



# LANGUAGE ACCESS TRAINING

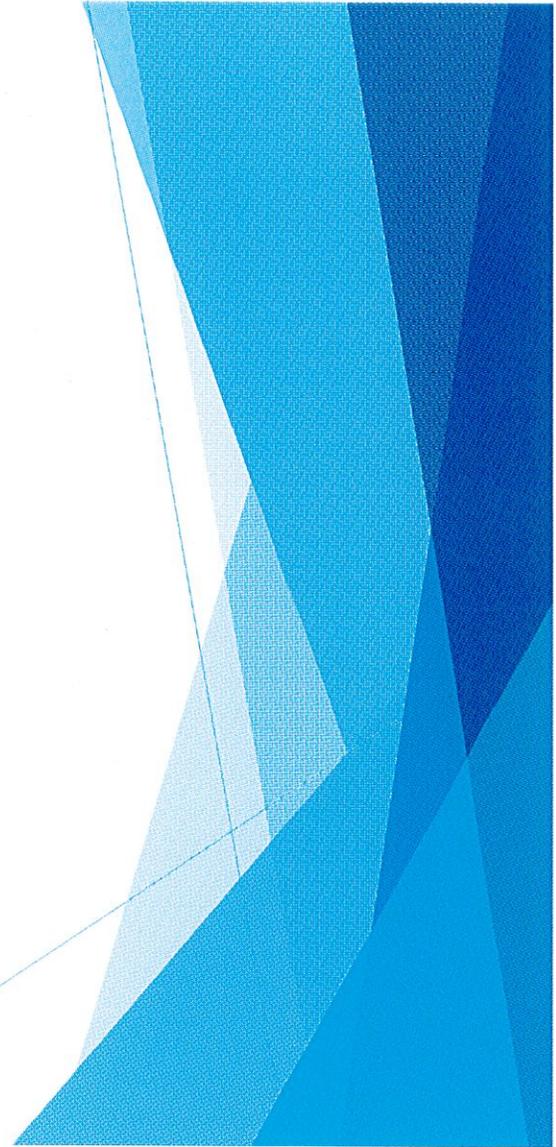
Providing language assistance to Limited English Proficient (LEP)  
Families Applying to and in the Emergency Assistance (EA) Program

April, 2018

## THE PROGRAM

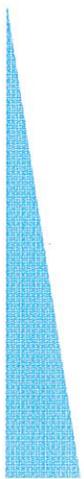
The EA Program is a program to temporarily shelter low-income homeless families and pregnant women. The program is administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) through:

- A central office staff, located at 100 Cambridge Street, Boston, MA.
- Ten field offices, located throughout the state, which are staffed by DHCD employees and determine eligibility for the program.
- A network of 52 shelter providers (contractors) located throughout the state, which provide approximately 3500 shelter beds for homeless families.
- A very small number of hotels/motels, which are used to house homeless families when shelter beds are full.



## THIS TRAINING

- Is designed to be used by DHCD staff, shelter provider staff and hotel/motel staff.
- Provides basic information about how to most effectively serve families who are Limited English Proficient (LEP).
- Limited English Proficient or LEP is a term that will be used throughout this training. Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons are persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.



