

**Language Access Plan**  
**Department of Children and Families**  
January 2024 – December 2025

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## **Department of Children and Families**

### **Language Access Plan**

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#### **I. Introduction**

The Department of Children and Families (“DCF” or “Department”) has developed and prepared this Language Access Plan (“LAP” or “Plan”), outlining ongoing efforts taken to provide language services to Limited English Proficiency (“LEP”) consumers. This plan also defines the actions DCF is taking to ensure meaningful access to its programs, services, activities, and materials for all LEP consumers.

In drafting this plan, DCF consulted prior Language Access Plans issued by DCF, [Executive Office of Administration and Finance Administrative Bulletin 16](#), and guidance issued by the Governor’s Office of Access and Opportunity.

DCF will review and update this LAP as needed to ensure continued responsiveness to community needs. Commonwealth Executive Orders [592](#), [559](#), [614](#) and [615](#), [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), and federal regulations at [45 CFR § 80](#) require that DCF provide meaningful access to LEP persons. The Department will review and update this Plan at least every two years to ensure that DCF is continuing to respond to community needs.

The Department serves a diverse population of various ages and linguistic origins. An LEP individual is someone with a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand the English language at a level that allows them to interact effectively with DCF staff. An LEP person may be someone whose first language is not English, but it may also include someone who is deaf, hard of hearing, speech disabled, or someone with a visual impairment. A consumer maintains the right to self-identify as LEP.

#### **II. Purpose**

The purpose of this plan is to ensure that DCF consumers have meaningful access to services, programs, information, and activities although they may be limited in their English language proficiency. DCF is committed to this Plan as the appropriate response to meeting our consumers’ needs.

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. The Department will provide quality language assistance to LEP consumers in a fair and timely manner, ensuring meaningful access to the agency’s services.

This LAP centralizes language access materials for staff and outlines trainings to ensure that all staff can access the materials and services listed in the sections below.

The objectives of this Language Access Plan are to:

- a) Improve access to and quality of state services, programs and activities for non-English speakers and LEP persons;
- b) Reduce any disparities and delays in the provision of services/programs to eligible LEP speakers; and
- c) Streamline training and resources for staff to increase effectiveness and ensure public satisfaction.

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**III. Policy**

It is the Department's policy to provide meaningful access to programs and services to persons who are limited in English proficiency.

**IV. Applicability**

This policy applies to all offices within DCF, including but not limited to the Central Office, the five Regional Offices, and the 29 Area Offices. This policy applies to units housed within the Central Office, including the Fair Hearings Unit, the Foster Care Review Unit and the Office of the Ombudsman.

**V. Agency Description & Role**

The Department ended FY2022 serving 24,593 families involving 86,453 children and adults: 41,263 children (0-17), 2,194 young adults (18 & older) and 42,996 adults. White, Hispanic/Latinx and Black children and adults account for the most consumers served by the Department. English is the primary language spoken amongst consumers, with Spanish being the next most prevalent language.

The Department strives to protect children from abuse and neglect and, in partnership with families and communities, helps ensure that children are able to grow and thrive in a safe and nurturing environment. We believe all children have the right to grow up in a home free from abuse and neglect, with access to food, shelter, clothing, health care, and education. As an organization, we work toward establishing the safety, permanency, and well-being of the Commonwealth's children by:

- providing support and services to stabilize and preserve families when it is safe to do so;
- providing quality temporary alternative care when necessary to keep children safe from harm;
- working to safely reunify families, when appropriate; and
- when necessary, creating new families through kinship, guardianship, or adoption.

**Agency Core Practice Values**

DCF's Core Values are anchors that ground our practice. DCF is committed to making these values more than words on paper. By strengthening the links among the Department, families, and communities, DCF will move closer to service delivery systems that reflect the core values listed below. With child and family safety at the heart of our work, we believe that:

- building parental capacity and family resilience, whenever possible, helps keep children safe and reduces trauma;
- collaborating with youth, families and community partners helps us achieve our mission;

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- promoting cultural humility and culturally responsive case practices, and committing to diversity, equity and inclusion will help reduce disparities and lead to better child and family outcomes; and
- engaging in continuous learning and continuous quality improvement (CQI) is a core strategy to achieve our mission.

