**LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN**

**Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP)**

Date January 5, 2024

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**Provided by the Massachusetts Governor’s Office of Access and Opportunity**

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**Introduction**

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (hereinafter referred to “MassDEP”) 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 that MassDEP is taking to ensure meaningful access to programs, services, activities, and materials for all LEP constituents.

MassDEP will review and update this LAP as needed to ensure continued responsiveness to community needs.

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

**I. Purpose**

The purpose of this plan is to ensure that all people are included in and have meaningful access to benefits of agency programs, services, and activities, and materials.

MassDEP is committed to making services available to LEP constituents as part of its mission. Based on this commitment, MassDEP makes every attempt to assist LEP constituents in accessing its services. MassDEP recognizes that language can be a barrier to accessing important benefits or services, understanding, and exercising important rights, complying with regulations, or understanding other information provided by its programs and activities. This is incorporated in our Nondiscrimination Plan as well.

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. MassDEP 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 conducted by MassDEP’s EJ office and the Language Access Coordinator (LAC) 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 constituents.

b. Reduce any disparities and delays in the provision of services/programs to eligible LEP constituents; and

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

**II. Policy**

It is MassDEP’s Policy to provide meaningful access to programs and services to LEP constituents.

**III. Applicability**

This Policy applies to all bureaus and office staff within MassDEP that engage, interact, or share information with LEP constituents.

**IV. Role**

DESCRIPTION OF YOUR AGENCY’S MISSION AND WORK WITH COMMUNITIES.

MassDEP’s mission is to protect and enhance the Commonwealth’s natural resources – air, water, and land – to provide for the health, safety, and welfare of all people, and to ensure a clean and safe environment for future generations. In carrying out this mission MassDEP commits to address and advance environmental justice and equity for all people of the Commonwealth, to provide meaningful, inclusive opportunities for people to participate in agency decisions that affect their lives, and to ensure a diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve.

MassDEP has a commitment to ensuring that all residents of the Commonwealth have access to its key agency actions and activities including providing proactive interpreter and translation services to LEP individuals at no cost.

The more frequent the contact with a particular language group, the more likely that enhanced language services in that language are needed.  MassDEP will also consider the frequency of different types of language contacts. The more important the activity, information, service, or program, or the greater the possible consequences of the contact to the LEP individuals, the more likely services are needed.

**V. Language Access Plan**

This 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 MassDEP.

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.

a. **Language Access Coordinator (Chiquita Cox,** **chiquita.cox2@mass.gov** **or 781 915-9721).**

b. **Language Resources (Shared on MassDEP’s internal shared drive accessible by all staff and will be placed on MassDEP’s website).**

i. **Translating Publications**

MassDEP is committed to maintaining its vital documents in the top 10 non -English spoken languages in the Commonwealth: Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Chinese (Simplified or Traditional), Cape Verdean Creole, Khmer, Vietnamese, Russian, Arabic and French. Translation refers to the replacement of a written communication from one language to another, either in written or oral form. When reaching out to specific communities in the Commonwealth, MassDEP staff should ensure that these vital documents will be accessible in the languages prevalent in each community. Longer and more specific vital documents should be translated when there are accessibility concerns for the intended audience.

The LAC, a member of the MassDEP Environmental Justice (EJ) office, tracks all requests for services. Members of the agency’s volunteer language bank may assist with some requests for translation. The volunteer bank includes staff members who have language skills and are willing and available to assist. Assistance from the language bank volunteers is dependent upon their workload at the time of the request. All requests for services are tracked whether referred to and conducted by language bank volunteers or sent to external vendors under PRF-75. All invoices for language access services completed by state contractors under PRF-75 are paid via the agency’s Fiscal Office staff.

**ii. Standard Operating Procedures for Requesting Written Translations Guidelines (Internal)**

When translating a document, follow these steps:

MassDEP’s EJ Office staff developed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) and online Smartsheet form that is accessible to all MassDEP staff to request interpreter and translation services which also includes American Sign Language (ASL) and Braille needs and services as mentioned above. Staff submit a request via the online form that is received by the agency’s LAC and other EJ Office staff. The LAC, upon receipt of the request, immediately sends the request to one of the two vendors under contract with MassDEP under PRF-75.

