

Language Access Services

5.20.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this order is to establish language access procedures, consistent with federal, state and local law, for San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) to guide employees members to follow when encountering a in providing service to Limited English Proficient (LEP) person individuals, fostering This order also defines the importance of effective and accurate clear communication between SFPD members and the community they serve. Language and reducing barriers can impede such effective and accurate communication in a variety of ways. Language barriers can sometimes inhibit or even prohibit individuals with limited English proficiency from accessing and/or that may otherwise limit access to critical understanding important rights, obligations, and services, or from while ensuring communicating communication is accurately, respectful, and effective and efficiently in different situations. Hampered communication with limited English proficient victims, witnesses, suspects, and community members can jeopardize safety and create evidentiary and investigative challenges.

Department employees should take reasonable steps to ensure timely and accurate communication and access to all individuals.

I. POLICY

It shall be the policy of the San Francisco Police Department to take every reasonable step to ensure timely and accurate language access services to all individuals regardless of national origin or primary language. When performing law enforcement functions, members shall provide free language assistance to LEP individuals whom they encounter or whenever an LEP person requests language assistance services. The San Francisco Police Department recognizes the importance of effective and accurate communication between its members and the diverse community it serves. It is the policy of this department to inform members of the public that language assistance services are available free of charge to LEP persons and that the Department will provide these services to them as part of the department's community policing and enforcement efforts.

II. 5.20.02 DEFINITIONS

- **Certified Bilingual Member** – A sworn member who is certified by DHR or other designated qualifying agency to provide interpretation services.
PRIMARY LANGUAGE: The language in which an individual is most effectively able to communicate.

- **Certified Civilian Interpreter** – *A non-sworn individual or contracted service (e.g. Language Line or body worn system) who is certified by a designated qualifying agency to provide language interpretation services.*
- **Interpretation** – *A live service that converts one language into another while retaining the same meaning.*
- **Language Access Liaison** – an employee, preferably a sworn member, responsible for managing the Department's Language Access services, including: assistance with coordinating training and bilingual certification processes, managing translation and interpreting services, overseeing signage posting, coordinating reporting, ensuring compliance with SF Admin Code §91. The Liaison may also be used as a resource to assist in coordinating the translation of documents and materials.
- **Language Access Services** – Translation and interpretation of information that enables communication with LEP individuals.
- ~~B. Limited English Proficiency~~ (LEP) ~~Person~~ **Individual** – *A person whose primary or preferred language is not English and who have has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.*
- **Non-Certified Bilingual Member** – A sworn member who can provide non-evidentiary interpretation services but is not certified by a designated qualifying agency. These members are prohibited from providing written translation services.
- **Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA)** – A City department tasked with aiding in compliance with City language access requirements and notifying Departments when a new language meets the threshold to become a Required Language (SF Admin §91).
- **Primary Language** – *The language in which an individual is most effectively able to communicate.*
- **Required Languages** – Languages the Department must provide interpretation and translation services for, and have vital information available in, per SF Admin Code §91.

C. INTERPRETATION: The act of listening to a communication in one language (source language) and orally converting it to another language (target language) while retaining the same meaning.

- ~~D. Translation:~~ – *For the purpose of this DGO, The replacement of any written text information converted from one language (source language) into an equivalent written text into another language (target language) while retaining the same meaning (including American Sign Language).*

~~E. QUALIFIED BILINGUAL MEMBER: For purposes of this order, SFPD members who identify themselves as “bilingual” must demonstrate, through a formal procedure which has been established by the Department of Human Resources (DHR), competency to communicate in the source language by demonstrating the ability to listen to a communication in one language (source language) and orally convert it into another language (target language) while retaining the same meaning. The Department will provide all members with training in interpreting techniques, roles, and ethics so that they may understand and follow confidentiality and impartiality rules for interpreters as defined by DHR.~~

~~F. QUALIFIED CIVILIAN INTERPRETER: A Qualified Civilian Interpreter is an individual who has been certified by the City or other designated qualifying agency. A Qualified Civilian Interpreter may be an employee of another city department or an outside agency contracted to provide language interpretation services to the Department. The Department will contract with outside agencies to provide in person as well as telephonic interpretation services.~~