Services are currently delivered statewide from the Department's Central Office as well as the 5 Regional and 29 Area Offices across the Commonwealth, as described below:

- Central Office, 600 Washington Street, 6th Floor, Boston, MA 02111 (617) 748-2000
- 5 Regional Offices:
  - Western Regional Office, 200 Front Street, Holyoke, MA 01040
  - Central Regional Office, 5 Brussels Street, Worcester, MA 01609
  - Northern Regional Office, 280 Merrimack Street, Lawrence, MA 01843
  - Southern Regional Office, 110 Mulberry Street, Brockton MA 02302
  - Boston Regional Office, 1785 Columbus Ave, 5th Floor, Boston, MA 02119
- 29 Area Offices strategically located within the 5 regions. These locations are the main business points of contact with the client population. Contact information for each office can be located here: [www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-children-families/locations](http://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-children-families/locations)
- Child-At-Risk Hotline 1-800-792-5200
- Website address: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-department-of-children-families>

In addition to the contact between consumers and DCF staff in the area offices, DCF direct service staff most often meet families in their homes, visit children in foster and pre-adoptive homes and in the Department's contracted congregate care facilities. Other points of contact take place in the community, courts, schools, day care centers, medical facilities, service provider agencies and other locations in the community as appropriate.

## **VI. Language Access Plan**

The Plan will be fully implemented subject to the availability of fiscal resources to implement it. This Plan represents DCF's administrative blueprint to provide meaningful access to DCF services, programs, and activities on the part of LEP individuals and outlines the tasks DCF will undertake to meet this objective.

### **(1) Agency Language Access Coordinator**

Rebecca Brink, Assistant Commissioner, Program Support  
600 Washington St, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02111

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617-874-0229

[rebecca.k.brink@mass.gov](mailto:rebecca.k.brink@mass.gov)

#### (2) Agency Language Access Needs Assessment

DCF strives to ensure that LEP identified individuals or persons seeking services have equal access to programs and services regardless of preferred language spoken or English proficiency.

Effective communication by social workers and DCF staff at all levels is imperative, so that consumers may receive services that are accessible as well as culturally and linguistically responsive. To that end, DCF continues to use a combination of approaches throughout the service process from intake, information and referral, assessment, action planning, service delivery and coordination to case resolution. This includes assignment of bilingual staff, securing both telephonic and in-person interpretation services when bilingual staff are unavailable, providing information translated into the language requested by LEP individuals or persons, contracting with providers who commit to meaningful language access and collaborating with community stakeholders so that individuals can be referred to bilingual services in the community.

The uniquely personal and sensitive nature of our mission requires DCF to create working relationships wherein children and families feel safe and supported regardless of their cultural background or linguistic capabilities.

#### Language Makeup of Client Population: Data

The Department's Annual Report contains statistical tables and graphs which provide a demographic description of DCF consumers and foster care providers as well as information regarding child maltreatment and performance and outcome metrics.

At the end of FY2022, the vast majority of consumers open in a DCF case were primary English speakers. The next most commonly identified primary language was Spanish.

Primary Language FY2022	Children (0-17)		Young Adults (18+)		Adults	
American Sign Language	14	*	-	*	38	*
Arabic	34	*	1	*	61	*
Cape Verdean Creole	94	*	6	*	240	1%
Chinese	21	*	4	*	75	*
English/Unspecified^	38,333	93%	1,870	85%	36,407	85%
French	-	*	1	*	30	*
Haitian Creole	121	*	24	1%	308	1%
Khmer (Cambodian)	17	*	-	-	68	*
Polish	3	*	-	-	8	*
Portuguese	331	1%	19	1%	718	2%

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Russian	26	*	1	*	40	*
Spanish	2,079	5%	214	10%	4,286	10%
Vietnamese	12	*	3	*	58	*
Other	164	*	51	2%	659	2%
<b>Total Consumers Fiscal Year End</b>	<b>41,263</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>2,194</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>42,996</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*Less than 1% after rounding.

^English may be overcounted

The preferred language of consumers is not currently a mandatory field. The Department is currently in the process of converting this field from optional to mandatory so that more comprehensive data can be collected for LEP consumers.

DCF is aware that its own data likely overcounts its English-speaking consumers. US Census data indicates that 25% of Massachusetts residents aged 5 and up speak a language other than English at home<sup>1</sup>.

### (3) Language Resources

The Department ensures meaningful language access to its consumers through a combination of bilingual staff, contracted interpretation and translation services, ensuring vendors with whom DCF contracts provide language access services, and, in collaboration with community stakeholders, identifying bilingual services in which to refer consumers.

**Interpretation and Translation.** An interpreter is a person who can provide a spoken translation from English to a target language and from the target language to English. American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters translate from spoken English to ASL and from ASL to spoken English. A translator converts text that is written in one language into text written in another.