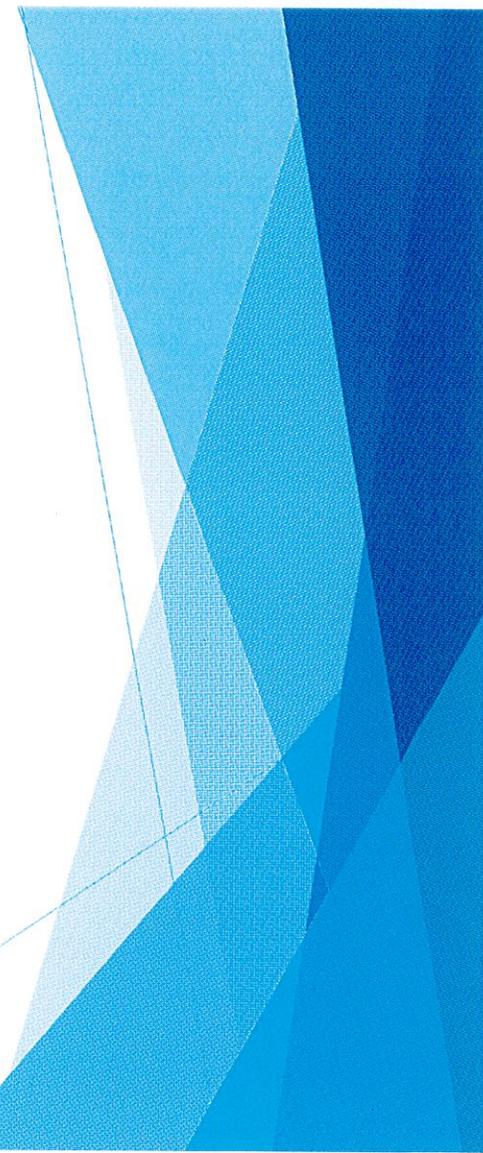
## THE LAW

- DHCD, as a state agency, is required to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful program access for persons with LEP.
- To the extent persons with LEP come into contact with the EA program, DHCD and all contractor staff must be prepared to identify and respond to their language assistance needs.
- To that end, DHCD has drafted a Language Access Plan and Staff Protocols, which can be found on the DHCD website, at <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/emergency-housing-assistance-resource-information>

## **PRIMARY LANGUAGES OF EA PARTICIPANTS**

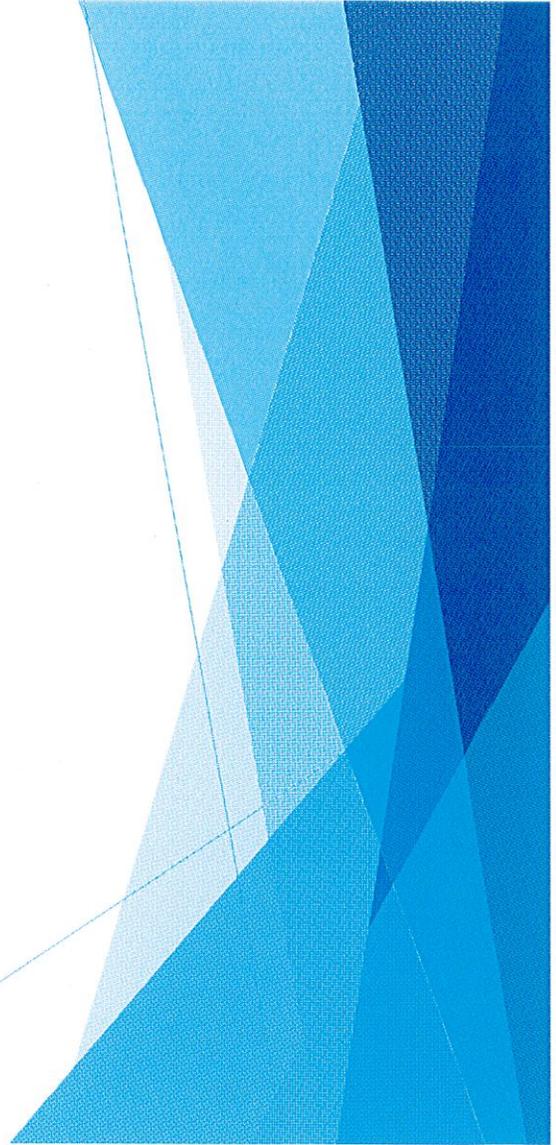
At intake, all families are asked their primary language. Data collected between January 1, 2013 and March 31, 2016 indicates that of the 29,980 total applicants, the majority identified English as their primary language. Other than English, the most encountered languages are:

- Spanish - 12.6% of applicants
- Haitian Creole – 1.3% of applicants
- Cape Verdean Creole - .06% of applicants
- Arabic - .04% of applicants
- Portuguese - .03% of applicants
- French Creole – 02% of applicants