~~G. EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES: Exigent circumstances are defined as situations that require deviation from procedures, such as a threat to life, safety, or property, a fleeing suspect, or the potential loss or destruction of evidence. (e.g., physical loss of property, witness or victim.)~~

5.20.03 POLICY

Employees *shall inform LEP individuals of their right to request free language access services, and will provide these services when requested or as needed.*

III. 5.20.04 PROCEDURES

~~SFPD members are to follow these procedures in all encounters absent exigent circumstances; however, exigent circumstances may require some deviation. In such situations, SFPD members shall use the most reliable, temporary interpreter available. Once the exigency has passed, members are expected to revert to the procedures set forth in this general order.~~

A. ~~GENERAL~~ *Identify Primary Language:* – *When an employee believes language access services are needed, or as requested, employees will determine the individual’s primary language by asking the person their primary or preferred language or using methods such as department language identification cards, translation apps, artificial intelligence, nearby people, DEM, a professional interpretation service, etc. The following procedures shall apply to members who encounter LEP individuals while performing law enforcement functions.*

1. Employees should err on the side of providing language assistance when unsure of LEP status.

2. Potential indicators of LEP individual - Misuse of language, switching between languages, inability to answer questions sufficiently, confusion with intricate enforcement procedures or language, cannot respond to open-ended questions, etc.

~~B. IDENTIFICATION OF PRIMARY LANGUAGE~~

- ~~1. All SFPD members will be provided a language identification card to aid in the identification of the primary language spoken by the LEP individual.~~
- ~~2. SFPD members should display the language identification card to the LEP person so the person can identify the language they speak prior to calling a qualified bilingual member, contract, or professional interpretation service. The member should then request the appropriate interpreter.~~
- ~~3. If the LEP person does not appear able to read or understand the language identification card, the member should call Department of Emergency Management (DEM/ECD) or the professional interpretation service and advise the service of the situation. With assistance from the language service member, members should attempt to ascertain the LEP individual's language in order to obtain a suitable interpreter.~~

~~B. C. Use the Services of Bilingual Members of Interpreters~~ – Employees will determine the type of interpretation needed based on the incident.

1. Criminal Incident – These are situations that may involve a violation of law that could lead to an arrest, citation, and/or result in judicial proceedings that require statements and evidence that will stand up to legal scrutiny. Members should follow this order of preference for interpretation unless there is an exigency:
 - a. Certified Bilingual Member (in-person preferred)
 - b. Certified Civilian Interpreter
 - c. Non-Certified Bilingual Member – May only be used for non-evidentiary communications (e.g. initial contact, to gather/provide information) unless there is an exigency.
2. Non-Criminal Incident – These are situations that do not involve a violation of the law and are unlikely to result in court proceedings or legal scrutiny. Employees should determine the appropriate level of interpretation needed, which may include certified or non-Certified Bilingual Members or civilians, neighbors, family members, friends, bystanders, or the use of digital or non-digital tools.

- ~~1. Staff Services shall maintain a listing of all SFPD Qualified Bilingual Members. This list will be provided to and kept at the Operations Center.~~

~~2. In the event that SFPD Bilingual Members are unavailable, SFPD members may also utilize a Qualified Civilian Interpreter. Contract and professional interpretation associations, or other professional interpreter services include interpretation services offering in-person interpretation, as well as those offering telephonic interpretation. SFPD officers shall be provided with the appropriate contact information and any department account code information to access such services.~~

~~C. ORDER OF PREFERENCE. Members shall provide oral interpretation services to LEP persons they encounter in the following order of preference unless deviations are required to respond to exigent circumstances.~~

~~1. Direct Communication by Qualified Bilingual Member: The preferred method of providing services to LEP persons is through the use of a Qualified Bilingual Member.~~

~~2. Use of Qualified Civilian Interpreter: When Qualified Bilingual Members are unavailable, members shall use a Qualified Civilian Interpreter or a professional interpreter to provide in person interpretation services.~~

