



MINNESOTA JUDICIAL CENTER FY12-FY13 LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP) PLAN

I. LEGAL BASIS AND PURPOSE

This document serves as the plan for the Minnesota Judicial Center to provide services to limited English proficient (LEP) individuals in compliance with Federal law.¹ The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and reasonable language assistance to those who come in contact with the Minnesota Judicial Center.

This plan was developed to ensure equal access to court services for persons with limited English proficiency and persons who are deaf or hard of hearing. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) rather than Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Accommodations will be provided for all deaf and hard of hearing customers including but not limited to sign language and/or deaf interpreters. Spoken language interpreters will be provided at no cost to LEP court customers who are “disabled in communication” when circumstances permit.

II. ANNUAL UPDATE

The Minnesota Judicial Branch provides court services through the Minnesota Supreme Court and the Minnesota Court of Appeals, both located in the Minnesota Judicial Center, as well as the trial courts in the ten judicial districts. Because court hearings heard in the Minnesota Judicial Center are at the appellate level, they tend to involve oral arguments among attorneys and judges.

Minnesota Judicial Center Annual Update

In spite of the limited involvement of the public in the appellate courts, there are several potential points of contact with LEP individuals. The following provides an overview various divisions and offices of the Minnesota Judicial Center who have most frequently encountered the public over the past fiscal year:

1. Minnesota Supreme Court and Court of Appeals

Persons involved in Supreme Court or Court of Appeals proceedings usually come in contact with the Clerk of Appellate Courts Office prior to any involvement with either court. If a person who is deaf or hard of hearing wishes to observe or participate in oral

¹ Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; 45 C.F.R. § 80 et seq; and 28 C.F.R. § 42 et seq.

arguments, the Court will make reasonable accommodations for assistance, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Examples may include obtaining a court interpreter or providing an assistive listening device.

2. Clerk of Appellate Courts Office

In addition to responding to questions and accepting filings for Supreme Court and Court of Appeals cases, the Clerk of the Appellate Courts Office provides parties with copies of court orders and opinions. Members of the public who seek assistance from the Clerk of Appellate Courts Office most often request general appeals and unemployment information or may be in need of assistance with forms and guides related to these areas. This office receives frequent phone calls with requests for language assistance, which is offered through the Language Line.

3. The State Law Library

The State Law Library frequently encounters members of the public accessing materials and information from the library. The State Law Library also receives frequent requests from multi-lingual individuals on becoming a certified court interpreter through the Court Interpreter Program.

When language assistance is needed, library employees refer patrons to the Language Line or the Minnesota Judicial Branch's Self-Help Center. "Do-It-Yourself Forms for Minnesota," offered through the U.S. Institute of Museum Library Services, and various documents from the Federal Trade Commission are available to LEP individuals in several languages.

4. State Court Administrator's Office (SCAO)

The State Court Administrator's Office (SCAO) provides leadership and direction for the effective operations of the Minnesota Judicial Branch as well as central administrative infrastructure services. This includes the Court Information Office, Court Services, Education and Organization Development, Executive Office, Finance, Human Resources and Information Technology.

Due to its focus on the operations of the Judicial Branch, SCAO has infrequent contact with the public. Encounters are generally limited to phone calls for general information or through visitors to the receptionist's desk. Employees make use of the MJC Multi-lingual Employee Listing or the Language Line in assisting LEP individuals.

5. Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility (OLPR)

The Office of Lawyers Professional Responsibility (OLPR) investigates complaints of unethical conduct made against attorneys and takes disciplinary action when necessary. Individuals who contact the OLPR that are not proficient in the English language are offered assistance through the Language Line. If appropriate, an appointment is made to meet with a sign language interpreter for deaf or hard of hearing individuals. The phone number of the Minnesota Relay Service is printed on the OLPR letterhead.

Complaint brochures, forms and instructions on how to file a complaint against a lawyer are available in Spanish, Somali, Hmong and Russian. When the OLPR receives documents in languages other than English, they are sent out for translation.