When bilingual staff are not available, DCF staff have access to interpreter service to provide culturally and linguistically accessible and responsive direct services to families. In addition to in-person interpreter services, the Department introduced telephonic interpretation services at the beginning of 2019, available 24/7 via a toll-free number that provides access to 200 languages typically within 30 seconds, procured through the Commonwealth's statewide contract. Additionally in 2022, DCF added video remote interpretation services available in 22 languages. Social work staff have been trained on how and when to access interpreter services. More information about in-person interpretation, telephone interpretation, video remote interpretation, and translation services can be found in sub-sections B through F below.

For deaf and hard of hearing consumers, DCF utilizes interpreter services through MCDHH. Funding for MCDHH interpreter services is managed centrally. More information about MCDHH's services can be found in sub-section H below.

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau. "Selected Social Characteristics in the United States." American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP02, 2022.

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#### **A. Vendor Services**

##### **(1) Lead Agency Model**

When a social worker requests services for a family with LEP, they request services in the family's preferred/primary language. The Department utilizes a Lead Agency model to match provider services with client needs which allows for services to be more accessible and appropriate for client needs. For consumers with Limited English Proficiency, the social worker requests the service through the Lead Agency to be provided in the preferred language of the client. The Lead Agency then checks provider resources within the geographic area to find and match a clinician or treatment provider that is bilingual in the language of the consumer.

DCF has contracts with providers who have the capacity to provide counseling and other client services in the preferred language of the client, including community based and congregate care providers that serve linguistic communities. This is particularly true for community-based providers who serve specific cultural and linguistic communities.

##### **(2) Family Resource Centers**

[Family Resource Centers](#) (FRCs) have been serving local communities since their inception in 2015. Currently, there are [32 FRCs](#) with at least one located in each of the 14 Massachusetts Counties. FRCs are community support programs procured through DCF and staffed by people from the communities in which they live, who provide parenting education programs, support groups, recreational activities and help parents and children connect to needed services in their community. Two-thirds of the FRCs have bilingual staff embedded in their programs and one quarter of the programs offer bilingual groups at the FRC based upon the linguistic needs of the communities they serve, which DCF consumers can access.

##### **(3) Child-At Risk Hotline: After Hours Services**

The Child-At-Risk Hotline provides after-hours access for the community to report suspected child abuse and neglect. The Hotline service is provided by a vendor whose employees take reports regarding allegations of child abuse or neglect by phone and make determinations on whether an emergency investigation is warranted. The Hotline vendor has some bilingual capacity among the staff (screeners and supervisors) to communicate with reporters in Spanish and Haitian Creole. The Hotline is staffed in shifts to cover nights, weekends, and holidays and has access to a Telephonic Language Line vendor, as required by its contract.

Deaf and hard of hearing consumers and reporters that call the Hotline use [MassRelay Services](#) or a TTY line. The call comes into the Hotline as a regular phone call. There is an operator that facilitates these calls.

The Department utilizes on-call DCF social work staff to conduct emergency child abuse investigations during hotline hours which includes a list of bilingual DCF employees who are willing to be contacted after hours for interpretation and translation, including staff with ASL ability. These employees are also available to the Hotline investigators just for interpretation. Any DCF employee who responds during hotline hours, whether to investigate or interpret, is paid a hotline rate for reimbursement.

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#### **(4) Leveraging the Procurement Process**

The Department is committed to ensuring our providers provide culturally competent and accessible services to families and children and will leverage its purchasing power to do so.

In two recent procurements, the Child-At-Risk-Hotline procured in 2019 and the Department's Congregate Care Provider Network procured during 2021, the Department stated with specificity a requirement of its contractors to serve LEP individuals. In another recent procurement for immigration legal services for DCF youth, the Department scored responsive vendors on their demonstrated ability to provide services in other languages and provide written translations of key documents.

The Child-At-Risk-Hotline is required to have the capacity to receive calls and provide responses professionally and timely from non-English speaking reporters or from those with limited English proficiency.

The Congregate Care Network Procurement has a section devoted to linguistic competency, which requires that providers communicate with youth and families utilizing American Sign Language (ASL), Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART), as well as provide professional interpreting services whether in person, telephonic or video in the absence of a staff person who is fluent in the preferred language of the youth or family and coordinate with DCF in securing interpreter services for a low prevalence language or dialect, or for communication services that are difficult to secure.

In October 2021 the Department posted a Request for Information (RFI) regarding its Support and Stabilization Services. A section of the RFI is devoted to cultural and linguistic competency and solicits strategies which can be used to meet the diverse language needs of families to ensure that language access is provided to families in a timely manner, to determine what barriers exist, if any, for families with diverse language needs to receive services, and to identify suggestions for overcoming barriers so that the reprocurement of support and stabilization services, slated to occur in FY24, ensures timely and meaningful language access to the consumers that DCF serves.