## **RESOURCES ON THE DHCD WEBSITE**

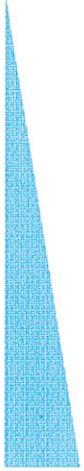
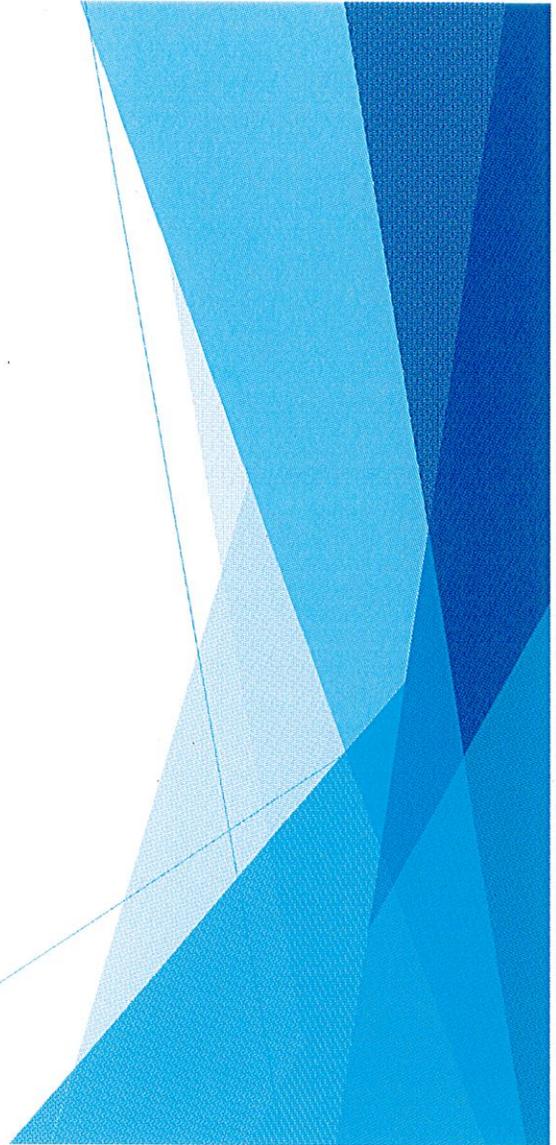
- There are many resources on the DHCD website to assist you in providing language assistance to LEP persons in the EA program.
- Go to: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/emergency-housing-assistance-resource-information>
- There you will find many of the documents which will be referred to in this training.
- The next heading after “Language Assistance” on the webpage is, “Emergency Assistance Uniform Shelter Program Rules, Guidelines and Forms.” There you will find the Uniform Shelter Rules, a summary of the Rules, the Babysitting Form and the Overnight Form translated into Amharic, Arabic, Haitian, Portuguese, Somali and Spanish.



## **OTHER RESOURCES**

For those who have access to Sharepoint, all of the documents listed as “Vital Documents” on Exhibit A to the Language Access Plan have been translated into Spanish and are available in Sharepoint.

Many other standard documents used in the program have been translated into Amharic, Arabic, Haitian, Portuguese, and Somali, as well, and are available on Sharepoint.



## **LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATOR**

DHCD has appointed a Language Access Coordinator to oversee implementation of the Language Access Plan, to receive and respond to feedback, answer questions, assist staff and contractors, and to resolve problems.

The Language Access Coordinator is:

Brenda O'Donnell  
Language Access Coordinator  
Dept. of Housing and Community Development  
100 Cambridge Street Suite 300  
Boston, MA 02114  
(617) 573-1381  
[Brenda.Odonnell@state.ma.us](mailto:Brenda.Odonnell@state.ma.us)



## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO (overview)