~~3. Telephone Interpreter: When qualified interpreters are not available to provide service in person, SFPD members may utilize DEM/ECD or use the language card to access the professional language service provider or Qualified Civilian Interpreter to provide interpretation services by telephone.~~

~~4. Officers should take reasonable steps to insure that the qualified interpreter does not know any of the parties.~~

C. Requesting Interpretation Assistance

- 1. To Request a Certified/Non-Certified Bilingual Member – Ask Dispatch if there are certified (or non-certified, if appropriate based on incident) members available.**
- 2. To Request a Certified Civilian Interpreter – Employees may use the designated language access app on their Department phone or call the direct number (1-800-880-1994, Client ID 501644).**

D. RESTRICTIONS:

- ~~3. SFPD members should not use family members, neighbors, friends, volunteers, bystanders or children to interpret for a LEP person unless exigent circumstances exist and a more reliable interpreter is not available, especially for communications involving witnesses, victim, and potential suspects, or in investigations, collection of evidence, negotiations or other sensitive situations.~~

4. ~~If an exigent circumstance requires a member to use family members, neighbors, friends, volunteers, bystanders or children for initial language assistance, the member shall seek the assistance of a Qualified Bilingual Member, Qualified Civilian Interpreter, or other professional interpreter to confirm or supplement the initial translation or interpretation as soon as practical.~~

D. E. General Scheduled Interviews: ~~When conducting general interviews, m~~Members should seek the assistance of ~~will use in-person interpretation by a qualified Certified Bilingual Member where possible, qualified civilian interpreter, or other professional interpreter, or the language line whenever the member encounters an unless the LEP person individual consents to the use of telephonic interpretation by a Certified Bilingual Member or Certified Civilian Interpreter, or exigent circumstances exist who requests an interpreter or is unable to communicate with or is experiencing difficulty communicating with the member.~~ Members may also seek qualified assistance from another law enforcement agency when practical.

1. Members should proactively arrange for an interpreter when possible.

E. Custodial Interrogations – Members will use in-person interpretation by a Certified Bilingual Member where possible. If an in-person interpreter is not available, members may use telephonic interpretation by a Certified Bilingual Member or a Certified Civilian Interpreter.

F. FORMAL INTERVIEW: ~~The accuracy of victim and witness statements is a priority in criminal investigations. Thus, to ensure effective communication and accuracy, either a Qualified Bilingual Member or Qualified Civilian Interpreter shall be used when taking formal statements or conducting any formal interview of a LEP witness and/or victim. Written forms shall be provided to the witness and/or victim in his or her primary language when available. In the case of forms that have not been translated into the LEP person's primary language and in the case of illiteracy, forms shall be read to the witness and/or victim in his or her primary language by a Qualified Bilingual Member, or Qualified Civilian Interpreter.~~

F. G. Interrogations 1. The Miranda Admonition, ~~and all other written forms~~ When required, the Miranda Admonition shall be provided to in the suspect's in his or her primary or preferred language when available. ~~In the case of forms that have not been translated into the LEP person's primary language and in the case of illiteracy, forms shall be read to the suspect, by the Qualified Bilingual Member or Qualified Civilian Interpreter, in his or her primary language.~~

G. Forms/Documents – Members will provide forms and documents in required languages. If a form/document is not available in the appropriate language and the LEP individual needs the information immediately, the member will have a Certified Bilingual Member or Certified Civilian Interpreter read the form/document to the LEP individual. For translations that are not needed immediately, see 'Translation of Documents and other Content'.