In 2022, the Department re-procured its telephonic interpretation services, video remote interpretation services, in person interpretation services, and translation services, which has provided an additional opportunity to continue to provide quality language access and increasing our total number of vendors on contract from 8 to 15. Updated instructions to access interpretation and translation services have been distributed and are available to staff via the DCF [language interpretation and translation services page](#) on the DCF intranet.

#### **(5) Collaboration with Community Stakeholders**

The PATCH Offices:

Four DCF social work units are strategically embedded in the communities of Dorchester, North Quabbin, New Bedford and Lawrence. These sites were selected based upon a Community Connection Coalition and a DCF Regional and Area Office having a strong relationship. The PATCH sites partner the neighborhood prevention work of the Community Connections with the child protective case practice of DCF social workers so that families can be connected to community resources more quickly, including resources that meet the linguistic needs of DCF consumers.



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#### **B. In-Person Interpretation**

In-person interpreting, otherwise known as face-to-face or on-site interpreting, is when a spoken language interpreter meets staff and a consumer at any given location for an assignment. In-person interpretation is preferred for in-person meetings with consumers.

Vendors provide DCF with a dedicated toll-free phone number to schedule interpreters. DCF staff utilize the number from the vendor of their choosing. The vendor must respond to the request and confirm availability within 60 minutes of the call being placed by DCF staff. The vendor must provide an interpreter within 24 hours after DCF places the request. Interpreters must be available, at a minimum, Monday-Friday, 9 am – 5 pm. Vendors are required to arrive at least fifteen (15) minutes prior to the scheduled time of the on-site scheduled appointment in order to receive any instructions from DCF.

As in-person interpretation vendors vary by area office, DCF staff should contact their Area Administrative Manager (“AAM”) for instructions on utilizing the vendors that are contracted to work with their office. Central Office Staff should contact Rebecca Brink, Assistant Commissioner for Program Support, at [rebecca.k.brink@mass.gov](mailto:rebecca.k.brink@mass.gov).

#### **C. Telephone Interpretation**

Telephone interpretation connects human interpreters via telephone. Telephone interpretation is preferred for phone calls with consumers.

There is one vendor, Lionbridge, that provides this service to Department staff. It is available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day via a toll-free phone number. DCF staff dial this number, respond to a series of questions, select the language they need and will be immediately connected to an interpreter.

The vendor is required to respond to incoming calls/requests for services within an average of 15 seconds (for a live agent) or 5 seconds (for an automated voice response system). The vendor must maintain an average monthly successful connection (to interpreter) time, for all languages provided, of 30 seconds or less.

In non-emergency situations, Area Office staff should submit an Interpreter Request Form to the Area Administrative Manager (“AAM”) prior to calling Lionbridge. In an emergency (including but not limited to screening a 51A or conducting responses), staff should follow up with the AAM after the service has been utilized.

Lionbridge can be accessed by calling 1-800-444-6627. Each Area Office or selected Central Office Unit has been provided with a unique “Customer Code” assigned by Lionbridge. The customer code identifies which location is utilizing these services for both billing and reporting purposes. Staff should contact their AAM or manager to obtain the code for their office/unit.

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#### **D. Video Remote Interpretation**

Video remote interpreting (“VRI”) is a video-telecommunication service that uses devices such as web cameras or video phones to provide spoken language interpreting services. This is done through a remote or offsite interpreter. VRI is preferred for web-based video meetings with consumers.

Vendors provide DCF with a dedicated toll-free phone number to schedule interpreters. DCF staff utilize the number from the vendor of their choosing when in need of VRI interpretation. DCF staff will connect to the vendor, respond to a series of questions, select the language they need and be immediately connected to an interpreter. These Interpretation Services are available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

As VRI vendors vary by area office, DCF staff should contact their Area Administrative Manager (“AAM”) for instructions on utilizing the vendors that are contracted to work with their office. Central Office Staff should contact Rebecca Brink, Assistant Commissioner for Program Support, at [rebecca.k.brink@mass.gov](mailto:rebecca.k.brink@mass.gov).

#### **E. Translated Vital Documents**

The Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services defines vital documents as “documents that affect access to, retention in, or termination or exclusion from a recipient’s program services or benefits.” DCF has taken a broad view of which documents to translate, including all notices, forms, applications, and pamphlets regularly used by the agency.

The Department is committed to maintaining all its vital documents in the nine most commonly encountered languages encountered by DCF: Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Cape Verdean Creole, Arabic, Vietnamese, Khmer, Chinese, and Russian. The Department’s review of vital documents to determine which need translation is ongoing, but the Department recently translated an additional 66 documents into each of these nine languages.

