



**DCFS**

**Los Angeles County**

**Department of Children and Family Services**

Los Angeles County Department of  
Children and Family Services  
Language Access Plan



July 2025

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## **I. Our Mission**

The Department of Children and Family Services promotes child safety and well-being by partnering with communities to strengthen families, keeping children at home whenever possible, and connecting them with stable, loving homes in times of need. To complete our mission, DCFS believes in utilizing all available resources to assist in providing children and families with information in their primary language.

## **II. Introduction**

DCFS understands the importance of providing linguistic services and support to the families we serve in their primary language. We are committed to providing services to children and families in a way that supports our vision of diversity, equity, and inclusion. On an average month, 15% of active DCFS cases are with clients that require services and translations that are Languages Other Than English (LOTE).

## **III. Key Terms**

CSW – Children’s Social Worker

SCSW – Supervising Children’s Social Worker

ARA – Assistant Regional Administrator

RA – Regional Administrator

DD – Deputy Director

RFA – Resource Family Approval

CWS/CMS – Child Welfare Services/Case Management System

FP – Family Preservation

HR – Human Resources

LOTE – Language other than English

CBO – Community Based Organization

ODITS – On Demand Interpretation and Translation Services

## **IV. Department Priority Languages**

- DCFS staff inquire about a client’s primary language beginning with initial contact and at major decision-making points in the investigation and through ongoing case work with families.
- Our child abuse hotline staff inquire about primary language when calls are made to the hotline and through the initial phone interview.
- When the client indicates what the primary language for translation and interpretation, the ER CSW has the family sign a Primary Language Designation Form (DCFS 0485)
- DCFS utilizes the State of California’s Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS) to track data that the CSW enters regarding a client’s primary language during the initial phone interview and throughout the case.

- Although DCFS provides services to clients who speak a variety of languages the top three primary languages served by DCFS, based on data from CWS/CMS and in the order of percentage used , are Spanish, English, and Mandarin.
- DCFS can generate an automated report listing the primary languages of all children in active cases, highlighting the top three (3) LOTE on a monthly basis. The data is broken down by geographic areas based on the child's current location, including Office Service Areas, Service Planning Areas, Supervisorial Districts, and various Legislative Districts.
- DCFS identifies priority languages by extracting data entered by Children's Social Workers (CSW) into CWS/CMS for each child's case. This process ensures that the languages reported are directly tied to the children and families we serve and reflecting the linguistic needs of our client populations. The primary languages are determined by assessing active cases and identifying the most frequently reported LOTE spoken by children and their families.
- DCFS will analyze and identify the primary language needs of clientele on a biannual basis, including emerging languages such as Indigenous American, African and Southeast Asian.

## V. Policy Statement

DCFS policy **Communication Needs of Non-English-Speaking Clients (0070-501.10)** states: County welfare departments must ensure that effective bilingual and interpretive services are provided to serve the needs of the LOTE population. These services must be provided promptly and without undue delays. Clients may provide their own interpreters but are not required to do so.

As required, DCFS will make linguistic services available through the use of bilingual staff, interpretive services, and audio and Braille materials. DCFS understands its obligation to provide meaningful and culturally appropriate services to the community.

The methods used to provide bilingual and interpretive services as described above must be documented in the investigation file and/or case record. If a client provides their own interpreter, the following must also be documented in the case record:

- The County Social Worker (CSW) obtained consent for the release of information.

- A client's acceptance or refusal of forms or written materials were offered in the client's primary language.
- The CSW obtained a signed agreement that the interpreter agrees to keep all information confidential.
- Clients were informed of the potential for ineffective communication with a client-provided interpreter.
- DCFS must obtain newly signed confidentiality agreements and consent for the release of information forms for all new client-provided interpreters.
- If the client uses the same interpreter during subsequent contacts, new agreements are not necessary.

DCFS will continue to strengthen relationships with current Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and expand outreach to additional CBOs to establish future partnerships and secure vital resources. DCFS recognizes that collaboration with CBOs provides valuable insights and helps maintain an active understanding of community needs, evolving social norms, and the cultural and linguistic services necessary to serve the community effectively, including appropriate interpretation and translation support.

