

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME



LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

I. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Fish and Game has developed and prepared this Language Access Plan (LAP) outlining ongoing efforts taken to provide language services to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) constituents.

This plan also defines the actions our office is taking to ensure meaningful access to programs, services, activities, and materials for all LEP constituents.

The Department of Fish and Game will review and update this LAP every two years at least or more often if needed to ensure continued responsiveness to community needs.

The Department of Fish and Game serves a diverse population of various ages and linguistic origins. An LEP person is someone who does not speak, read, write, or understand the English language at a level that allows them to interact effectively with Department of Fish and Game staff. A constituent maintains the right to self-identify as LEP.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to ensure meaningful access to services, programs, activities, and materials for all LEP constituents.

The Department of Fish and Game is committed to making services available to individuals with LEP as part of its mission. Based on this commitment, the Department of Fish and Game makes every attempt to assist LEP constituents in accessing our services.

This LAP does not create new services; rather it strives to eliminate barriers for LEP constituents accessing existing services and ensure that all staff can assist LEP constituents in accessing those resources. Department of Fish and Game will provide quality language assistance to LEP constituents in a fair and timely manner, ensuring meaningful access to the agency's services. This LAP centralizes language access materials for staff and outlines the regular trainings for new hires to ensure that all staff can access the materials and services listed in the sections below.

The objectives of these Language Access Guidelines are to:

- Improve access to and quality of state services, programs, and activities for non-English speakers and individuals with LEP;
- Reduce any disparities and delays in the provision of services/programs to eligible LEP speakers; and

- Streamline training and resources for staff to increase effectiveness and ensure public satisfaction.

III. POLICY

It is the Department of Fish and Game's policy to provide meaningful access to programs and services to individuals with limited English proficiency.

IV. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all offices within the Department of Fish and Game (DFG), including the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW), Division of Marine Fisheries (DMF), Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), and the Office of Fishing and Boating Access (FBA).

The Department of Fish and Game is charged with stewardship responsibility over the Commonwealth's marine and freshwater fisheries, wildlife species, plants, and natural communities. DFG conserves and restores the state's rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, wild lands, and coastal waters through programs of research, restoration, and land protection. In addition, DFG issues licenses and registrations for hunting, trapping, inland and marine fishing as well as promotes recreational uses of the state's public lands and waters consistent with its mission.

The Department of Fish and Game consists of four Divisions and the Office of the Commissioner:

- Division of Fisheries and Wildlife manages the Commonwealth's inland fisheries and wildlife resources, including issuance of hunting and fishing licenses, administering the Hunter Education Program, and protection of state-listed rare species;
- The Division of Marine Fisheries manages marine fisheries resources, including commercial and recreational marine fishing activities;
- The Office of Fishing and Boating Access constructs facilities that provide access by the public for fishing and boating activities in the Commonwealth;
- The Division of Ecological Restoration provides technical assistance for river and wetland restoration projects in the Commonwealth; and
- The Office of the Commissioner oversees and provides administrative services to DFG and its divisions and offices.

Common Points of Contact between DFG include:

- DFW: Applications for hunting and fishing licenses, the Hunter Education Program, and the website;
- DMF: Applications for commercial and recreational fishing licenses, filing of catch reports, and the website;

- FBA: The FBA rarely interacts directly with the public. However, signs placed at FAB facilities and pamphlets are indirect points of contact;
- DER: Interactions with the public arise out of restoration projects. DER rarely, if ever, interacts directly with individuals with LEP; and
- Commissioner's Office: Contact with the public in general most often arises out of telephone inquiries and the website.

This Language Access Plan (LAP) shall be fully implemented, subject to the availability of requisite fiscal resources. It represents the agency's commitment to ensuring that all residents of Massachusetts can readily access information and resources from the Department of Fish and Game.

V. LANGUAGE ACCESS RESOURCES

For staff, this plan centralizes resources, training, and the agency's multilingual content and publications while outlining the minimum standard of access to the agency for LEP constituents.

Language Access Coordinator

- The Language Access Coordinator, Noah McClanan, Director of Legislative Affairs, at (617) 894-4366 or noah.mcclanan2@mass.gov, will be the primary contact for the implementation, review, and monitoring of the Language Access Plan;
- The Language Access Coordinator will coordinate with staff from DFG's Divisions, as well as Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs staff, to fulfill the goals and objectives of the Language Access Plan; and
- The Language Access Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring publications are translated.

The Department of Fish and Game is committed to creating and maintaining all its widely applicable publications in the five most spoken languages in the Commonwealth in addition to English. Documents that will be translated include but are not limited to:

- Flyers advertising public meetings, to be posted in community centers, schools, and other public locations;
- Materials and handouts to be distributed at public meetings; and
- Information regarding human-wildlife interaction

For publications containing regulations that change annually, including hunting and fishing regulations, the Department of Fish and Game is committed to supporting non-English-speaking constituents. Prominent messaging will accompany printed regulations guiding

constituents to website resources that have translation options, as well as guidance for initiating an interpreted call with a staff member who can answer questions and explain regulations.

- When reaching out to specific communities in the Commonwealth, Department of Fish and Game staff should ensure that these publications will be accessible in the languages prevalent in each community; and
- Longer and more specific publications should be translated when there are accessibility concerns for the intended audience.

Translating Signage

The Department of Fish and Game and its four Divisions utilize signs at public access sites, Wildlife Management Areas, and recreational facilities to inform the public about rules and guidelines. The Department of Fish and Game will examine installing secondary signs at these locations that contain a short URL and bring up a digital version of the sign. At present, short URLs point users to equivalent content on Mass.gov webpages that can be translated into more than 30 languages.