These translated documents are available on a single DCF [intranet page](#) so that DCF staff may easily find them for distribution to LEP consumers. During this LAP cycle, DCF’s Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator will continue to review which vital documents need translation. If any vital documents are not available in a particular language, staff should contact Rebecca Brink, Assistant Commissioner for Program Support, to request translation. Members of the public can also request vital document translation by contacting the Office of the Ombudsman as described in Section VIII.

#### **F. Translating Individual Documents**

Social workers can request translation of case-specific documents, such as the Family Assessment and Action Plan, from the Department’s contracted translation providers. The vendor will provide a quote for the translation cost as well as an estimate regarding the time it will take to provide the translated document prior to each translation engagement. Documents to be translated should be provided in Word and/or PDF format.

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As translation vendors vary by area office, DCF staff should contact their Area Administrative Manager (“AAM”) for instructions on utilizing the vendors that are contracted to work with their office. Central Office Staff should contact Rebecca Brink, Assistant Commissioner for Program Support.

In addition, DCF staff are encouraged to produce materials using plain language in accordance with [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#).

#### **G. Agency Multilingual Staff**

It is a priority for the Department to recruit and hire bilingual, bicultural staff to work more effectively with families served by DCF. This includes a focus on increasing DCF staff diversity and inclusion at all levels, through recruitment, improved retention, and promotional opportunities.

One of the strategies that the Department employs to recruit and retain staff who reflect the diversity of the areas that they serve and to meet families’ cultural and linguistic needs is the use of a differential pay scale. Bilingual social workers and social work technicians receive differential pay for carrying a caseload/workload with a significant number of LEP consumers that speak the language in which the staff person has proficiency. Approximately 30% of the total Department staff are bilingual. The Department also has some direct service employees who are proficient in ASL.

DCF’s bilingual staff, including those fluent in ASL, may communicate directly with LEP consumers on their assigned caseload. However, these staff should not be used as interpreters or translators by other staff members. Instead, staff should utilize the interpretation and translation vendors described above.

#### **H. Interpretation for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing**

The Department has executed a Memorandum of Understanding (“MOU”) with the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (“MCDHH”) to provide ASL interpreters and other communication services for DCF consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing. MCDHH can provide American Sign Language (“ASL”) Interpreters, Certified Deaf Interpreters (“CDI”), Deaf-Blind Interpreters, Oral Translators, and Computer Assisted Real Time Transcribers (“CART”), depending on the needs of the consumer.

When a need for communication services is identified, DCF staff should first determine the consumer’s preferred communication method and their available dates and times, prior to submitting a request to MCDHH. Staff should then submit the request directly to MCDHH through their [website](#). If emergency interpretation services are required, staff should contact MCDHH’s emergency request number at 800-249-9949. After a request has been submitted, staff should then follow up with ADA Coordinator Joan Beron at [joan.beron2@mass.gov](mailto:joan.beron2@mass.gov). Appendix A includes more detailed descriptions of MCDHH’s communication options, instructions on submitting interpretation requests, and tips on working with MCDHH interpreters.

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#### **(4) Agency Website**

To translate [DCF's website](#), a "Select Language" drop-down menu at the top of every page may be used to translate the site into any of 38 different languages.

#### **(5) Stakeholder Consultations**

The Steering Committee of DCF's Racial Equity Workgroup, MCDHH, and the Office of Refugees and Immigrants were consulted during the development of this Plan. During this LAP cycle, the Department will identify additional community-based stakeholders to provide feedback on the LAP.

#### **(6) Staff Training**

The ability to collaborate with families is dependent upon the Department's use of language to create understanding and agreement. The Department stresses this fact deeply during the new worker training series because it is vital for social workers to hold it as a value in their work. The Department includes information regarding available translation and interpretation services in training provided at all levels: new social workers, supervisors, and managers.

All newly hired social workers are required to attend New Social Worker Pre-Service Training. This training includes a module on Equity Minded Practice which in part discusses accessing supportive services in the family's preferred language. The curriculum for new supervisors and managers includes a presentation where the topics of cultural humility, disabilities, and accommodations as well as language access in the workplace is covered and the language access plan is distributed.

During this LAP cycle the Department will create an eLearning on the Language Access Plan and process by which interpretation and translation services are accessed. The Language Access Plan is posted on both the Diversity Page of the Intranet as well as the New Social Worker Pre-service Training Page where all training curriculum is located. To reinforce learning and communication materials, the Language Access Plan will be presented at staff meetings across all area and regional offices as well as the Central Office.

