**Sample Language Access Policy**

*The following has been adapted from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This template is provided as a general sample and should be adapted, edited, and updated to meet the specific policies, procedures, and practices of your organization.*

|  |
| --- |
| **Subject: Language Access Policy and Procedure** |
| **Policy Number:** |
| **Effective Date:** |

**1. Purpose**

In this section, the agency should explain the purpose of this document, such as to create a written policy and procedure for agency staff to follow to ensure meaningful access to programs and activities for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP).

**2. Policy**

The agency should explain its policy regarding language access, such as a statement that the agency will take reasonable steps to ensure that persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access and an equal opportunity to participate in services, activities, programs and other benefits. Language assistance will be provided through use of competent bilingual staff, staff interpreters, contracts or formal arrangements with local organizations providing interpretation or translation services, or technology and telephonic interpretation services. All staff will be provided notice of this policy and procedure, and staff that may have direct contact with LEP individuals will be trained in effective communication techniques, including the effective use of an interpreter.

**3. Definitions**

The agency may wish to include definitions of relevant terms, such as “meaningful access” and “services and activities”.

**4. Procedures**

The agency should explain its procedures for providing language access for individuals with limited English proficiency. These procedures should include, at a minimum:

* Identifying individuals with LEP and their language. This can be accomplished through the use of language identification cards (or “I speak” cards available online at [www.lep.gov](http://www.lep.gov)) or posters to determine language. In addition, when records are kept of past interactions with clients the language used to communicate should be included with the records.
* Identifying staff person(s) who can provide services in the language of individuals with LEP.
* Obtaining a qualified interpreter when needed. This can be accomplished internally or through contracts with outside interpretation agencies.
* Providing written translations of vital documents. Agencies will provide translation of written materials.
* Provide notification to LEP persons of the availability of language access by providing written notice in the person’s native language.
* The agency shall describe how it will disseminate these procedures to agency employees, such as by posting the procedures on the agency website, providing a copy of the procedures to employees during the training sessions, distributing the procedures to all new employees during orientation, etc.

**5. Training**

The agency should describe its procedures for providing periodic training for agency employees on these procedures, including an employee’s responsibility to respond to language access needs from program participants and prospective program participants.

This sample policy has been adapted from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Program’s civil rights sample documentation, *https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-providers/clearance-medicare-providers/example-policy-procedure-persons-limited-english-proficiency/index.html*