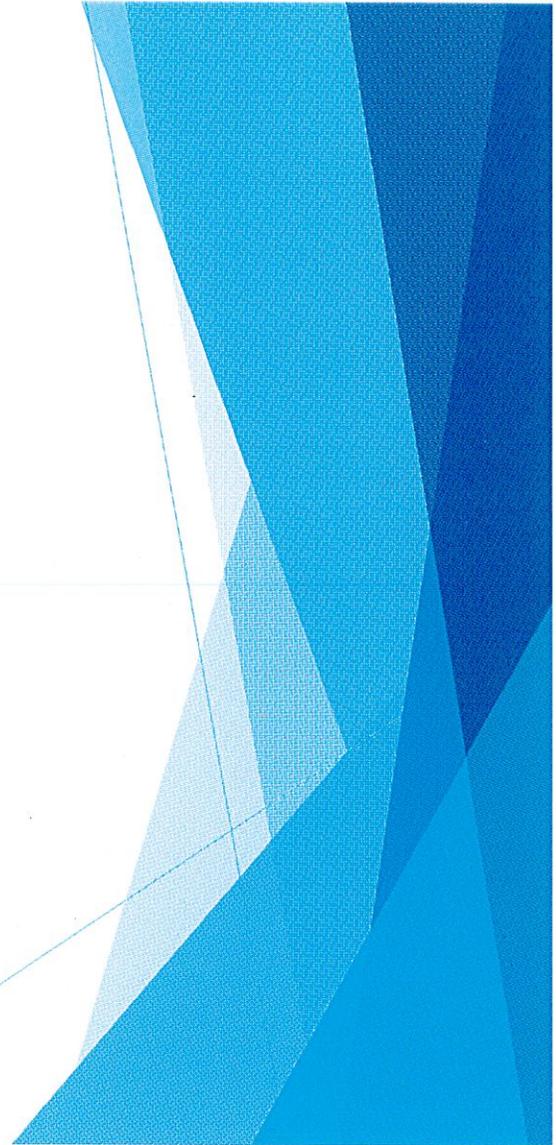
- Post the Your Right to an Interpreter poster at or near the main entrance of the field office, shelter office of hotel/motel check-in counter. The poster can be found on the DHCD website (Exhibit 1 to the Staff Protocols).
- Determine which families are LEP.
- Determine the family's primary language.
- Enter the family's primary language into ASIST.
- Provide interpretation to the family, including offering to interpret untranslated documents, either through shelter staff or the DHCD over-the-phone interpreter line.
- Provide relevant translated documents (if available) to the family.
- When appropriate, ask the family to wait a few minutes. See "One Moment Please" document, which can be found at the DHCD website, here: [will insert website when the document is posted]

## POSTER and “I SPEAK” CARDS

- The *Your Right to an Interpreter* poster contains the following message in 34 different languages:

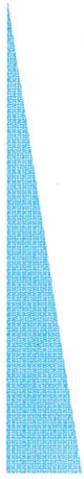
“You have the right to an interpreter at no cost to you. Please point to your language. An interpreter will be called. Please wait.”

- The “I Speak” cards are available on the DHCD website as Exhibit 2 of the EA Staff Protocols and they state “Mark this box if you read or speak [language]” in 38 different languages.
- All field offices, shelters and hotels/motels should display the poster at or near the entrance or main desk to the facility where people entering will notice it, and should have copies of the I Speak cards available for use by staff.



## **STAFF PROTOCOLS**

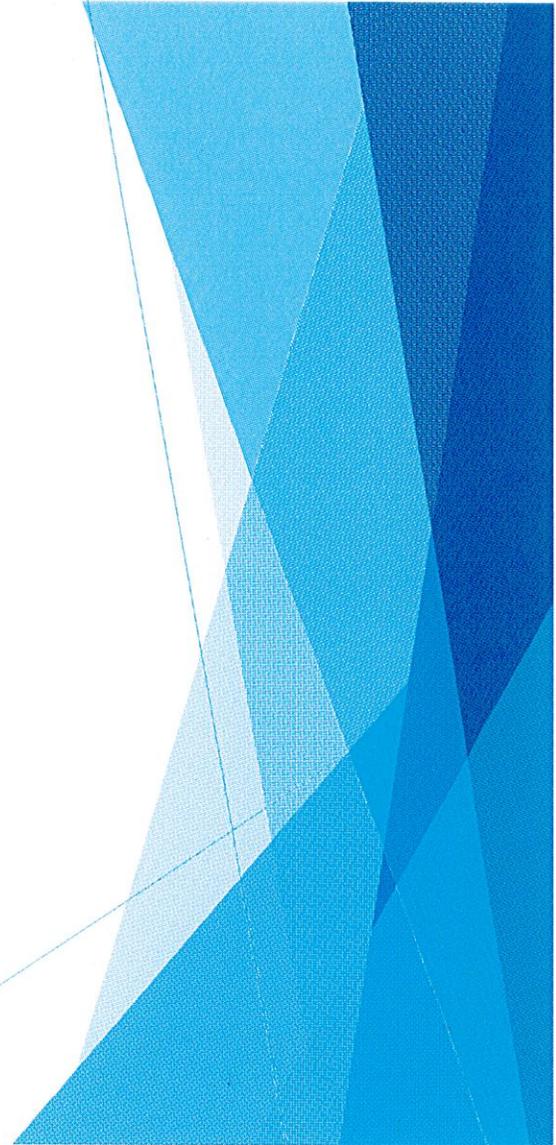
- Staff Protocols is a relatively short document with exhibits which provides basic instructions on identifying LEP families and providing them with language services.
- Copy the Staff Protocols from the DHCD website, and go over the protocols with all staff who will come in contact with LEP families.
- Keep a copy of the Staff Protocols in the main office or main desk of your facility so that staff can refer to the Protocols as necessary.