Language access training priorities include:

- the development and use of an interactive training on the Language Access Plan and practical training on working with LEP consumers and interpreters.
- training on determining an individual's preferred language in conjunction with converting the language field in iFamilyNet from optional to mandatory.

#### **(7) Notice to Public**

A language access notice is posted on the DCF website which details how an individual can file a language access complaint. The DCF Language Access Plan is included as a link on the

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language access page. The Department also has posted signage notifying consumers that they have the right to interpretation services at no cost in each area office.

#### **VII. Agency Monitoring**

A key element to an effective Language Access Plan is to monitor the plan. To that end, the Departments' Continuous Quality Improvement Unit will include in its case review process a series of questions to assess whether staff is providing meaningful language access to LEP consumers.

The Department has created the position of and hired a full-time Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator, separate and distinct from the Language Access Coordinator. This staff member will work closely with staff in the Office of the Ombudsman to help resolve complaints made by DCF consumers to address concerns raised by parents, caregivers and others involved in DCF matters as it pertains to complaints of discrimination, including language access.

In summary, during this LAP cycle, the Department through its staff will do the following:

- The Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator will analyze current and previous data on languages served and language assistance usage.
- The Information Technology team will convert the "preferred language" field in iFamilyNet from optional to mandatory so that more comprehensive data can be collected for LEP consumers.
- The Information Technology team in conjunction with the Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator will develop a user guide on determining an individual's preferred language in conjunction with converting the language field in iFamilyNet from optional to mandatory.
- The Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator will continue to review which vital documents need translation as well as identify more general information about Departmental practices, services and activities to assist both consumers and foster parents in communicating with the Department.
- Present the Language Access Protocols at staff meetings across all area and regional offices as well as the Central Office.
- The Child Welfare Institute along with the Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator will develop an interactive training for all staff on the Language Access Plan itself along with practical training on working with LEP consumers and interpreters.
- Ensure that signage notifying consumers that they have the right to interpretation services at no cost continues to be posted in each area office.
- The Continuous Quality Improvement Unit will conduct a sampling of reviews of individual cases on a routine basis to assess whether staff is providing meaningful language access to LEP consumers. This information will be shared on a regular basis with the Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator.

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- The Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator will help resolve complaints and address concerns raised by parents, caregivers and others involved in DCF matters.
- The Department will identify additional community-based stakeholders to provide feedback on the LAP.

### **VIII. Complaints**

Individuals may file a complaint with the DCF Office of the Ombudsman or the Office of Access and Opportunity if they believe they have been denied the benefits of this plan. Language access-related complaints submitted to the Office of the Ombudsman will be reviewed with the assistance of the Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator. Complaints must be filed within 6 months of the alleged denial. The complaint must be in writing.

To file a complaint with the Office of the Ombudsman, individuals must submit the written complaint to:

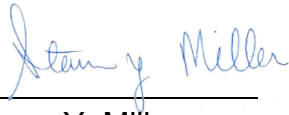
Office of the Ombudsman  
Department of Children and Families  
600 Washington Street, 6th Floor  
Boston, MA 02111  
(617) 748-2444  
[dcfombudsman@mass.gov](mailto:dcfombudsman@mass.gov)

To file a complaint with the Office of Access and Opportunity, individuals must submit the written complaint to:

Office of Access and Opportunity  
Attn: Yarlennys Villaman, Office of the Governor  
State House, Room 280  
Boston, MA 02133  
[yarlennys.k.villaman@mass.gov](mailto:yarlennys.k.villaman@mass.gov)

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IX. Approvals

[Signature of Agency Lead]   
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[Agency Lead]      Staverne Y. Miller  
Title      Acting Commissioner

[Date]      3/7/2024

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

[Signature of Kathleen E. Walsh]

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Kathleen E. Walsh

Secretary of the  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services

[Date]

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Department of Children and Families**

### **Language Access Plan**

January 2024 – December 2025

## **Appendix A: Requesting Communication Access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals**

### **INTERPRETERS**

Interpreters can work alone for short assignments and work in pairs for assignments longer than two hours. Interpreters can work in person or remotely depending on the situation.

#### **American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters**

American Sign Language or ASL is a visually interactive visual spatial language that uses a combination of hand motions, head, hand and body movement and facial expression. There is no written form and it is not a direct translation of English.

#### **Deaf Interpreters (DI)**

DI Interpreters are Deaf or hard of hearing individuals who have specialized training in the use of gestures, mime, props, drawings and deaf culture and fluency in ASL. DIs may be needed when the communication mode of the Deaf or hard of hearing individual is not fluent in understanding or communicating in ASL; their primary language is a sign language from another country and/or their communication contains home signs.