H. PROCEDURES FOR SPECIFIC SCENARIOS

~~1. Custodial Interrogations and Crime Victim Interviews:~~

- a. ~~Formal crime victim interviews and custodial interrogations of suspects potentially involve statements with evidentiary value, upon which an individual may be impeached in court. As such, accuracy is a priority. Moreover, a failure to protect the rights of LEP individuals during arrests and custodial interrogations presents risks to the integrity of the process. SFPD members must recognize that miscommunication during custodial interrogations may have a substantial impact on the evidence presented in any related criminal prosecution. A Qualified Bilingual Member or Qualified Civilian Interpreter shall be used for any custodial interrogation or taking of a formal statement where the suspect or witness' legal rights could be adversely impacted. The preferred method for interviewing a LEP individual is direct communication. When a Qualified Bilingual Member is not available to directly communicate with a LEP individual a Qualified Civilian Interpreter shall be provided. The following procedures shall be utilized in custodial interrogations:~~

- ~~1. Contact a Qualified Bilingual Member or Qualified Civilian Interpreter to appear in person, unless the LEP person consents to the use of an interpreter via telephone or other exigent circumstance(s) exist. SFPD members shall have access to contract interpreters and/or a directory of professional interpreter associations and services. All LEP custodial interrogations shall be taped unless exigent circumstance(s) exist.~~
- ~~2. Advice of Miranda admonition and all other written forms and notices shall be provided to both the suspect and witness in his or her primary language when available. In the case of forms that have not been translated into the LEP person's primary language and in the case of illiteracy, forms shall be read to the individual by the Qualified Bilingual Member or Qualified Civilian Interpreter, in his or her primary language.~~

~~2. Field Contacts, Enforcement, and Investigations:~~

- a. ~~Field contacts with LEP persons could generally include such contacts as traffic stops, pedestrian stops, serving warrants and restraining orders, crowd/traffic control and other routine field contacts.~~

~~3. Notification of Interpretation Services to LEP Individuals: At the main public entry or lobby of each SFPD Facility, as defined in Administrative Code Section 91.2 (e), signs shall be posted stating that interpreters are available free of charge to LEP individuals.~~

- H. Incident Reports:** – Whenever an incident report is prepared regarding an incident involving an LEP person, the incident report ~~Members shall identify~~ **will complete** the LEP section on the incident report. ~~Members may include additional details in the narrative~~ **the primary language spoken by the LEP individual, the person who provided the interpretation and the manner in which interpretation services were provided.**

5.20.05 EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES

- A. In exigent circumstances**, or if waiting for a Certified Bilingual Member or Certified Civilian Interpreter would delay critical actions, members may use the most reliable, temporary interpreter until a Certified Bilingual Member or Certified Civilian Interpreter is available (e.g. if someone is assaulted and a member needs the description of the suspect before interpretation services are available, they may use a family member or bystander to get a physical description).
1. For evidentiary communications – ~~Members shall~~ **have a Certified Bilingual Member or Certified Civilian Interpreter confirm or supplement the translation or interpretation as soon as practical.**

5.20.06 TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS AND OTHER CONTENT

A. External Requests

1. ~~J. TRANSLATED DOCUMENTS. Required Language – SPFD shall maintain written forms and guidelines for assistance to LEP individuals~~ **Vital written materials and applicable digital content should be available to the public directly or will be made available by request (SF Admin Code §91.5(a)).**
2. **Non-Required Language – Any employee receiving a request for vital written information not in a required language will:**
 - a. Provide acknowledgement to the requester within 48 business hours,
 - b. Send the request to the Language Access Liaison for translation, and
 - c. Make an effort to provide the requester with a date they can expect the materials. The employee receiving the request is responsible for communicating with and providing the final product to the requester.

B. Internal Requests

1. ~~a. Transcribing Tapes and Other Evidence Into English: Evidence – The Department shall translate tapes, documents, evidence, or documents submitted by LEP individual(s) into English when such evidence shall be translated by a Certified Bilingual Member or Certified Civilian Interpreter into English~~ **is when necessary to continue for the an investigation, and/or prosecution of a criminal case, or a Departmental administrative investigation. Employees may request assistance from Certified Bilingual Members or the Language Access Liaison.**

2. Documents not related to an SFPD Investigation – The employee will email the document to the language Access Liaison, who will coordinate the translation. Translation may take up to two weeks.