## **IDENTIFYING LEP FAMILIES**

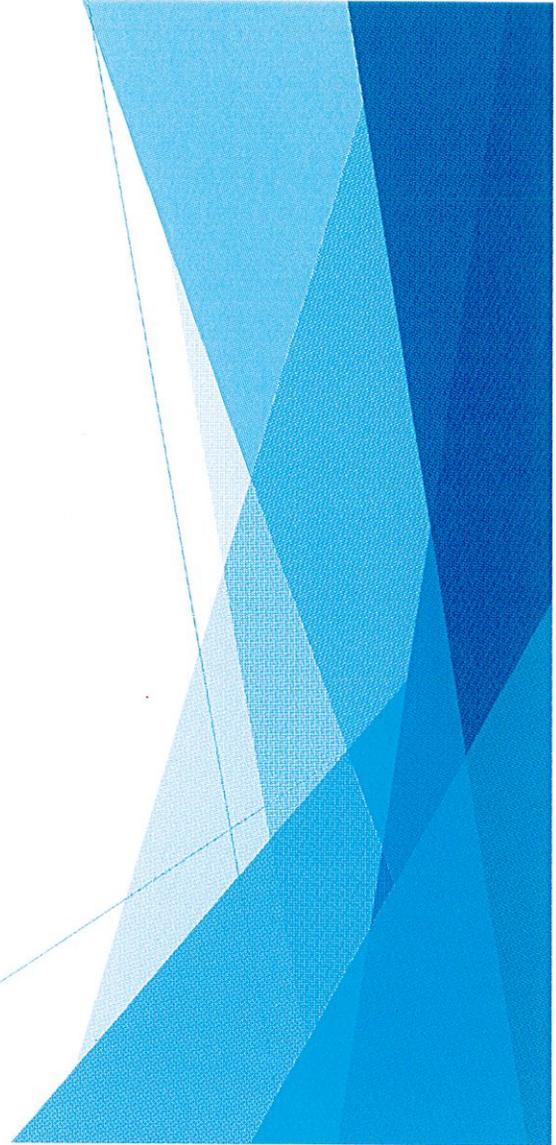
Some families with LEP can convey their language needs, but if not, you can:

- Use the poster, asking the family to point to their language.
- Use the “I Speak” cards, asking the family to identify their language
- Ask staff who speak other languages to assist.
- Call the over-the-phone interpreter service for assistance.



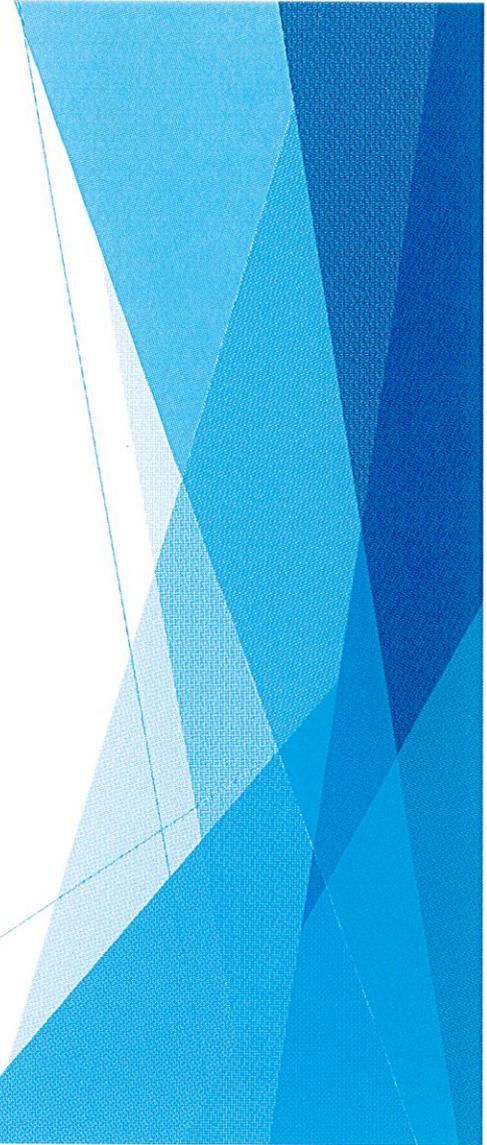
## **WHEN PRIMARY LANGUAGE IS IDENTIFIED**