## **VI. Scope of Policy**

DCFS has policy in place that sets expectations for bilingual certified staff and contracted service providers. DCFS shall ensure that all bilingual certified staff are able to provide services and linguistic support for the client's primary language in a professional manner written and/or spoken. Contracted service providers ensure all staff providing program services are able to provide services in a manner that effectively responds to differences in cultural beliefs, behaviors, learning styles, and communication styles and the clients' primary language within the community that the service is being provided. Best efforts shall be made regarding eliminating racial disparity and disproportionality concerns.

## **VII. Identifying Preferred Languages**

Currently, DCFS has over 2000 bilingual staff in over 15 languages, including but not limited to, Spanish, Mandarin, Korean, Russian, American Sign Language, Armenian, Farsi, Samoan, and Taiwanese.

- DCFS utilizes the State of California's CWS/CMS to track data that the CSW enters regarding a client's primary language.
- The DCFS hotline and CSWs inquire about the client's primary language at initial contact. During the initial contact with the client, the CSW will work with the client and/or a linguistic service to ensure services are provided to the client in the client's primary language once the primary language has been

confirmed and established. If a client prefers another language other than their primary language, the CSW confirms with the client.

- At the initial inquiry, whether in-person or telephonic, DCFS inquires about the client's preferred language. Utilizing interviewing techniques and data gathering, a trained staff member is able to seek and ascertain from the client their preferred and/or primary language which they would like information delivered to them.
- Additionally, DCFS inquires about a client's preferred language at major decision-making points throughout the investigation and case.
- Additional routes of determining a client's preferred language may also come from assistance provided to them from an interpreter that the client may have a close relationship with, such as an English-speaking friend or relative and/or utilizing services that are available to them in their community, such as non-profit advocacy organizations.
- DCFS is in the process of contracting with Google Translation Services to provide translation services for vital documents.
- Bilingual staff will review, edit and/or approve all documents that have been interpreted by digital translation services.
- If a client has their own translator, then staff ensure that the DCFS 74-A form (titled "Interpreter Usage & Consent For Release of Information") is completed.
- DCFS has a Master Service Agreement for the use of On-Demand Interpretation and Translation Services (ODITS) overseen by the Internal Services Department (ISD):
- ODITS services categories include: 1. Over the Phone Interpretation, 2. Video Remote Interpretation, 3. Document Translation, 4. In-Person Sign Language Interpretation, 5. In-Person Oral Interpretation, 6. Miscellaneous Interpretation and Translation Services, with subcategories: captioning services, post-production/post webinar (closed) captioning, remote transcription, simultaneous oral interpretation, subtitling, text transcription, transcription, and voice-over services.

## **VIII. Vital Documents**

DCFS and the California State Department of Social Services identified the following as vital documents for translation services, as stated in All County Letter (ACL) 23-04 that was issued to all 58 counties in the state of California:

- Court Reports
- RFA Documents
- Court-ordered Case Plans
- Transitional Independent Living Plan and Agreement
- Foster Youth Bill of Rights
- Consent for Release of Information
- Confidentiality Agreements
- Children and Family Team Meetings Action Plans

## **IX. Policy on Untrained Interpreters**

- All internal interpreters must be bilingual certified, and all external interpreters must be vetted by DCFS and/or the County of Los Angeles prior to being utilized.
- DCFS utilizes only bilingual staff that have successfully passed a County of Los Angeles sanctioned bilingual exam and are receiving a bilingual bonus from DCFS. Although a staff member may have a bilingual certification, if they are not receiving the bilingual bonus, they are not authorized to interpret and/or provide information to a member of the public.

