



**RAMSEY COUNTY
COMMUNITY HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT
PLAN FOR THE PROVISION OF SERVICES
TO
PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY
(LEP)**

Agency Commitment:

Ramsey County Community Human Services Department is committed to the goal of providing full and equal access for all our services to persons with limited English proficiency through the provision of effective language services, oral and written, at no charge.

Updated November 2008

I. INTRODUCTION

Ramsey County Community Human Services Department (referred hereafter as The Department) recognizes its legal obligation to be in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that prohibits discrimination for any of its services on the basis of National Origin as evidenced by limited English proficiency. The Department also recognizes its responsibility to serve fairly and equally all eligible residents of Ramsey County.

Since the mid-1970s, refugee resettlement and other immigration to Ramsey County has fueled a dramatic change in the human face of our County. Dominated for the past century by Scandinavian and other Western European immigrants and their descendents, Ramsey County has been a welcoming home for the past 25 years to tens of thousands of new Americans from Southeast Asia, Africa, the former Soviet Union, and the Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America and the Caribbean.

We have seen this growing diversity reflected in a new economic and cultural dynamism throughout our County. We have also witnessed the very real and painful struggle on the part of some to adapt to a new culture and marketplace. This transition is often made much more difficult because of poverty and isolation, which is, in part, due to the struggle to cope with a lack of English language skills. In turn, the poverty and isolation experienced by some of our LEP residents greatly increases the need for timely and effective human services.

The Department has been developing and expanding capacity to deliver services to a growing and diversifying population with limited English proficiency (LEP). **Our goal is the elimination of disparity in the delivery of, and access to, all our services for people who cannot take full advantage of those services without language assistance, both verbal and written.** Achievement of this goal will require a long-term commitment to develop our capacity to ensure fair and equal access to services and information.

This plan should be considered a work in progress. We will continue to seek out additional methods of providing language assistance as our population continues to change and diversify. This constant dynamic creates both opportunities and challenges that will need to be addressed as we continually modify and improve this plan.

Serving the language needs of the LEP population in Ramsey County is a challenge far broader than improving services provided by the County. Cities, schools, hospitals,

businesses, and non-profit organizations all have a stake in effectively reaching and communicating with residents in our County that do not speak English well. Fulfillment of the full intent of Title VI will require solutions that are innovative and community-wide. We intend to explore, with community partners, opportunities to utilize the potent blend of technology and language diversity in our community to forge creative ways of making language assistance available more broadly and effectively.

II. Legal Authorities/References

According to the Office for Civil Rights (OCR), in order to avoid discrimination on the basis of national origin against persons with limited English language proficiency, recipients of federal financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services must take adequate steps to ensure that persons with limited English proficiency receive the language assistance necessary to allow them meaningful access to services, free of charge. This limited English proficiency plan for Ramsey County Community Human Services Department has been completed at OCR's instruction. In OCR's August 30, 2000 policy guidance, issued to interpret the regulations under Title VI, OCR states that a recipient of federal financial assistance can ensure effective communication (which leads to meaningful access) by implementing a limited English proficiency plan that accounts for how the recipient (agency) will provide language assistance services when they are needed by applicants, clients, and members of the public.

- **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**, 42 U.S.C. §2000 et seq.; 45 CFR §80, Nondiscrimination Under Programs Receiving Federal financial assistance Through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Effectuation of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- **Office for Civil Rights Policy Guidance**, 65 Fed. Reg 52762 (2000), Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, Policy Guidance on the Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination As It Affects Persons With Limited English Proficiency (August 30, 2000); OCR Website: www.hhs.gov/ocr/lep/
- **Department of Justice Regulation**, 28 CFR §42.405(d)(1), Department of Justice, Coordination of Enforcement of Non-discrimination in Federally Assisted Programs

III. Department Contact

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Phone</u>
Don Jones	Department Manager	(651) 266-4324

, is the Department representative responsible for monitoring the implementation of this Plan and its compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the policy guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights in Vol.65, No. 169 of the Federal Register, dated Wednesday, August 30, 2000. The

Department contact will also be responsible for handling client/applicant complaints related to this Plan.