DI interpreters always team with ASL interpreters. The DI interpreter communicates with the deaf or hard of hearing client and relays the information to the ASL interpreter. The ASL interpreter then typically signs and voices the information to the other participants.

#### **Deaf-Blind Interpreters**

An interpreter that provides tactile signing or touch in conjunction with ASL to give and receive information from individuals who have hearing and visual interpreting needs.

### **ORAL AND WRITTEN TRANSLITERATION AND TRANSCRIBERS**

#### **Computer Assisted Real Time Transcribers (CART)**

A CART provider is a specially trained and certified individual who uses a court reporter stenographic keyboard to write what is said verbally in real time. The text displays on either a laptop computer, tablet, or smart phone that a Deaf or hard of hearing individual reads.

An **Oral Transliterator** is an individual trained to articulate speech silently and clearly to assist an individual to understand spoken language through lip reading. The current from the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing does not contain an option for oral transliterators as this is not a typical request. If an oral transliterator is needed, please inform the MCDHH Legal Referral Coordinator Shannon La Marche at [Shannon.lamarche@mass.gov](mailto:Shannon.lamarche@mass.gov).

#### **Working with Interpreters, Captioners and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals**

- Speak directly and look at the individual and not the communication access provider(s) (i.e., do not say to an interpreter, “tell them...”).
- Speak at your natural pace/volume unless the interpreter or transcriber tells you alter your speaking.



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- To ensure full communication, wait for the individual to finish communicating with the communication access provider(s), and then for the communication access provider(s) to finish the communication before moving on to the next part of the conversation.
- If the Deaf or hard of hearing person is attending a presentation, provide the materials prior to the event to both the individual and the communication access provider(s), and project the information to allow the Deaf or hard of hearing participant to follow along when materials are being read aloud.
- Ask the communication access provider(s) where they need to position themselves before the meeting starts to ensure that the Deaf or hard of hearing individual can see the signed communication or view the transcription.
- Check the venue to see if there is good lighting and turn off or reduce all sources of background noise.
- If the communication access provider(s) is going to be providing communication remotely, give the interpreter or CART transcriber screen access or co-host capability so that they can adjust the remote features in order to allow the provider to ensure the Deaf or hard of hearing individual has full communication access during the meeting.

#### THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- MCDHH requests **14 days minimum notice** to request American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, Deaf Interpreters (DIs), and/or Computer Assisted Real Time transcription (CART). If the request must be made immediately because it is an investigation, a removal, or an emergency, please let MCDHH know by calling the **emergency number: 800-249-9949**. MCDHH may direct you to its main number 617-740-1600.
- Once you make the request through MCDHH, email the Automatic Response to Joan Beron, the Executive Office of Health and Human Services appointed ADA Coordinator for the Department at [joan.beron2@mass.gov](mailto:joan.beron2@mass.gov). Please also send a copy of the Confirmation Email containing the order number to Joan Beron by email.
- Please obtain alternate dates and times from the Deaf or hard of hearing individual to give to the MCDHH referral coordinator Shannon LaMarche if MCDHH cannot secure an interpreter or interpreter team on the original date selected.
- If you need an interpreter or CART provider after hours or on weekends or the matter is an emergency and requires a provider, you should immediately contact the MCDHH **EMERGENCY NUMBER 1- 800-249-9949**.
  - Then, fill out the MCDHH online form and indicate in the comments section that you have called the emergency number to make a request. Follow up with the ADA Coordinator Joan Beron at [joan.beron2@mass.gov](mailto:joan.beron2@mass.gov)

#### CANCELLATIONS

Cancellations must be received at least 2 full business days prior to the event when possible, or the Department will be billed. **To cancel** ASL or CART, go to

<https://www.mass.gov/forms/request-to-cancel-interpreting-cart-services>. If a request is being rescheduled, it's best to call in the cancellation and provide the new date in your voicemail.

#### COMMUNICATION ACCESS OPTIONS AVAILABLE THROUGH MCDHH

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Procedure for requesting Communication Access from MCDHH

**Step 1**

Ask the Deaf or hard of hearing individual what their preferred communication access accommodation is before scheduling a provider and obtain available dates with alternative dates if requested service is not available on the first date requested and the date of the meeting can be flexible. You may not need a family's permission to contact MCDHH during a screening of a 51A report or investigation of a 51B response if contacting the family will result in harm to the child. If you have asked the individual and still do not know what type of communications access accommodation to request, inform the MCDHH Legal Referral Liaison (Shannon LaMarche) by email at [Shannon.LaMarche@mass.gov](mailto:Shannon.LaMarche@mass.gov). MCDHH will also contact you as the requestor if there are any questions about the interpreter selected and will schedule the appropriate provider to provide communication access.