~~K. AIRPORT BUREAU.~~ Airport Bureau members, and other members of the San Francisco Police Department providing services at the Airport, will adhere to department policies. Airport Bureau members and other members of the San Francisco Police Department providing services at the Airport will contact Airport Communications when language assistance is required at the San Francisco International Airport.

~~L. COORDINATION WITH DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT.~~ On a monthly basis the Department shall provide the Department of Emergency Management (DEM/ECD) with a copy of the Department's Bilingual Personnel List.

5.20.07 M. TRAINING.

- A. In an effort to ensure all SFPD members are properly trained in these guidelines, ~~the SFPD Department~~ will provide **all public-facing employees with** periodic training in **member awareness of the on LEP policies and procedures, how to access both in-person and telephone interpreters, and how to work with interpretersing techniques, roles, and ethics.** The Department shall conduct such trainings for new recruits, at in-service training and at Roll Call for SFPD members at least every two (2) years. Initial training shall be conducted within 180 days of the Police Commission's adoption of this General Order.

5.20.08 CERTIFIED BILINGUAL EMPLOYEE LIST

- A. Staff Services Division maintains a list of all Certified and Non-Certified Bilingual Civilian and Member Interpreters, and notifies DEM when there are updates.

~~G. N. RECORDING AND TRACKING OF LANGUAGE ACCESS EFFORTS:~~ The Deputy Chief of the Administration Bureau will be responsible for, and will direct as necessary, divisions within the Bureau to address translation and interpreter services, develop training, respond to language access concerns/suggestions by staff and the public, review Department progress and coordinate budgetary, procurement and contracting matters related to language access.

5.20.09 a. Language Access Liaison Officer

- i. The Department shall designate a Language Access Liaison officer. This officer shall prepare quarterly (or more frequently as needed), a written report on LEP matters, through the chain of command, to the Chief of Police.
- ii. The Language Access Liaison officer's duties include but are not limited to:
 1. Monitoring compliance with the General Order;
 2. Coordinating language access training at the Academy;

- ~~3. Coordinating interpreter training for qualified bilingual members and employees;~~
- ~~4. Coordinating telephonic and third-party interpreter services as required by this order;~~
- ~~5. Working with the Department of Emergency Management to establish a system that immediately identifies LEP calls and promptly dispatches language assistance, preferably with a bilingual officer speaking the needed language;~~
- ~~6. Coordinating as needed meetings with the Officer of Citizen Complaints and community groups to discuss and resolve language access complaints;~~
- ~~7. Overseeing the LEP data collection as detailed below; (this will require implementation of RMS); and~~
- ~~8. Preparing a biannual report for the Police Commission addressing the Department's language access efforts.~~

- A. Reporting** – The Language Access Liaison coordinate the preparation of the fiscal year report as outlined in ~~a. Each year, the Department shall collect the information required by San Francisco Administrative Code sec. § 91.9(b)(1-14)11, including the number and percentage of LEP individuals who used the Department's services, a roster of certified and non-certified bilingual employees, ongoing training strategy, etc. In addition, the Department shall collect LEP data as to all calls for service, contracts and investigations that require an incident report.~~
- ~~b. In a yearly report to the Police Commission, the Department shall provide data concerning~~
- ~~1) the number of calls for service, contacts and investigations involving LEP persons where an incident report was required;~~
 - ~~2) the manner in which interpretation services were provided;~~
 - ~~3) any complaints concerning language access which have been forwarded by the Officer of Citizen Complaints; and~~
 - ~~4) the Department's resolution to any language access complaints.~~

~~This report shall be a public document that is posted on the Police Department and Police Commission's website and provided to the Office of Citizen Complaints in advance of its presentation to the Police Commission.~~

- ~~1. The report shall be submitted to the Police Commission and OCEIA upon approval by the Chief.~~

- B. Signage** – The Department will post the following in publicly accessible lobbies, in all required languages (per OCEIA determination):
1. Signage noting the availability of free language access services.
 2. Signage relating to and/or providing vital information about Department services or programs.
 3. OCEIA's Know-Your-Rights brochure, when available, or other required published materials.

References

~~DGO 2.04, Citizen Complaints Against Officer~~

Proposed