IV. Language Needs Assessment:

Ramsey County Community Human Services Department has made an assessment of the language needs of the people residing in Ramsey County. This assessment was developed from several sources, including:

- Reports of country of origin and primary language (when available) collected from the combined application form for all foreign-born applicants and recipients of public cash and medical assistance.
- MAXIS data from the state
- School enrollment data from the school districts in Ramsey County.
- Enrollment data for LEP students in the St. Paul Adult Learners program at the Hubbs Center for Lifelong Learning.
- Refugee arrival data from the Minnesota Department of Health.
- Data collected for all Ramsey County Community Human Services Department interpreter contacts over the past three years.
- Results from a survey of 36 refugee and immigrant service providers serving LEP residents of Ramsey County.

Table 1. Assessment of Language Needs in Ramsey County (effective 2/01)

Language	Ramsey County Estimated Population	Estimated % who are LEP	Estimated # who are LEP
Hmong	48,000	30%	14,400
Spanish	21,000	35%	7,350
Vietnamese	5,500	25%	1,375
Khmer	4,500	25%	1,125
Somali	6,800	40%	2,720
Russian	2,100	35%	735
Oromo	2,000	35%	700
Amharic	1,500	20%	300
Burmese/Karen	1,900	65%	1,235
Laotian	300	35%	105
Tigrinya	800	25%	200
Arabic	700	50%	350
French	150	15%	22
Tagalog	80	10%	8

The Human Services Department recognizes that this assessment represents our best estimates for the point in time for which the data is collected. The language assessment will be an on-going process to identify both short and long-term trends.

V. Notification of the Availability of Language Assistance:

The Ramsey County Community Human Services Department has signs in Hmong, Spanish, Somali, Oromo, and Karen in several locations in our primary service location at 160 E. Kellogg Blvd. our Mental Health Center at 1919 University Ave. and our additional office location at 450 N. Syndicate. These signs inform limited English proficient human services applicants and recipients that language assistance is available to them on request at no cost.

The Department routinely includes a language block on important documents that have not been translated. The language block informs people that the letter contains important information and that they should get help in reading it and contains the notification that language assistance is available from the Human Services Department at not cost.

VI. Determining that Language Assistance is Required:

Determining that language assistance is required could be made in a number of ways:

- Limited English proficient applicants and recipients can indicate their need for language assistance by pointing to their language on a 12-sided pop-up dome located at any reception or information/help desk in the Department. The pop-up dome says “I need a [specific language] interpreter” in Hmong, Spanish, Khmer, Russian, Korean, Vietnamese, Arabic, Lao, Somali, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Amharic.
- The Human Services staff person reviews the language preference questions on the application forms (HCAPP, CAF I, and Recertification Form, or any social services application or case review form. [County-produced application and review forms will be updated to include language preference information].
- The Human Services staff person asks, whenever there is a question, if the persons would like oral or written language assistance, repeating the message that it is the person’s right to have language assistance provided, if desired, at no cost.

VII. Provision of Spoken Language Assistance:

The preferred method of service delivery for all clients and applicants is by appointment. However, we recognize that our clients and applicants for services may have urgent needs or issues requiring immediate attention. When situations arise that make scheduling appointments impractical, arrangements are made for an expedited response. The Department will make a good faith effort to provide an equivalent capacity for expedited response for LEP clients and applicants based on the same determination of need as applies to English speaking persons.

When an LEP person requires an expedited response, the Human Services staff person identifying that need will utilize a flexible menu of language service options to ensure that there is timely and appropriate response. What method of language assistance is most appropriate is a case-by-case determination based on a variety of factors, including availability, degree of complexity of the issue, client preference, etc. In general, however, the options, in order of preference, include:

- Bilingual staff from the service area that is required
- On-site interpreter
- Community Interpreter Agency – either face to face or by phone
- Bilingual staff from another service area
- AT&T Language Line
- Bilingual Volunteer from the community

The Ramsey County Community Human Services Department provides a flexible menu of language assistance services.

