Language Access

A toolkit for developing, translating or interpreting materials for limited English proficient or non-English speakers, including those who use American Sign Language.

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About the Office of Health Equity

The mission of the Office of Health Equity is to support and strengthen the internal capacity of ADHS to operationalize health equity and to work with communities to reduce health disparities. Aligning with the [10 Essential Public Health Services](#) and the ADHS Health Equity Policy, the Office of Health Equity develops toolkits and training which actively promote "systems and services that enable good health and seek to remove obstacles and systemic and structural barriers."

Our work starts by adopting and promoting recognized best practices, such as this toolkit. This toolkit was updated and adapted from the original publication created by Dr. Élida Testai, Medical Translator, which was originally modeled from the Translation Manual and Translation Toolkit by the Utah Department of Health, Office of Health Disparities.

For resources or additional information, email the Office of Health Equity at healthequity@azdhs.gov.

Purpose

This toolkit is intended to serve as a guide and a resource for health and healthcare organizations and other service providers in Arizona who need to develop materials for persons with limited English proficiency or in languages other than English, including American Sign Language. Checklists and easy reference guides are embedded throughout this document and included again at the end of this toolkit.

[Limited English Proficiency (LEP)](#) can refer to an individual or a group unable to communicate fully in English because their primary language is not English.

All organizations in Arizona that receive federal funding should be aware of this guideline and plan appropriately when planning and providing services to the LEP population. Any organization receiving federal money must provide interpretation and translation services at no cost to the clients. Family members, friends and minors should not be used to provide language services.

It is particularly important to ensure that [vital documents](#) are translated into the non-English language of each regularly encountered LEP group. ADHS programs that receive federal funding should also determine if the federal program has specific guidelines for serving the LEP population.

The [Office of Civil Rights guidance](#) explains that the obligation to provide language access starts with an individualized assessment of four factors:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program or grantee;
2. The frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with the program;
3. The nature and importance of the program, activity or service provided by the recipient to its beneficiaries;

4. The resources available to the grantee/recipient and the costs of interpretation/translation services.

The lack of language access services can create communication challenges and barriers to quality health care. Often this leads to a lower quality of overall services and higher health costs for individuals.

Languages Spoken in Arizona

In Arizona, 27% of individuals 5 years old and older speak a language other than English. The most commonly found languages, other than English, include:

- Spanish
- Navajo
- Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese)
- American Sign Language

Roughly 23% of adult Arizonans have a low [literacy rate](). This means they are able to understand very basic vocabulary. For some it may mean they struggle with finding specific information on a topic or are unable to read.

Communication Styles

In order to communicate effectively, it is important to understand the unique cultural identity and individual preferences of those you serve. Being aware of how communication styles tend to vary across cultures can help you avoid misunderstandings. This helpful [table]() outlines different types of

communication styles and how they tend to vary across cultures. Additional training on the importance of understanding cultural differences can be found in [Culturally & Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS)](#).

Awareness

When [effectively communicating](#), it is important to be aware of:
- Language differences in verbal and written communication, including American Sign Language.
- Barriers that can arise when expressions, idioms or multi-meaning words are used in communication; even if you and the individual speak the same language.
- Stylistic details (tone of voice, font size/type).
- Wording - is it formal? too complex? unwelcoming?
- The individual's level of literacy and health literacy.

Plain Language

[Plain Language](#) is writing to ensure any reader understands the concepts quickly and easily the first time they read it. Whether the topic is simple or complex, when using plain language, it guarantees the general public can read and understand what is written. All written materials should be written using plain language guidelines, so that individuals with all levels of literacy and health literacy can understand them.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have published "Everyday Words for Public Health Communication" which includes plain language suggestions.

General guidelines for plain language are:
- Use short sentences.
- Focus on need to know versus nice to know and be accurate.
  - The document should reflect the knowledge and facts that the author wants to convey.
- Speak to the reader by using "you" and "we."
- Give the most important information first.
- Limit the number of messages.
- Tell the reader what they need to do or what they will gain from understanding and using the material.
- Choose your words carefully.
  - Use commonly understood words and as few words as possible.
  - Limit the use of jargon, technical or scientific language.
  - Use words with three syllables or less.
  - Communicate as if you were talking to a friend.
  - Be friendly and respectful.
- Be culturally appropriate.
  - Materials should be respectful. When translating, in order to achieve this goal, sometimes the text needs to be modified, recreated or recast. Additionally, typography (the style and

appearance of printed matter, including text, line spacing, etc.) varies from language to language.

When material is easier to read it reaches a larger audience. Thus many best selling authors write at a 4th to 6th grade level. You can check your material for its reading level by using an Automatic Readability Checker.

Easy Read is recommended when the reader has intellectual or cognitive disabilities. See the Easy Read Checklist at the end of this toolkit for an example.

