

10 Key Components to a Successful Language Access Program in the Courts

These standards of practice illustrate ten key behavioral and professional aspirations of the Consortium's members

- 1. Clear Purpose:** Promote access to justice in courts and tribunals by eliminating language barriers for persons with limited English proficiency.
- 2. Leadership:** Receive active support from top judicial and court administration leaders for the mission and goals of the language access program*.
- 3. Consortium membership:** Actively participate in the governance and committees of the Consortium for Language Access in the Courts (Consortium), and strictly adhere to the security, confidentiality, and test administration and rating standards articulated in the membership agreements.
- 4. Credentialing* of language service providers*:** Adopt clear standards and procedures for credentialing language service providers through the use of exams and accompanying policies and protocols developed or approved by the Consortium.
- 5. Appointment of credentialed language service providers:** Adopt appropriate, legally binding rules, policies, and procedures to require the use of credentialed language service providers for all court proceedings, the translation of court documents, and the translation/transcription of audio and video recordings.
- 6. Standards of professional conduct for court-related language service providers:** Adopt and enforce a Code of Professional Conduct for court-related language service providers.
- 7. Program administration:** Employ highly competent professional individuals who efficiently and effectively oversee the delivery of language services in accordance with established rules, policies, and procedures.

Effective administration includes, but is not limited to: (1) managing program budget and staff; (2) recruiting, hiring, and monitoring the performance of qualified language service providers; (3) collecting, analyzing and disseminating program data and information to court leaders and stakeholders; and (4) actively seeking alternative funding, including grants, to enhance program operations and services.
- 8. Communication:** Maintain effective ongoing communication with: (1) judicial and court administration leaders regarding the needs and performance of the language access program; (2) stakeholders regarding the nature and performance of the program; and (3) Consortium members through participation in its annual meeting, listserv discussions, and requests for information.
- 9. Education of language services users:** Educate judicial partners such as judges, mediators, arbitrators, court staff, attorneys and others about: (1) the need for and role of language service providers in court proceedings; (2) the knowledge, skills, and abilities of a competent language service provider; (3) the policies, procedures, and rules for the appointment and use of credentialed language service providers in the courts; and (4) the techniques for effectively delivering services to persons facing language barriers in the courts.

Educate persons with limited English proficiency about the availability, role, and use of language service providers in the courts.
- 10. Professional development for language service providers:** Encourage professional development and support training programs for language service providers including, but not limited to, the development and maintenance of formal programs at institutions of higher education and collaboration with professional associations.

Definitions:

Language Access Program: A program created to increase access to the courts, its services and activities by eliminating language barriers and increasing education, including, but not limited to the following resources:

- Credentialing court interpreters
- Developing LEP plans as defined by the Department of Justice
- Providing interpreters for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Translating signage, forms, and other vital documents
- Providing local courts with appropriate means to identify language needs
- Developing and distributing judicial bench books and/or bench cards
- Providing professional development training for interpreters, as well as training on language access for the judiciary, the Bar, and court personnel

Credentialing: Designating as qualified, certified, licensed, approved, registered, or otherwise proficient and capable through training and testing programs.

Language service providers: Those individuals and/or entities who provide qualified court interpreting services, bilingual assistance, and translation services for court users who are limited English proficient.