1. A written request is made using the online Smartsheet form with specific questions that must be answered (which language(s), when the service is needed, what is the purpose of the service). Requestor chooses which language(s) is/are needed for translation. The LAC tracks the requests received, the name of the vendor or language bank volunteer completing the request, the name of the requestor, date the request received in the EJ office, number of pages. Upon receipt of completed translated documents the LAC enters the date received from the vendor into the tracking spreadsheet and forwards the completed request to MassDEP staff.
2. Requestor attaches a Word document version of the publication or document to be translated to the LAC. The LAC reaches out to a language bank volunteer with the needed language skills to assist.
3. If unable to secure a volunteer, the LAC will send the request to an external vendor under PRF-75.
4. Link to [state](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/find-a-statewide-contract-user-guide) [vendors](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/find-a-statewide-contract-user-guide) - the PRF75 Statewide Contract

Questions? Contact Chiquita Cox (LAC) at her contact information above.

**iii. Standard Operating Procedures In-Person Interpreting (Internal)**

Interpretation refers to the act of listening to dialogue in one language and orally translating it into another language.   Requestor submits a request for in-person interpretation using the online Smartsheet form. The LAC upon receipt of the request immediately sends the request to one of the two vendors under contract with MassDEP under PRF-75. The requestor will be given the name and contact information of the assigned interpreter to confirm date and time the interpreter is needed as well about the type of event and the location or to discuss any other logistics as appropriate. The LAC tracks the requests via an online spreadsheet, name of the vendor and requestor, date received, date service is needed, location, time, and date of event.

**iv. In-Person & Written Translation Guidelines (External) [in-development]**

A LEP constituent in need of interpreter or translation services can obtain services from MassDEP by:

* Contacting MassDEP’s Language Access Coordinator Chiquita Cox at chiquita.cox2@mass.gov, or 781 915-9721
* Complete the online form - link found here – [In development].
* Visit MassDEP’s Language Translation Assistance page at the link below for assistance - [MassDEP Language Translation Assistance | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massdep-language-translation-assistance).

**v. Correspondence**

MassDEP developed a Communication Document as a resource to assist LEP constituents with documents issued that are appealable to MassDEP’s Office of Appeals and Dispute Resolution (OADR). An updated Communication Document has been successfully used to identify and assist LEP constituents agency-wide for many key agency actions and activities. All MassDEP staff can access the document on an internal shared drive accessible by all staff to further assist LEP constituents; staff are also using the document at their discretion. The Communication Document is attached as Exhibit A.

**vi. Web Content**

MassDEP has a Language Translation Assistance webpage on the agency’s website to help LEP constituents of the Commonwealth access MassDEP staff to obtain information about the agency’s key agency actions and activities. The link can be found here - [MassDEP Language Translation Assistance | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massdep-language-translation-assistance).

MassDEP is in the process of creating an external-facing online request for interpreter and translation services. The completed form is sent to the LAC and other MassDEP EJ office staff. The LAC is the primary point of contact and will track the request from start to finish. If there are any questions or concerns (incomplete form missing/ information) the LAC will contact the requestor to obtain the necessary information to ensure the request is acted upon in a timely manner.

In addition, MassDEP has a robust internal volunteer language bank made up of bi and multilingual staff who assist with interpreter and translation needs of the agency when

applicable. The volunteer language bank is in addition to the agency’s PRF-75 contract with external vendors to assist with interpreter and translation needs. MassDEP’s LAC communicates with the language bank volunteers twice a year to determine if their participation is manageable or if they are no longer able to assist and works to enlist new staff interested in becoming a language bank volunteer.

**vii. Bi and Multilingual Staff at MassDEP**

MassDEP is committed to hiring and retaining bi and multilingual staff for all positions, but especially to provide assistance to LEP constituents on behalf of the agency.

**viii. Interpreter Services for Walk-in Constituents**

While the preference is to provide direct service to LEP constituents in their primary language, MassDEP staff have been trained and have received resources to assist LEP constituents using the over the phone telephonic interpreter service that includes over 380+ languages.

The “I Speak” poster is posted in all four MassDEP regional offices, Headquarters and the William X Wall Experiment Station/Laboratory and will be placed on our homepage website for easy access. The “I Speak” poster states, “You have the right to an interpreter at no cost to you. Please point to your language. An interpreter will be called. Please wait.” The “I Speak” poster is translated into 31 languages and can be used to identify the language spoken by LEP constituents. LEP assistance will be provided by MassDEP bi or multi-lingual staff or by a telephonic interpreter via either one of the two state vendors under contract with PRF-75. The “I Speak” poster is MassDEP’s language identification flashcard.