**Step 2**

Request an interpreter or CART provider online through the MCDHH's Temporary referral system by filling out the online form located at:

<https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-provider>

You will need to provide the following information when filling out the form:

- Name of the requestor (the Social Worker or other person making the request).
- The type of service needed (ASL interpreter, Deaf interpreter and/or CART provider)
- The name of the person that requires the communication access service(s).
- The date or dates needed for the communication access and the reason why communication access is needed (i.e. foster care review, home visit, etc.).
- The address of where the communication access provider needs to be available in person, or the link if the communication access service(s) will be remote.
  - In person communication access is nearly always preferred. Do not request remote access without checking with the Deaf or hard of hearing individual first.
- Whether the Deaf or hard of hearing individual is a child or adult or both if there is more than one individual who needs communication access.

**Step 3**

Email the automatic response confirming that MCDHH has received the request to the ADA Coordinator Joan Beron at [joan.beron2@mass.gov](mailto:joan.beron2@mass.gov)

Inform Joan Beron if you do not receive an auto-response by the end of the day.

**Step 4**

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When MCDHH schedules the interpreter and CART providers provider, they will send you a Confirmation email with an Order Number and the name(s) of the provider(s). When you receive confirmation, do the following:

- Check the MCDHH confirmation email to ensure that the information is accurate, has an order number, date, and time and the current location (address or remote).
- Contact Shannon LaMarche at MCDHH at Shannon.lamarche@mass.gov if the information is not correct and include the ADA coordinator in that email.
- Send the communication access provider(s) any materials that would be helpful for them (i.e., agendas, PowerPoints, materials shared to other attendees either in advance or shared during a training session).
- Send the provider the virtual link if the service is being provided remotely.
- Send the ADA Coordinator Joan Beron a copy of the confirmation email so that she can assist in resolving any issues regarding provider scheduling and make sure that the providers are paid.

### How to Complete the MCDHH Online Form to Request Communication Access Services

#### Region Category Field:

Pick the city where the client is from the pull-down bar.

#### Requestor Information Field:

Enter your first and last name, your job title, email, and phone number.

#### Business Organization Field:

Enter the name and address of the Department Area Office.

#### Billing Contact Information-Please note that this has changed as of July 2022

- Do not check off the “Billing Contact is same as Requestor” box
- In the First name field enter: MCDHHAP
- In the Last name field enter: MCDHHAP
- In the Contact Title field enter: MCDHHAP
- In the Contact Email field enter: mcdhhap@mass.gov
- In the Contact phone field enter: 617-740-1600

#### Service Selection Field:

Pick the type of communication access from the pull-down bar (ASL, ASL remote, CART, DI, DI remote).

If you are requesting ASL and CART, or ASL and a DI interpreter, you will need to submit two requests and put that information in the service description section of the form.

#### Number of Resources

Select 1 if requesting a CART provider or one interpreter and 2 if asking for a pair of interpreters.

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#### **Service Description:**

Enter a summary of the request with needed detail (i.e., requesting an ASL/DI interpreter team for an in-person parent visit on April 8, 2022 from 2-3 pm parent needs DI in addition to ASL interpreter due to cognitive delays in addition to being Deaf).

Put down any alternate dates and times that can be scheduled if an interpreter is not available.

#### **Start/End Date Field:**

Enter the location, address, and directions if the services will be provided on-site. If the event will be virtual, add the link to the meeting if you have it available. If the link is not available at the time of the request, follow up with Shannon LaMarche immediately once the link is obtained so that it can be added to your request for services.

Under onsite information, list the address including room number and any special instructions (i.e. front door only).

#### **Client/Customer Information Field:**

If you know the name of the person that will be receiving the service, select the first radial button and enter the person's first and last name. If you do not, select the second radial button

#### **Submit Button:**

Once you have completed the request, click "Submit Online Service Request." Once submitted, you will get a confirmation pop-up on your screen. It may take a minute to process so don't keep clicking the submission button or you will submit multiple requests.

#### **MCDHH also provides Assistive Technology (AT) Consultation and Case Management Services.**

The contact for information about AT is:

**Jonathan O'Dell**

Phone: 617-740-1600 Voice 617-849-9021 VP

Email: Jonathan.ODell@massmail.state.ma.us

Information about other services that MCDHH provides can be found here:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/mcdhh-and-dhils-fact-sheet-updated-11-16-2020-pdf/download>