. Reg. 41455 (June 18, 2002).

This LAP is developed to ensure equal access to court services for LEP persons and persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. Although deaf and hard of hearing individuals are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) rather than Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, they have been included in this plan insofar as they relate to our policy of access to justice and equal protection under the law. Protections for individuals with qualifying disabilities includes the following:

- Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public entities, including state and local courts, to provide equal access to their programs and services. 42 U.S.C. §§ 12131-12134.
- Public entities are required to “take appropriate steps to ensure that communications with applicants, participants, and members of the public with disabilities are as effective as communications with others.” 28 C.F.R. § 35.160(a).

- Public entities must “furnish appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to afford an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefits of, a service, program, or activity conducted by a public entity.” 28 C.F.R. § 35.160(b)(1).
- These auxiliary aids and services include the provision of “qualified interpreters, notetakers, computer-aided transcription services, written materials...or other effective methods of making aurally delivered materials available to individuals with hearing impairments.” 28 C.F.R. § 35.104.
- To determine “what type of auxiliary aid and service is necessary, a public entity shall give primary consideration to the requests of the individual with disabilities.” 28 C.F.R. § 35.160(b)(2).
- Deaf and hard of hearing people may not be charged for the costs of such auxiliary aids or services. 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(f).

II. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions

The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions will make every effort to provide services to all LEP and deaf or hard-of-hearing persons in its jurisdiction. The most commonly used languages in Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions are the following:

- Spanish
- Somali
- Nepali
- French
- American Sign Language

The following monthly averages were taken from interpreter requests received by Interpreter Services at the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions Juvenile from January to June 2023.

- Total requests per month (all languages): 426
- Spanish: 215
- Somali: 63.5
- Nepali: 41
- French: 13.5
- American Sign Language: 9.5

III. LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

A. Language Access Coordinator

The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions will designate a language access coordinator. The language access coordinator should report to the director of court services and administrative judge since high level support is essential to successful implementation. The language access coordinator, along with the court administrator and the administrative judge, will assist in ensuring that language services are delivered by the court in accordance with this plan and in accordance with this plan and the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio, Rules 80 - 89.

The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions language access coordinator is Shannyn Kitchen. She can be reached at DRJ_InterpreterRequest@fccourts.org. Complaints submitted under Section VIII of this Language Access Plan will be addressed by the language access coordinator within seven business days. In addition to the responsibilities already outlined in this plan, the language access coordinator also has the following responsibilities:

- Identify qualified interpreters and translators to be included in an interpreter database or list as maintained by the court;
- Track and collect data regarding the use of interpreters, the languages needed, etc.
- Outline measures to ensure quality control of interpreters and translators; and
- Assign qualified interpreters and translators to perform language assistance functions.

B. Interpreters Used in the Courts

Under Ohio law and Supreme Court rules, there are two different instances in which a court must provide an interpreter: in a case or court function (see Sup.R. 80) and in connection with ancillary services (see Sup.R. 89). This distinction is important because the type of interpreter to be provided and the court's responsibilities differ depending on the specific situation.

By statute, Ohio courts must appoint qualified interpreters. Specifically, section 2311.14 of the Ohio Revised Code provides that courts shall provide interpreters due to hearing, speech, or other impairments of a party or a witness to a case.

Additionally, Rule 88 of the Rules of Superintendence for the Courts of Ohio, requires that the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions appoint an interpreter in a case or court function when a LEP or deaf or hard of hearing individual requests an interpreter or when the court determines the services of an interpreter are necessary for the meaningful participation of the party or witness.

Under Ohio law, foreign language interpreters will be provided at court expense, if the party is found to be indigent. However, in order to comply with the prohibition against national origin discrimination in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d, et. seq., the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, 42 U.S.C. 3789d(c), and 28 C.F.R. Part 42, Subparts

C and D, recipients of federal funds must provide meaningful access to limited English proficient (LEP) individuals. *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974). The U.S. Department of Justice advises that practices, such as charging for interpretation and translation services or seeking recoupment for those costs, significantly impair, restrict, or preclude the participation of LEP individuals in the judicial system and are inconsistent with recipients' Title VI obligations. For more information, please refer to Guidance from the U.S. Department of Justice to state court justices and administrators' letter from Assistant Attorney of the Civil Rights Division to Chief Justices and State Court Administrators (Aug. 16, 2010); Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons, 67 Fed. Reg. 41455 (June 18, 2002).