American Sign Language

American Sign Language (ASL) is like any other language. When communicating with one another, it's easiest and most effective to communicate in your primary language. For some, ASL is their primary language. Individuals who are deaf and who use ASL report better understanding and comprehension when they are able to communicate with professionals in ASL. This is especially true for more complex or nuanced topics such as health and healthcare.

It is important to note, ASL is not universal. Not everyone who is deaf or hard of hearing uses ASL, some individuals may use assistive technologies to communicate. These may include closed captioning, screen readers, or text-to-speech. For more details, review Best Practices for Providing Services in ASL.

Interpretation Versus Translation

Being bilingual does not equate to being an interpreter or translator. In order to become an interpreter or a translator, an individual must be deemed as qualified through comprehensive training.

An interpreter communicates **orally** and moves information between the source language and target language, including ASL.

A translator communicates in **writing**, from a source language into a target language.

Source language refers to the original language from which information is interpreted or translated. Target language refers to the language into which we interpret or translate. For example, when translating from Spanish into English, Spanish is the "source" language and English is the "target."

An interpreter or translator will have a thorough understanding of technical or subject terminology and practices in the source and target languages and an understanding of the code of ethics.

Interpretation

- [Consecutive interpreting](#) is when the interpreter takes turns with the speaker(s).
- [Simultaneous interpreting](#) is when the speaker and interpreter talk at the same time, with the interpreter lagging a few words behind the

speaker.

- [Sight translation](#) is when the interpreter orally translates a written document with little or no preparation.

The more technical a subject, the more important it is for the interpreter to have experience on the matter or be provided ample information ahead of time. For lengthy assignments or events, more than one interpreter is suggested. Interpreting is stressful and when an interpreter is fatigued it can cause inaccuracy.

Resources

[Working Effectively with an Interpreter Checklist](#)

[Working with an Interpreter - a Scripted Introduction](#)

Translation

Sharing written information in a client's primary language is one way to ensure all clients receive accurate information. Translating includes many steps, so it is important to determine if written materials are the best way to communicate the information to the audience. Written communication may not always be the best way to reach some audiences.

- Some people may not be able to read, either because they do not know how, or because they suffer visual challenges.
- Individuals may not feel comfortable reading and would prefer other ways to communicate.

- Some communities may prefer to use oral language rather than written language.

In these situations, it is not useful to create or translate written materials.

When translating materials, there are three options.

Option A	Option B	Option C
Through research, you are able to find the topic you need already translated in the target language. Once found, verify that you have the right to copy it and check the document's accuracy with a translator.	You create new written material in the target language.	You translate material already written in the source language into the target language.

Option B is best practice and preferred, creating new material directly in the target language. This may also be faster and easier. You will need to use a certified translator.

If you prefer option C, translating an existing document from English into the target language, you will still use a certified translator.

Qualifications of a Translator

- The translator should be a writer.
    - Find a translator who is a good writer in the target language and who also understands the subject matter. For example, a nurse or physician who specializes in the topic on which you want to write. You will go through the information that needs to be covered in the text with this expert.
- The translator should feel comfortable and confident when writing in the target language.
- Translators translate into their native language.
- Those who translate both ways, into the source and into the target language, are exceptional. Most translators will only translate into their native tongue.
- Translators know the source language very well.
- Translators are not necessarily bilingual, but they are experts in the source language.
- Translators are cultural brokers.
    - They know the culture of both language pairs (source and target language).
- Translators are content experts.
- They are subject matter specialists. In general, they tend to specialize in certain disciplines: medicine, law, engineering, etc.
- Translators are knowledgeable of registers, regionalisms, genres, etc.
    - Register - when language is formal or colloquial.

- ○ Regionalism - certain words and expressions more frequently used in some geographical areas.
  - ○ Genre - way to write according to the type of document.
- Translations should be a "rewrite" or "adaptation," not a "[for-information](#)" translation.

Working with a Translator

You should be able to determine the proficiency of a translator. However, this is not always possible. If your program has a list of approved translators or translation agencies, this may narrow the number of alternatives from which you may choose.

You can attain the best translator by asking for the following:
- Samples of their previously translated materials
- At least 2 recent references
- Their qualifications and experience
- Their areas of specialization and regional target language they know

If you work with a translation agency, you can ask them:
- How they recruit their translators
- How they monitor quality (revision process: edition, proofreading)
- Translator's continuing-education requirements

Prior to working with a translator, be sure to:
- Anticipate and allocate time and funding for the translation.