Use of a family member or friend as an interpreter will be allowed only if it is clearly the wish of the applicant/client and the person designated can demonstrate competence to serve as an interpreter. Minor children will not be used as interpreters except in cases of emergency when **no alternative** is available. Emergency, for purposes of qualifying for this exception to using minor children as interpreters, is defined as a situation requiring **immediate** intervention to prevent, stop, or ameliorate serious emotional or physical harm.

- **Bilingual Professional Staff:** The Department maintains language/cultural specific hiring lists to ensure that we continue to have the capacity to hire professional service staff who can speak and relate to Ramsey County's diverse clients.

The Department intends to maintain a directory of staff with bilingual language skills who can demonstrate a competency level sufficient to provide interpreting assistance, if needed in an emergency. The current directory includes 112 staff who are proficient in 14 languages.

Whenever feasible, without unduly delaying services or introducing confidentiality issues, LEP applicants/clients will be assigned to bilingual staff

who are competent to deliver services in the applicant/client's native language.

While this method of service delivery is generally the preferred option, we are cognizant that it is not without potential difficulties as well. Some bilingual professional staff have reported extreme stress related to serving a caseload exclusively or predominantly from their own cultural community. Expectations that the worker is in a position to make decisions to the benefit of the individual or family can create animosity when the result is otherwise.

Therefore, even if, from a perspective of efficiency and accuracy of communication, receiving services from bilingual professional staff may be preferable, it remains only one option in a more diversified menu of options.

- **On-Site Interpreters:** The Department currently maintains a contract with the International Institute of Minnesota for the equivalent of 7 full time interpreters broken out as follows:

- Hmong/Lao/Thai 3 FTE
- Spanish 2 FTE
- Somali 1 FTE
- Somali/Oromo/Amharic 1 FTE
- Karen 1 FTE

These interpreters are located on site at 160 E. Kellogg Blvd. and are available for appointments or emergency assistance.

These interpreters, because they are on site in our primary service location, provide the Department and our LEP clients and applicants with a flexibility to respond through scheduled appointments, phone contacts and appointment setting, and emergency response.

- **Community Language Banks:** The Department maintains contracts with nine community-based organizations that agree to provide oral and written language assistance in more than 100 languages upon demand (generally within three hours but with a promise to make every effort to have someone available within one hour). These interpreters are available primarily by appointment.
- **The Language Line or Dialog One telephone interpretation on demand:** The Department also accesses, as needed, the telephone interpretation and appointments scheduling service provided by The Language Line and Dialog One. The two companies can provide nearly instantaneous connection with interpreters in 140 languages for a by-the-minute fee. This service is used primarily for short-term crisis services and other unscheduled but critical needs.

- **Multi-lingual Information and Referral Services:** The Department maintains a contract with 211 Information and Referral Services to provide, through a subcontract Jewish Family Services, the full range of 211 information and referral services in Russian. First Call For Help also provides its services in Spanish.

VIII. Written Language Assistance:

When available through the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Department will utilize translated documents related to application and eligibility information.

The languages that are currently the most common non-English languages in Ramsey County are:

- Hmong
- Somali
- Spanish
- Oromo
- Karen/Burmese

When translated forms are available, the LEP service recipient will be provided the option of receiving the form in English or the translated version. Once this decision has been made and documented, the client will be sent forms in that language (if available).

IX. Language Assistance Competency Assurance:

The Department requires the International Institute of Minnesota to test and verify the competence of interpreters provided through our contract for an in-house team of interpreters at our Human Services offices.

The Community Human Services Department Coordinator of Interpreter Services responds to any complaints from staff over the competence of interpreters from contracted agencies. Details of the complaint are sent to the agency and, depending on the severity of the complaint, the interpreter in question can be banned from working on site, or can be required to demonstrate competence before allowed to be an on-call interpreter for our Department.