In the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions, sign language interpreters will be provided at court expense for all deaf or hard of hearing court parties, witnesses, or jurors in compliance with the ADA.

Interpreters are provided by contracted interpreter services on a case-by-case basis for in-person and remote interpreting by video or phone. Some languages may not be available for in-person interpretation.

IV. USE OF INTERPRETERS

A. Determining the Need for an Interpreter

There are various ways that the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions will determine whether an LEP or deaf or hard of hearing person needs the services of a court interpreter. First, the LEP or deaf or hard of hearing person may request an interpreter.

Second, court personnel and judges may determine that an interpreter is necessary for the meaningful participation of a party or witness. Many people who need an interpreter will not request one because they do not realize that interpreters are available, they mistakenly think they will have to pay for the interpreter, or because they do not recognize the level of English proficiency or communication skills needed to understand the court proceeding. Therefore, when it appears that an individual has any difficulty communicating, the court staff, judge, or magistrate must provide an interpreter to ensure full access to the court. See Sup.R. 88(A)(2), (B)(1)(b). In legal proceedings, judges and magistrates must make a determination, on the record, as to the need for an interpreter. In court functions and ancillary services, designated staff may make a determination as to the need of an interpreter.

Third, once a party or a witness has been identified as an LEP or deaf or hard of hearing individual, the court will exercise every effort to appoint interpreters in all future related proceedings or court functions. Furthermore, the court will follow the requirements of Sup.R. 88 to appoint an interpreter (see Section C below). If no in-person interpreter is available at the given instance, the court will grant a continuance or if possible and appropriate, in accordance with Sup.R. 88, Appendix J, use the services of a telephonic interpreter.

B. Court Interpreter Qualifications

The Language Services Section of the Supreme Court of Ohio maintains a statewide roster of interpreters who are qualified to interpret in the courts. Foreign language interpreters on the roster have passed a written examination, attended at least 24 hours of court interpreter training, and have scored within a designated range that measures their language and interpreting skill. Sign language interpreters have also met similar requirements as necessary for national certification through the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf. The definition of each category of interpreter is set forth in Sup.R. 80-88.

C. Appointment of a Court Interpreter

The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions will appoint in-person and telephonic court interpreters in accordance with all criteria set forth in Sup.R. 88 and will ensure that certified court interpreters are used whenever reasonably available.

Pursuant to Sup.R. 88(C), the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions Juvenile will make all reasonable efforts to avoid appointing foreign language interpreters or sign language interpreters if they are compensated by a business owned or controlled by a party or a witness; friend or a family or household member of a party or witness; a potential witness; court personnel employed for a purpose other than interpreting; law enforcement officer or probation department personnel; or would not serve to protect a party's rights or ensure the integrity of the proceedings or have a conflict of interest, real or perceived.

D. Language Services Outside the Courtroom

In accordance with Sup.R. 89, the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions shall ensure that LEP individuals and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing have meaningful access to ancillary services outside the courtroom. LEP individuals and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing may come in contact with court personnel via the phone, counter, or other means. The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions has the following resources to assist LEP individuals and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing:

- When a court staff member does not know what language the person is speaking, refer to a Language Identification Guide which is available in 100 languages. The language access coordinator is responsible for distributing cards to all staff and to any new staff.
- When an interpreter is not reasonably available through Interpreter Services, all court staff have access on telephonic interpretation using LanguageLine Solutions to bridge communication.

V. TRAINING

Ohio courts are committed to providing language access training opportunities for all staff members who come in contact with or may come in contact with LEP individuals and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. The Ohio Judicial College and the Language Services Section provide on-going training for court staff regarding issues related to LEP populations, individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, the use of interpreters, and other language access matters.

The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions staff with direct contact with LEP individuals or individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing will receive training on language access, to be coordinated by the Language Access Coordinator. The Language Access Coordinator will ensure that all staff receives updated training regularly and new staff are trained at the time of hire.