Sign types include but are not limited to:

- Public Access at boat ramps and fishing piers;
- Shellfish Harvesting Rules;
- Striped Bass Fishing Rules;
- Sea Herring Rules;
- Prohibitions on releasing live fish or other exotic wildlife; and
- Wildlife Management Area entrance information.

Written Translations Guidelines

The Operational Services Division (OSD) has created a Statewide Contract ([PRF75](#)), which is available to state agencies to efficiently procure document translation services on an as-needed basis. DFG utilizes the PRF75 to procure translated services for the translation of full documents (not on-demand). There are several [state vendors](#) on the [PRF75 Statewide Contract](#)

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) has contracted with Bay State Interpreters to provide on-demand translation services for written correspondence from LEP constituents (e.g., email, letter, or social media). To utilize these services, DFW staff may contact the Language Access Coordinator, Noah McClanan, Director of Legislative Affairs, at (617) 894-4366 or noah.mcclanan2@mass.gov.

Web Content

DFG's websites are hosted by the Massachusetts Digital Services under the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security. Digital Services has prioritized accessibility and inclusion in their content delivery and training materials.

The website is designed to maximize visual accessibility and to work well with screen readers. All mass.gov pages also offer a Google translate widget, which supports neural machine translation to more than 30 languages. All web content authors complete a training that teaches techniques for creating inclusive content.

Best practices include:

- Writing in plain English language for those not familiar or experts on the topic or issue;
- Avoiding jargon;
- Avoiding harmful or exclusionary language;
- Avoiding PDFs; and
- Providing alternative text for images

Multilingual Staff at Department of Fish and Game

The Department of Fish and Game is committed to hiring and retaining multilingual staff for all positions, but especially for public-facing staff and on the agency's hotlines.

Interpreter Services for Walk-in Constituents

While the preference is to provide direct service to LEP constituents in their primary language, Department of Fish and Game staff also have access to an over-the-phone language service that includes over 380+ languages. Step-by-step instructions on how to use the over-the-phone language services, including ASL, are included below in the section on hotlines and general phone lines.

A [Language Identification Flashcard](#) is posted on our homepage website for easy access. The card states "I speak" in 38 languages and can be used to identify the language spoken by LEP constituents accessing services provided by the Department of Fish and Game.

Hotline, General Phone Lines & Over-the-Phone Language Services

There are several over-the-phone language service providers to assist in interpreting over the phone. All staff should have access to and be trained on the over-the-phone language service providers. There are other [state vendors](#) providing similar services.

Constituents can get help with fishing/hunting license purchases through DFG's third-party Mass Fish Hunt license vendor's customer service. The agency has access to the quantity of language interpretation requests as well as information about the time it takes to resolve them successfully.

For the staff of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW): DFW has contracted with Baystate Interpreters since 2022 to provide real-time or scheduled language-interpretive services as staff interact with the general public. Staff have been provided with instructions on how to readily access these services. The contracted vendor must be utilized for interpretation services. For questions related to real-time access to phone and walk-in interpretation services, please contact Mass Wildlife Outreach and Education staff.

Interpretation for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at Department of Fish and Game Events

The Department of Fish and Game must provide interpretation for the deaf and hard of hearing when requested. The organization hosting the event might request that DFG provide interpretation when scheduling and confirming the event. When registering attendees for our office presentation/event, you should provide an option for attendees to request American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Review these [First Time Use Instructions](#) from the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) to familiarize yourself with the different kinds of interpretation that could be requested.

If ASL interpretation is requested, follow the steps below to request an ASL interpreter. Requests should be made at least two weeks or more in advance of the event. If the services are no longer needed or the event is canceled, you should provide notice to MCDHH at least three days before the scheduled date to avoid fees.

Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH)

Interpreters should be requested from the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The process for requesting interpretation is laid out on the Commission's website, linked above. Request ASL for the date and time in question. Most events will require two ASL Interpreters.

If it is possible to request interpreters from multiple organizations, you should make time prior to the event for the interpreters to connect.

DFG will be assessed costs associated with interpretation services. Notify appropriate administrative staff of all interpretation requests to ensure proper accounting of requested services.

Staff Training

The Language Access Plan (LAP) will be:

- Posted internally for all employees;
- Incorporated into the orientation for new employees;
- Presented to management so they are fully aware of and understand the LAP in order to reinforce the plan's importance and ensure its implementation by staff; and
- Presented to Department of Fish and Game staff having contact with the public, so such staff is trained to work effectively with LEP constituents and over-the-phone interpreters.

Monitoring

The Department of Fish and Game will review and update its Language Access Plan at least every two years or more frequently, as needed. The review assesses:

- Whether there have been any significant changes in the composition or language needs of the population served. DFG will utilize US Census data and Environmental Justice community resources to determine any significant change to the top languages spoken in various regions of Massachusetts;
- Whether the staff knows and understands the LAP document and is comfortable using the services described within;
- Whether additional documents require translation;
- Identification of any issues or problems related to serving individuals with LEP which may have emerged during the past year; and
- Identification of any recommended actions to provide more responsive and effective language services (e.g., adding documents to be translated, creating, or expanding partnerships with community organizations, or changing staffing priorities).

Monitoring the effectiveness of a Language Access Plan may include:

- Analyzing current and previous data on language assistance usage, including languages served;
- Surveying staff on how often they use language assistance services, if they believe there should be changes to the services provided or the providers used, and if they believe that the language assistance services in place are meeting the needs of the LEP communities in their service area; and
- Monitoring feedback from community-based organizations, legal services, and other stakeholders about the agency's effectiveness and performance in ensuring meaningful access for individuals with LEP.

Department of Fish and Game Language Access Coordinator shall attend quarterly meetings hosted by the Executive Office of Energy and Environment Affairs' designated Secretariat Language Access Coordinator to assess the implementation of this plan. For any language