## **X. Notification of Language Assistance**

- The child abuse hotline, CSWs and office receptionists provide notification to the appropriate parties of language assistance to clients if there is a need.
- When individuals call the hotline they are prompted to select English or Spanish to continue. When a client is connected to a CSW, there is a default procedure to ask if language assistance is required if the CSW perceives that language assistance is required.
- The DCFS public website includes a language toggle button, allowing the website to be translated into several languages with the click of a button.
- The Department works with CBOs to provide external linguistic resources for target languages, including but not limited to, Indigenous American and Southeast Asian.
- The Department provides trauma informed training to staff, along with cultural, religious and social resources for the communities served.
- CSWs provides forms: DCFS 0485 – The Primary Language Designation Form, Pub 13 - Civil Rights Pamphlet and the DCFS 2457 - Civil Rights Information Form, at initial and subsequent contacts.
- To ensure instant language accessibility for the main LOTE, the department translates the majority of its external communications into Spanish, including statements, news releases, newsletters and social media posts. When

languages other than Spanish are required, requests for additional translations may be made through ODITS services.

## **XI. Evaluation of Language Assistance**

- DCFS Human Resources Exams section currently utilizes a testing process for internal language providers. The test includes an evaluation of their written, verbal, and reading skills by a language proficient rater. Once they have been assessed, passed the examination and are certified in the language, they are eligible to receive the Bilingual Bonus. Competency tests are administered by the Exams section of DCFS Human Resources (HR) and the language competency lists are maintained by the Classification/Compensation section of HR.
- External providers are vetted through contracts and partner agreements. In addition to the feedback DCFS receives from clients and the community regarding services provided by DCFS, DCFS' Contracts Division conducts periodic reviews to assess the quality of services that are provided.

## **XII. Complaint Process**

- Clientele can file a language access complaint on the DCFS main public website.
- If there is a language access complaint, via verbal, written and/or electronically, the CSW will work with the client to resolve the issue/complaint within two business days. And The CSW documents the concerns in the case file. If the complaint is not resolved, CSW and their SCSW will make an attempt to resolve the complaint. If the complaint is unable to be resolved at the SCSW level, the complaint will be elevated to the ARA level. If the ARA is unable to satisfy the needs of the client, it will then be forwarded to their RA. The RA will alert the DD and provide them with a summary about the complaint. The DD will ensure that the complaint is addressed within 8-10 business days of the original complaint.
- Clients and the public may also utilize DCFS's Public Inquiries email address or phone number, which can be found on the DCFS public website, <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/contact/>, to make inquiries and complaints. These are routed to the appropriate parties to take necessary action.
- If Public Affairs receives a language access complaint that is not Departmental, internal and/or media related, they forward the complaint to Public Inquiries which will then be routed to the appropriate parties and/or Civil Rights Division if necessary.
- The Department's Civil Rights Division responds to and tracks complaints involving discrimination concerning all legally protected classes including language access complaints.

### **XIII. Training**

- The DCFS Training Academy ensures that all newly hired staff are trained in policy regarding the use of the primary language form (DCFS 485). DCFS 485 is covered in detail in the following trainings: Elements of Emergency Response, Elements of Continuing Services, and it is also covered in a simulation exercise.
- All employees are required to complete the following training, Trauma Informed, Cultural Humility and Civil Rights for LOTE Clients and Clients with Disabilities, that covers:
  - Remember the Basic Principles of Civil Rights
  - Understanding the Division 21 Mandate and how it applies in the workplace
  - Fulfill your responsibility to Civil Rights as a DCFS employee
- All employees are trained to recognize and address the needs for clients who speak a LOTE and clients with Disabilities. In addition all employees are required to attend the annual New Laws training that address any new laws pertaining to Civil Rights issues
- Staff receive periodic updates on new laws, mandates, etc. from Policy, Legislative Affairs and County Counsel.
- CBOs provide input on current/common cultural dynamics.
- All Supervisors and Managers are required to complete the following training, on the County Policy of Equity Process (CPOE) and Civil Rights, that covers:
  - The role of DCFS' Civil Rights Unit
  - The laws prohibiting employee discrimination, harassment and retaliation, as well as client discrimination
  - The scope and purpose of the CPOE and prohibiting conduct
  - The responsibilities of Managers and Supervisors as it relates to CPOE and Civil Rights
  - The CPOE Reporting Process
  - Respect and honor of Federal and State mandates of protected areas and classes under Civil Rights laws