- Proofread and finalize text in English BEFORE initiating the translation. Ideally, you should include the translator in the discussion of the source text. Many times the translator will provide you clues on how to improve the written source text.
- Provide clear specific instructions regarding the project
  - Intent of the message - persuade, inform, notify, clarify
  - Intended reader - individual, professional, mass communication
  - Medium of communication - flier, banner, telephone script, internet, press release
- Provide glossaries and reference materials
  - You may already have glossaries from previous translation requests that you may want to share with the translator. This ensures that the translator will be using the same words that you used for other documents and that all of your written materials follow the same context.
  - Reference materials are other written materials (brochures, letters, pictures, etc.) that help clarify the meaning of the text you want translated by providing extra information and context.
- Determine who will edit and proofread.
  - The editor will see whether or not the target text is well organized and if the transitions read smoothly. The editor will also assess the content (if it is logical), the style, text structure and citations.

- ○ The proofreader assesses the document for specific punctuation, grammar and production errors such as misspellings.
- ○ Sometimes the parties want to have input from the community to see if the target text is accurate. Reviewers, either monolingual or bilingual, from the target language community, can assess for understanding. They should understand the stand-alone target text, without comparing it to the source.

Written materials, whether newly created or translated from an existing document, should follow the plain language standards shared on page 6 of this toolkit. The translated material should also be:

- Complete - no information is omitted.
- Coherent - it should make sense as a stand-alone document, and the transition from one paragraph to the next should be smooth.
- Resonative with the culture for which it is intended.

Translation Process

Now that you know the qualifications of a translator, and how to work with one, you need to know the steps that are involved in the translation process. Not all steps may be present in all translations.

1. Analytical reading of the source document - a translator literally strips the source text in order to reach deep meaning.
2. Translating
3. Editing

4. Proofreading

5. Formatting: fonts, graphics, layout, addition of extra spaces, date of translation, name of translator

6. Communicating between translator<>author

7. Communicating between translator<>editor

8. Reviewing

Resources

[Translation Getting it Right, a guide to buying translations](#)

Checklists

Plain Language Checklist

Ensure your materials follows the guidelines below:

- ☐ Use short sentences.
- ☐ Focus on need to know versus nice to know and be accurate.
- ☐ Use "you" and "we."
- ☐ Give the most important information first.
- ☐ Limit the number of messages.
- ☐ Tell the reader what they need to do or what they will gain from understanding and using the material.
- ☐ Choose your words carefully.
- ☐ Be culturally appropriate.

Easy Read Documents Checklist

Clear and easy to understand

A picture for every idea

Uses no acronyms

Large space between paragraphs

Fewer ideas on a page

Icons are often metaphors

This icon would be a metaphor for women's health

Translation Checklist

Prior to Translation

☐ Check that the English source document is accurate, clear and appropriate and has no typos or punctuation errors

☐ Contract a translator

    ☐ Identify a translator or translation agency

    ☐ Request a detailed itemized quote

    ☐ Set the due date for the finalized document

☐ Identify an editor and proofreader

☐ Identify reviewers and quality-assessment community readers

Share with the Translator

☐ Description of the target audience: age, educational level, health literacy level, language regionalization, gender

☐ Tone or intent of the target text (persuasive, admonitory, informational, etc.)

☐ Medium of communication (wall sign, letter, booklet, internet, application, etc.)

☐ If available, a list of acronyms, terminology definitions, glossaries and reference materials

Quality Assurance and Finalization

☐ Maintain open communication with the translator

☐ Submit the source text and translation or target document and Quality Assessment form to one or two independent readers from the target community for evaluation.

☐ Keep a copy of foreign-language fonts

Quality Assessment Worksheet for Translations

Complete the upper portion of this page prior to giving this form, along with the source and target documents, to the independent reader from the target community.

Document Title: _____ Date: _____

Translator or translation agency: _____

Language: _____

Please check the appropriate box as you evaluate the attached document:

Integrity: The translated text and the English text convey the same message and tone to the reader. ▫ Strongly Agree ▫ Agree ▫ Disagree ▫ Strongly Disagree

Accuracy: The translated text is an accurate, correct translation from the English text.
▫ Strongly Agree ▫ Agree ▫ Disagree ▫ Strongly Disagree

Neutrality: The translated text can be easily understood by its intended audience.
▫ Strongly Agree ▫ Agree ▫ Disagree ▫ Strongly Disagree

Grammar: The translated text is free of grammatical and punctuation, errors, missing accents, diacritics, etc. ▫ Strongly Agree ▫ Agree ▫ Disagree ▫ Strongly Disagree

Appropriateness: The translated text and visual elements are appropriate and inoffensive to the intended audience. ▫ Strongly Agree ▫ Agree ▫ Disagree ▫ Strongly Disagree

How do you rate this translation overall?
▫ Excellent ▫ Good ▫ Average ▫ Below Average ▫ Unacceptable

Comments: _____

_____

_____

Reader's Name: _____

Signature: _____