- Note it in ASIST (DHCD software) so that others are aware of the primary language.
- If you don't have access to ASIST, note it in whatever software your shelter or hotel/motel uses.
- Provide family with documents in their primary language, if available.
- If documents are not available in family's primary language, use staff or the over-the-phone interpreter line to provide the family with an oral interpretation of a document or vital information.



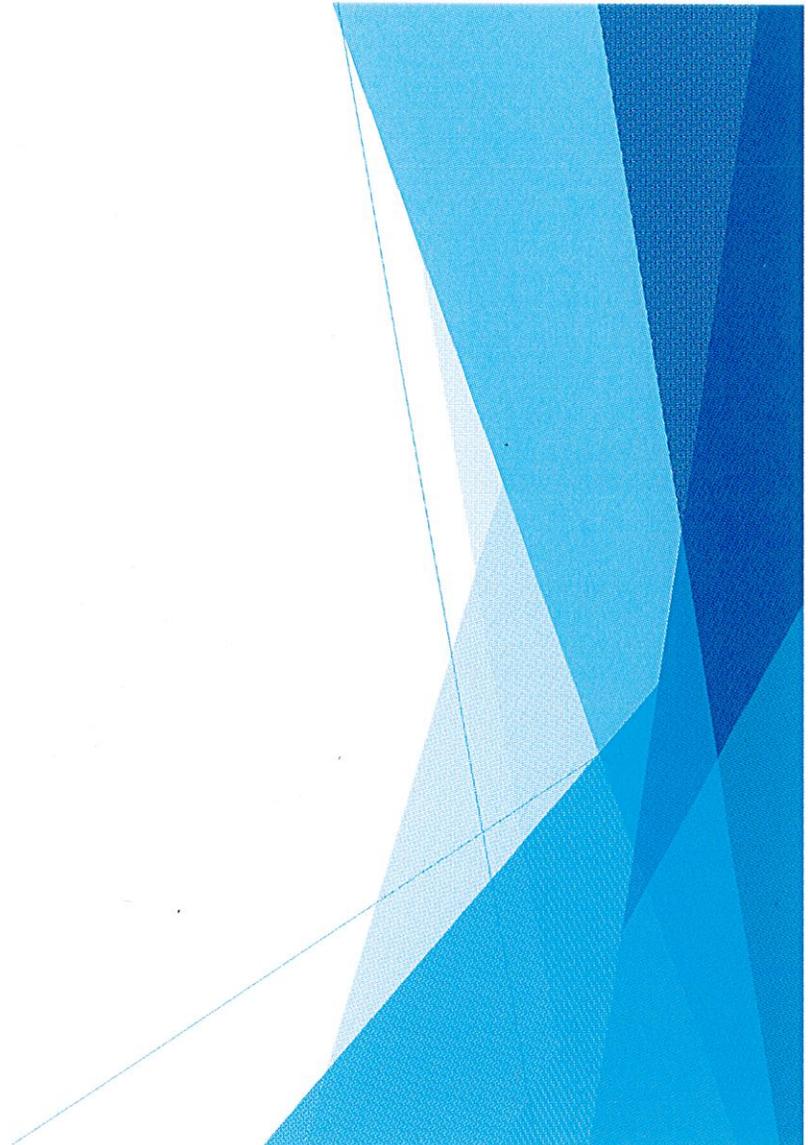
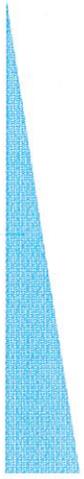
## **PROVIDING DOCUMENTS**