**ix. Hotline & General Phone Lines**

**Telephonic Interpreter Services / Over-the-phone language services**

MassDEP has two over-the-phone telephonic interpreter language services under state contract PRF-75 which provides interpreter assistance over the phone. All staff have access to, and selected staff including service center staff have been trained on, the over-the-phone language service providers. In addition, MassDEP staff have access to step-by-step instructional cards; live demonstrations were conducted and offered to all MassDEP staff to answer any questions.

MassDEP must provide interpretation for the deaf and hard of hearing when requested. Interpretation for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at MassDEP Events – MassDEP staff can contact the EJ Office for assistance with obtaining ASL interpretation for MassDEP meetings. The request for ASL is handled in the same manner as requests for interpreter or translation services via the online Smartsheet form which is also overseen by MassDEP’s EJ Office. Deaf or hard of hearing constituents can request interpreter or Communicate Access Realtime Translation (CART) services here - [How to Request an ASL Interpreter or CART provider | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-provider) or can contact MassDEP’s EJ office (857) 406-0738 for assistance. We are also able to use closed captioning on Teams and Zoom for meetings held on these platforms.

Please see more information below.

Review these [First](https://www.mass.gov/doc/communication-spectrum-tip-sheet-for-first-time-interpretercart-requests/download) [Time](https://www.mass.gov/doc/communication-spectrum-tip-sheet-for-first-time-interpretercart-requests/download) [Use](https://www.mass.gov/doc/communication-spectrum-tip-sheet-for-first-time-interpretercart-requests/download) [Instructions](https://www.mass.gov/doc/communication-spectrum-tip-sheet-for-first-time-interpretercart-requests/download) 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 cancelled, you should provide notice to MCDHH at least three days before the scheduled date to avoid fees.

[**Massachusetts**](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-provider)[**Commission**](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-provider)[**for**](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-provider)[**the**](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-provider)[**Deaf**](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-provider)[**and**](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-provider)[**Hard**](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-provider)[**of**](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-provider)[**Hearing**](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/how-to-request-an-asl-interpreter-or-cart-provider) **(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.

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

c. **Staff Training**

The LAP will be:

a. Posted internally for all employees.

b. Incorporated into the orientation for new employees by MassDEP’s EJ office and LAC.

c. Presented to management so they are fully aware of and understand the LAP, to reinforce the plan’s importance and ensure its implementation by staff.

d. Presented to MassDEP staff that have contact with the public, to ensure all staff are trained to work effectively with LEP constituents and telephone interpreters.

**VI. Monitoring**

MassDEP will review and update its LAP at least every two years or more frequently, as needed.

The review assesses:

a. Whether there have been any significant changes in the composition or language needs of the population served;

b. Whether the staff knows and understands the LAP document, and is comfortable using the services described within;

c. Whether additional documents require translation;

d. Identification of any issues or problems related to serving LEP constituents which may have emerged during the past year; and

e. 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 the LAP may include:

a. Analyzing current and previous data on language assistance usage, including languages served;

b. 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

c. Monitoring feedback from community-based organizations, legal services and other stakeholders about the agency’s effectiveness and performance in ensuring meaningful access for LEP individuals.

MassDEP's LAC 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.