6. Board of Law Examiners (BLE) and the Board of Continuing Legal Education (CLE)
The BLE/CLE works directly with attorneys and in accrediting agencies and therefore provides little to no interaction with the general public and LEP individuals. This office has received requests for interpreters from deaf and hard of hearing attorneys participating in the State Bar Examination and in admissions ceremonies. Because the official language of the Bar Exam is in English, requests for interpreters in languages other than English cannot be granted. The phone number of the Minnesota Relay Service is included in the BLE/CLE stationery.

III. LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure that LEP individuals have meaningful access to services outside the courtroom. This is perhaps one of the more challenging situations faced by Minnesota Judicial Center employees as they are most often charged with assisting LEP individuals without an interpreter.

The following resources are available through the Minnesota Judicial Center:

- [“Language Identification” Card](#)
- Multi-lingual Employees
- Language Line
- Deaf and hard of hearing accommodations
- Translated forms and documents

“Language Identification” Card

The [“Language Identification card”](#) is a list of over 170 languages available through the Language Line (see below). Employees may use this document to help identify the language that an LEP individual speaks.

Multi-Lingual Employees

MJC employees may be available to voluntarily assist in interpreting should LEP visitors require assistance. A [Multi-Lingual Employee Listing for MJC](#) is available on Minnesota Judicial Branch internal website (CourtNet), from the LEP Coordinator or from the MJC receptionist. Employees on this list have offered their skills and are not required to provide interpretation; they may offer their services only if it does not significantly interfere with their primary job duties. They should not interpret in situations requiring a language level superior to their own and are only permitted to provide assistance, not legal advice.

Language Line

Court employees may make use of the Office of Enterprise Technology (OET) Language Line to obtain a phone interpreter to assist LEP individuals. Each location of the following MJC offices has a unique 6-digit access code for billing purposes:

- Minnesota Court of Appeals
- Minnesota Supreme Court
- Court Interpreter Information Line
- SCAO Main Line
- State Law Library Circulation Desk
- Ground Floor Reception
- Clerk of Appellate Courts Office

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Accommodations

When the Minnesota Court of Appeals, Clerk of Appellate Courts or Minnesota Supreme Court learns that an individual that is deaf or hard of hearing wishes to observe oral arguments, reasonable accommodations are made when possible. This may include obtaining a sign language interpreter or providing assistive listening devices.

Translated Forms and Documents

The Minnesota Judicial Branch understands the importance of translating forms and documents for LEP individuals to have greater access to court services. The Minnesota Judicial Branch [public website](#) has various court forms and instructions translated into several languages.

IV. TRAINING

The Minnesota Judicial Branch is committed to providing LEP training opportunities for all employees. LEP training is provided for new employees as a part of the New Employee Orientation; judges are trained on interpreter matters at the New Judge Orientation. All employees and judges may access LEP training through the Minnesota Judicial Branch internal website ([CourtNet](#)).

The Minnesota Judicial Branch provides periodic training on LEP resources available at the Judicial Branch such as:

- [“Language Identification”](#) cards
- Multi-lingual employees
- Language line
- Deaf and hard of hearing accommodations
- Accessing the [Self-Help Center](#)

V. PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF LEP PLAN

A. LEP Plan Approval & Notification

The Minnesota Judicial Center LEP plan is approved by the State Court Administrator and a copy is kept on file with the State Court Administrator’s Office (SCAO). The plan is also posted on the Minnesota Judicial Branch [public website](#). Copies of Minnesota Judicial Center LEP plan are available upon request.

B. Evaluation of the LEP Plan

The LEP Coordinator will review this plan on an annual basis and make any changes based on the review. The evaluation will include identification of any problem areas and development of required corrective action strategies. Elements of the evaluation may include:

- Assessing the frequency of language assistance requests
- Assessing current language needs to determine if additional services or translated materials should be provided
- Assessing whether court employees adequately understand LEP policies and procedures and how to carry them out
- Gathering feedback from LEP communities

Any revisions made to the plan will be communicated by posting on the [Minnesota Judicial Branch public website](#).

LEP Contact Person

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The effective date of this LEP plan is September 30, 2012.