X. Staff Training:

The RCCHS training plan consists of two components:

1. **Awareness** of the LEP Plan including its purpose and importance. At a monthly Leadership Meeting, all supervisors and managers will review the plan's essential elements including:
 - A. The Department's legal obligation to be in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
 - B. Recent trends in language needs in Ramsey County
 - C. Client notification of the availability of language assistance
 - D. Summary of available language assistance services and means of accessing each.
 - E. Staff training requirements
 - F. Complaint resolution procedures
2. **Supervisor Review:** Supervisors will review this information with their staff within 60 days. The "Special Policy" process will be utilized to monitor compliance.

2. Staff Training

- A. Staff will be updated annually on the general policies and procedures for requesting in-house interpreter services as outlined in the Administration Manual. The "Special Policy" process will be utilized to monitor compliance.
- B. All current staff will attend the "*How to Work with Interpreters*" workshops designed by the Program in Translation and Interpreting at the University of Minnesota. New staff will view a video of this training as part of their new employee orientation.
- C. Staff and interpreters will be provided a glossary of mental health and developmental disability terms translated into Hmong, Spanish, and Somali.

XI. Evaluation and Monitoring:

The Department will monitor its language assistance program at least annually to assess the current language needs in the County and whether existing assistance is meeting the needs of clients and applicants of Department services. The Department will assess staff awareness about the policies and procedures for accessing and effectively utilizing language assistance resources, and ensure that sources of and arrangements for assistance are still current and viable.

XII. Complaint Resolution Procedure:

It is the policy of Ramsey County Community Human Services Department to provide services to all persons without regard for limited English proficiency.

In order to assure compliance with this policy, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin, including those with limited English proficiency, a program participant, participant representative, applicant, or staff member who has reason to believe that she/he has been mistreated, denied services, or discriminated against in any aspect of services or employment may file a grievance. In order to implement this policy, Ramsey County Community Human Services Department has adopted an internal grievance procedure, providing for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging any action prohibited by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Regulation (45 CFR, Part 80).

The Ramsey County Community Human Services will provide language assistance, free of charge, upon request, at any and all stages of the complaint resolution process.

The law and regulations may be examined in the offices of:

Don Jones
Ramsey County Community Human Services Department
160 East Kellogg Blvd, room 9800
St. Paul, MN 55101
phone number (651) 266-4324

Mr. Jones has been designated to coordinate efforts of Ramsey County Community Human Services Department to comply with the regulations.

Step 1: A grievance must be in writing (in English or in a native language). If requested, language assistance, written or oral, will be provided to assist in the preparation of the grievance. The grievance must contain the name and address of the person filing it, and briefly describe the action alleged to be prohibited by the regulations and the language and method (orally or in writing) in which the grievant prefers to receive the decision.

A grievance must be filed with:

Don Jones
Ramsey County Community Human Services Department
160 East Kellogg Blvd. #9800
St. Paul, MN 55101

within 180 days after the person filing the grievance becomes aware of the action alleged to be prohibited by the regulations. The Department may waive this timetable if extenuating circumstances exist which justify an extension.

The Department designee shall conduct an investigation of the grievance, as may be appropriate to determine its validity.

The Department designee shall issue a decision to the grievant in the language and in the method (written or oral) selected by the grievant no later than 20 working days after its filing. If the grievance has not been resolved at Step 1, the Department designee should forward it to the Ramsey County Director of Diversity Programs.

Step 2: The grievant has 10 working days after the Department designee has issued his/her determination to appeal the grievance to the Ramsey County Director of Diversity Programs. The Ramsey County Director of Diversity Programs shall investigate the matter, issue a determination, and notify the grievant in the language and method (written or oral) selected by the grievant, within 20 working days.

If the grievance is still unresolved, the grievant will be advised by the Ramsey County Director of Diversity Programs of the right to file a complaint with the appropriate local, state, and federal civil rights offices, and will be provided with the names and addresses of such offices including the Office for Civil Rights of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at 105 West Adams Street, 16th floor, Chicago, IL 60603.