- At intake, every family who appears to be a LEP family should be given a copy of the document entitled, “If you Don’t Speak English Well.”
- At intake, when a family is determined eligible, every family should be given a copy of the Uniform Shelter Rules in their primary language, if it is a language into which the Rules have been translated.
- These documents, as well as a shorter summary of the Rules, the Babysitting Form and the Overnight form are posted on the DHCD website in Spanish and many other languages.
- Other standard forms are available in multiple languages in Sharepoint.
- If you don’t have access to Sharepoint (which is only available to DHCD employees) please contact Brenda O’Donnell, the Language Access Coordinator and she may be able to provide you with translated documents.



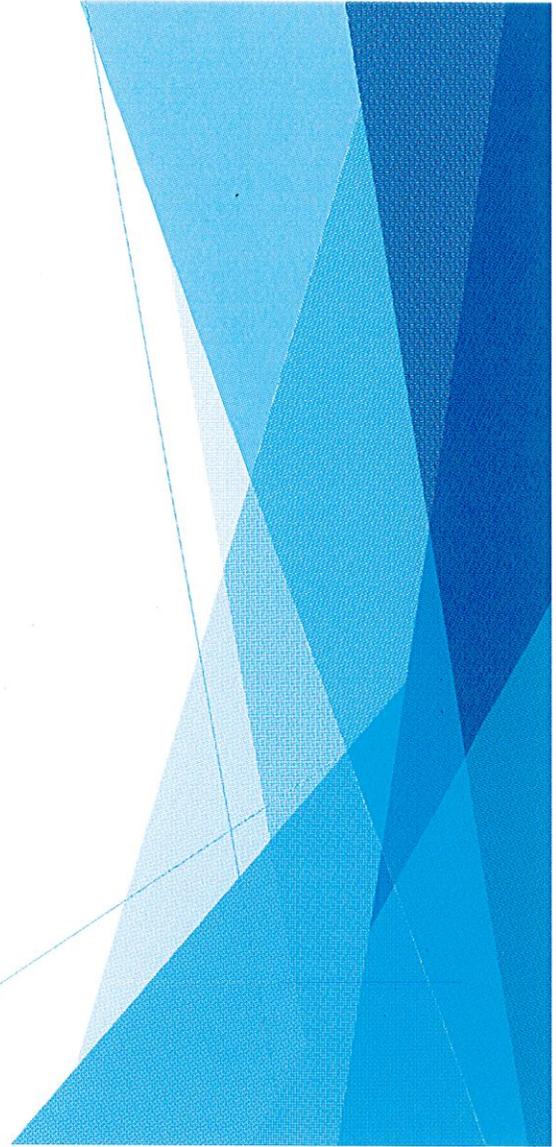
## **USING THE OVER-THE-PHONE INTERPRETER LINE**

- If translated documents are not available, staff should use the over-the-phone interpreter line to provide interpretation of important documents and important notices (such as room inspections) to LEP families.
- The interpreter line should also be used to provide the family with important information.
- All DHCD staff (both central and field staff), all shelter providers and all hotels/motels now have access to the DHCD funded over-the-phone interpreter line.
- DHCD contracts with Transperfect for over-the-phone interpretation service.
- To call Transperfect, you dial an 800 number, enter your PIN number, enter the number for the language you need (if you know) and you will be connected to an interpreter.
- Detailed instructions for dialing the Transperfect line are posted on the DHCD website as Exhibit 4 to the Staff Protocols.



## **COMPLAINT FORM**

- If a family believes it has not received the language services set out in the Language Access Plan, the family can file a complaint form with Brenda O'Donnell, DHCD's Language Access Coordinator.
- The Complaint form is available on the DHCD website in English, Arabic, Cape Verdean Creole, Haitian Creole, Portuguese and Spanish.
- Brenda O'Donnell works with the provider and the family to resolve language complaints.



## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Please refer to the resources available on the DHCD website, and especially the Staff Protocols for more detailed information about how to identify and handle LEP families in the EA program.

## **QUESTIONS?**

If you have questions about the material in this training, please contact Brenda O'Donnell, the Language Access Coordinator.