### **XIV. Community Outreach and Engagement**

- DCFS currently collaborates with external stakeholders that include but are not limited to community advocacy groups and faith-based organizations. DCFS has existing relationships with community-based organizations like Korean American Family Services to support Asian American families and several of the Central American consulates to support Spanish speaking families and families from Indigenous communities.
- Regional Offices organize and host events that are specific to common LOTE in the communities they serve. In planning the events the regional offices inform the public, CBOs and external partners about the availability of translation and interpretation services in a client's primary language.

- DCFS' works closely with CBOs to assist with informing their communities about interpretation and translation services along with additional educational resources.
- DCFS engages CBOs to provide input to policy and collaborate on community outreach.
- DCFS' Family Preservation FP agencies are contracted to provide in-home support to families and their communities in their primary language.
- FP agencies are staffed with English/Spanish speaking staff that provide services in Spanish.
- Chinatown Services Center is a lead FP agency, along with two (2) sub-contracted agencies that support the Asian Pacific Unit language needs Countywide.
- FP agencies attend monthly Steering Committee, Task Force and Roundtable meetings. These structured meetings are where agencies can provide input and obtain information regarding languages served, however, they also contact the FP unit when they run into barriers with translation services.

## **XV. Demographic Analysis and Determination of Priority Languages**

- The Department's Analysis and Determination of Priority Languages is based off data found in CWS/CMS with input from Department CSWs during initial and continued contact with clients. The Department can input a client's primary language and thus extract raw data with specific date ranges to determine the total number of clients with specific and listed primary language.
- The Department utilizes the California Department of Health Care Services list of threshold languages, which is generated and updated every two (2) years. The State of California defines a threshold language as one that is spoken by at least 5% of the population in a given area.
- DCFS has consolidated specific target languages and developed units, such as, Asian Pacific Unit, Deaf Services Unit and the American Indian Unit, in order to provide language services, to populations Countywide that may not meet the state threshold of based on office, region and/or geography.

## **XVI. Bilingual Staff Policy**

Potential and current bilingual DCFS staff and transfer/promotion staff are encouraged to test for bilingual certification. All employees that require certification reach out to HR as recommended by their supervisor or when instructed during their time in the academy. Although certification does not guarantee that they will be utilized, it does provide the Department with additional resources in the case they are needed. Currently, exam staff test DCFS employees who request to be tested and certified as bilingual. DCFS also reaches out to other County Departments to obtain staff who speak a language when DCFS does not have a certified employee to assist. When the need arises, DCFS collaborates with internal staffing and human

resources on strategies to recruit for specific languages.

DCFS currently recruits secondary language staff, typically during the following times: at application submission, time of examination and new-hire orientation. If there is a need for a specific language and/or additional threshold language(s) DCFS sends an email to all class specific staff who may be fluent in the canvassing language(s).

## **XVII. Vendors and Their Qualifications**

If the Department does not have an employee that is a certified interpreter for the specific language, the Department will have the unit, office and/or region reach out to community agencies and partners, such as the Chinatown Services Center to inquiry and provided the needed services. If additional support is needed for languages not provided by partners and agencies, the Department will then utilize vendors that have a Master Agreement with the County, these include language hotlines and language vendors utilized by other departments. External stakeholders and partners may also provide additional resources. Vendors are typically vetted by the County and/or vendors are in the field of Child Welfare and understand the roles, needs, and required education of CSWs and ability to provide resources for LOTE clients.

## **XVIII. Contact Information**

Contact Unit: Public Inquiries – [publicinquiries@dcfs.lacounty.gov](mailto:publicinquiries@dcfs.lacounty.gov)  
DCFS DLAP Lead: Teri Badia – [badiat@dcfs.lacounty.gov](mailto:badiat@dcfs.lacounty.gov)  
Mailing Address: 510 S. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles, California 90020  
Phone Number: (213) 351-5507  
Response time: Initial contact to be made within two business days