VI. COMPLAINT PROCESS

The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions will ensure that all LEP individuals and individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing receive language assistance services in their preferred language. To promptly address any concerns that an LEP person or an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing did not receive language assistance, the Supreme Court of Ohio has developed a process for handling such complaints.

Complaints can be made directly to the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions interpreter coordinator at DRJ_InterpreterRequest@fccourts.org and by all court staff using the Language Services SharePoint page.

Complaints can also be made to the Supreme Court of Ohio. Parties may call 1(888)-317-3177, Monday-Friday, 8 AM to 5 PM, or send correspondence via email to: InterpreterServices@sc.ohio.gov or via US Postal Service to:

Language Services Section
Complaint Resolution
65 South Front Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions employees will also provide information on this complaint process to LEP individuals or individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing upon request or if an LEP/deaf or hard of hearing individual voices concern about the lack of language access services or the quality of services that were provided.

In addition to the Supreme Court's complaint process, The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions has developed a local complaint resolution process as well. If the language access coordinator receives a language access complaint, she will document receipt of the complaint and provide information about it to the individual who

supervises the affected employee(s). Once the supervisor or monitor receives notice of a language access complaint, she will take prompt action to review, investigate and respond to its allegations. The language access coordinator will also notify the Supreme Court of Ohio manager of the Language Services Section of such complaint.

The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions will display a sign translated into Ohio's 12 most frequently used languages which states:

If you are limited English proficient, you have the right to a court-appointed interpreter. To request one please contact the person or number below:

Your local contact information here

If you are not provided an interpreter, call the Supreme Court of Ohio complaint line at 1.888.317.3177

The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions will display this sign at common areas visible to all court users. In the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions, the Language Access Coordinator is responsible to make sure signs are visible, interpreters are provided, and our LAP plan is monitored.

VII. PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF LAP

A. LAP Approval

The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions LAP has been approved by the administrative judge of the court. Any future revisions to the plan will be submitted to the administrative judge for approval. Copies of The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions LAP will be distributed electronically to all court staff by the language access coordinator.

B. Notification

The language access coordinator will ensure that any new staff receives a copy of the plan. Copies of The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions LAP will be provided to the public upon request. In addition, The Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions will post this plan on its website.

C. Evaluation of the LAP

The Language Access Coordinator will review this plan on an annual basis and make changes based on the review. The evaluation will include review of any complaints received, identification of any problem areas, development of required corrective action strategies, and input from court staff. Elements of the evaluation may include:

- Assessing the number of LEP/deaf hard of hearing persons requesting court interpreters in Ohio courts;
- Assessing current language needs to determine if additional services or translated materials should be provided;
- Assessing whether staff members adequately understand LEP policies and procedures and how to carry them out;
- Reviewing complaints received since the last review; and
- Gathering feedback from LEP/deaf hard of hearing communities around the state; using that feedback as collaboration on any revisions to the LAP.

Any revisions made to the plan will be approved by the administrative judge and will be communicated by posting on the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas, Domestic Relations and Juvenile Divisions public website.

**VIII. OFFICIAL DESIGNATION OF LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATOR AND
BACK-UP LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATOR.**

Language Access Coordinator

Name: Shannyn Kitchen
Title: Interpreter Services Coordinator
Address: 373 S. High St., Office 4001A
City, State, Zip: Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: 614-525-4463
Email: Shannyn_Kitchen@fccourts.org

In the event that the Language Access Coordinator is unavailable, the back-up Language Access Coordinator will serve as the substitute.

Back-up Language Access Coordinator

Name: Kayalani Cloe
Title: Interpreter Services Coordinator
Address: 373 S. High St.
City, State, Zip: Columbus, OH 43215
Phone: 614-525-4568
Email: Kayalani_Cloe@fccourts.org

XI. HELPFUL RESOURCES

- Federal interagency website about language access- LEP.GOV
- American Bar Association Standards for Language Access in Courts, February 2012,
- Department of Justice Language Access Planning
- Supreme Court of Ohio's Language Services Section .

XII. LAP ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE APPROVAL

This LAP was reviewed and approved by:

Administrative Judge Monica Hawkins



DATE: 7/14/25

XIII. EFFECTIVE DATE

7/14/25

Back-Up Language Access Coordinator updated, July 14, 2025.