**Exhibit A – Communication Document**

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| MassDEP: Important Communication for Non-English-Speaking Parties *This document is important and should be translated immediately.*If you need this document translated, please contact MassDEP's Director of Environmental Justiceat the telephone number listed below. |
| Español SpanishEste documento es importante y debe ser traducido inmediatamente. Si necesita traducir este documento, póngase en contacto con el Director de Justicia Ambiental de MassDEP (*MassDEP's Director of Environmental Justice*) en el número de teléfono que figura más abajo.Português PortugueseEste documento é importante e deve ser traduzido imediatamente. Se você precisar traduzir este documento, entre em contato com o Diretor de Justiça Ambiental do MassDEP no número de telefone listado abaixo. 繁體中文 Chinese Traditional本文檔很重要，需要即刻進行翻譯。如需對本文檔進行翻譯，請透過如下列示電話號碼與 MassDEP 的環境司法總監聯絡。简体中文 Chinese Simplified*这份文件非常重要，需要立即翻译。*如果您需要翻译这份文件，请通过下方电话与 MassDEP 环境司法主任联系。 | **Ayisyen Kreyòl Haitian Creole**Dokiman sa a enpòtan epi yo ta dwe tradui l imedyatman. Si w bezwen tradui dokiman sa a, tanpri kontakte Direktè. Jistis Anviwònmantal MassDEP a nan nimewo telefòn ki endike anba a.**Việt Vietnamese**Tài liệu này và quan trọng và phải được dịch ngay. Nếu quý vị cần bản dịch của tài liệu này, vui lòng liên hệ với Giám Đốc Phòng Công Lý Môi Trường của MassDEP theo số điện thoại được liệt kê bên dưới**.****​ប្រទេសកម្ពុជា Khmer/Cambodian**ឯកសារនេះមានសារៈសំខាន់ ហើយគប្បីគួរត្រូវបានបកប្រែភ្លាមៗ។.ប្រសិនបើអ្នកត្រូវការអោយឯកសារនេះបកប្រែ សូមទាក់ទងនាយកផ្នែកយុត្តិធម៌បរិស្ថានរបស់ MassDEPតាមរយៈលេខទូរស័ព្ទដែលបានរាយដូចខាងក្រោម។**Kriolu Kabuverdianu Cape Verdean**Es dokumentu sta important i tenki ser tradusidu immediatamenti. Se nho ta presisa ke es dokumentu sta tradisidu, por favor kontata O Diretor di Justisia di Environman di DEP ku es numero di telifoni menxionadu di baixo. |
| Pусский RussianЭто чрезвычайно важный документ, и он должен быть немедленно переведен. Если вам нужен перевод этого документа, обратитесь к директору Департамента экологического правосудия MassDEP (MassDEP's Director of Environmental Justice)по телефону, указанному ниже.العربية Arabic*هذه الوثيقة مهمة وتجب ترجمتها على الفور.*إذا كنت بحاجة إلى ترجمة هذه الوثيقة، فيرجى الاتصال بمدير العدالة البيئية في MassDEPعلى رقم الهاتف المذكور أدناه.한국어 Korean*이 문서는 중대하므로 즉시 번역되어야 합니다.*본 문서 번역이 필요하신 경우, 매사추세츠 환경보호부의 "환경정의" 담당자 분께 문의하십시오. 전화번호는 아래와 같습니다.հայերեն ArmenianԱյս փաստաթուղթը կարևոր է, և պետք է անհապաղ թարգմանել այն:Եթե ​​Ձեզ անհրաժեշտ է թարգմանել այս փաստաթուղթը, դիմեք Մասաչուսեթսի շրջակա միջավայրի պահպանության նախարարության (MassDEP) Բնապահպանական հարցերով արդարադատության ղեկավարին (Director of Environmental Justice)` ստորև նշված հեռախոսահամարով فارسی Farsi Persianاین نوشتار بسیار مهمی است و باید فوراً ترجمه شود.اگر نیاز به ترجمه این نوشتار دارید لطفاً با مدیر عدالت محیط زیستی MassDEP در شماره تلفن ذکر شده زیر تماس بگیرید.Français FrenchCe document est important et doit être traduit immédiatement. Si vous avez besoin d'une traduction de ce document, veuillez contacter le directeur de la justice environnementale du MassDEP au numéro de téléphone indiqué ci-dessous. | **Deutsch German**Dieses Dokument ist wichtig und muss sofort übersetzt werden. Wenn Sie eine Übersetzung dieses Dokuments benötigen, wenden Sie sich bitte an MassDEP's Director of Environmental Justice *(Direktor für Umweltgerechtigkeit in Massachusetts)* unter der unten angegebenen Telefonnummer.**Ελληνική Greek**Το έγγραφο αυτό είναι πολύ σημαντικό και πρέπει να μεταφραστεί αμέσωςю. Αν χρειάζεστε μετάφραση του εγγράφου αυτού, παρακαλώ επικοινωνήστε με τον Διευθυντή του Τμήματος Περιβαλλοντικής Δικαιοσύνης της Μασαχουσέτης στον αριθμό τηλεφώνου που αναγράφεται παρακάτω**Italiano Italian**Questo documento è importante e deve essere tradotto immediatamente. Se hai bisogno di tradurre questo documento, contatta il Direttore della Giustizia Ambientale di MassDEP al numero di telefono sotto indicato.**Język Polski Polish**Ten dokument jest ważny i powinien zostać niezwłocznie przetłumaczony. Jeśli potrzebne jest tłumaczenie tego dokumentu, należy skontaktować się z dyrektorem ds. sprawiedliwości środowiskowej MassDEP pod numerem telefonu podanym poniżej.हिन्दी **Hindi***यह दस्तावेज महत्वपूर्ण है और इसका अनुवाद तुरंत किया जाना चाहिए।.* यदि आपको इस दस्तावेज का अनुवाद कराने की जरूरत है, तो कृपया नीचे दिए गए टेलीफोन नंबर पर MassDEP के पर्यावरणीय न्याय निदेशक से संपर्क करें।  |