

County of Monterey Board Policy Manual

Policy Name Language Access and Effective Communication Policy	Policy Number P-130	Page 1 of 4
Policy Category Personnel		

I. Purpose

1. To provide effective communication needs for clients with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) to ensure meaningful access to programs, activities, and services.
2. To ensure the employment of an ethnically and culturally diverse workforce where individuals enjoy the opportunity to communicate in their preferred language.

II. Definitions

Limited English Proficient (LEP) person/population: individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

Meaningful Access: Language assistance that results in accurate, timely, culturally competent, and effective communication at no cost to the LEP individual

Translation: the rendering of written text in one language (source language) in a comparable written text in another language (target language).

Interpretation: the conversion of a message communicated in a source language into an equivalent message in the target language. This includes preferred sign language.

Substantial number of non-English-speaking people: people who either do not speak English or who are unable to effectively communicate in English because it is not their native language, and who comprise five percent or more of the people served by the

County. In federal law this is referenced as a “threshold language” when five percent or 3,000 people (whichever is fewer) speak the language.

III. Background

County of Monterey (County) is a recipient of federal financial assistance and acknowledges that as a condition of receiving these funds, it must comply with both Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and California’s Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act which includes provisions that require meaningful access to services for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons.

Monterey County’s population includes a significantly-sized population of individuals who face communication barriers in accessing County benefits and services because of their preferred language abilities. The 2021 American Community Survey data showed that over 55% of Monterey County residents spoke a language other than English at home and 25% of those reported speaking English “less than very well.” Spanish is the second most spoken language in the County after English, with 48% of the population that speaks it. A threshold language is a language that 5% or more of the population speaks. Spanish is the only language considered a “threshold” language in Monterey County. Past census data shows us that there is a significant population that speaks Tagalog and Korean, and there is a large population of speakers of Mexican indigenous languages, including Mixteco, Triqui, and Chatino, among others. However, these languages do not meet the requirements to be considered threshold languages.

The County is committed to ensuring all community members have fair and meaningful access to County programs, activities, and services, which means we must have procedures for serving LEP populations.

IV. Policy

County of Monterey will ensure that LEP Persons have meaningful access to its programs, services, and activities. The County recognizes that language can be a barrier to accessing important benefits or services, understanding and exercising important rights, complying with regulations, or understanding key information if bilingual staff or proper interpretation and translation are not utilized.

The County recognizes that providing services in languages other than English is necessary and welcoming to its residents and seeks to provide efficient and accessible public services to its non-English speaking communities.

All employees of the County may use a language other than English without threat of discrimination or reprisal. Departments may require, after consultation with the Civil

Rights Office, that specific employees communicate only in English at certain times when it is justified by business necessity or emergency.

In addition, Monterey County will strive to employ enough qualified bilingual persons in public contact positions to ensure provision of information and services to the public, in the language of the non-English-speaking person.

V. Procedure

Departments must ensure that language services are available to members of the public and may use, but are not limited to, the following means:

1. County-certified bilingual staff members who can communicate directly in an LEP person's language;
2. Utilize a qualified interpreter or translator;

While a minor may provide language assistance to bridge initial communication between two adults, their use should be limited to spontaneous, informal encounters. It is prohibited to use minor children as interpreters or translators.

Departments must provide interpretation services within a reasonable time. Departments may not require advance notice for an individual interacting with the County in person or over the phone to receive language interpretation services.

Language interpretation services should be provided at all Board of Supervisors meetings, coordinated by the Clerk of the Board. When requested by the public or staff, depending on availability of County resources, interpretation may also be provided for additional meetings or events.

Departments should strive to offer simultaneous interpretation services at meetings, events, and public outreach events.

Material translation: Departments distributing documents to the public should endeavor to make available those documents, at minimum, in Spanish and English. Materials should be translated by a qualified translator.

Departments will provide notices wherever feasible to inform members of the public of the option to obtain language services. Notices can be included:

1. On the department's website;
2. On departmental handouts, forms, brochures, pamphlets, meeting agendas, flyers, or other informational handouts; and/or,
3. On a sign posted at the department's reception area.

All new public signage created by the County shall be completed in both English and Spanish, with the goal of having all public access points in both languages.

County Department Heads, managers, and supervisory personnel are responsible

for implementing this policy within their areas of authority.

The Civil Rights Office is responsible for developing a Language Access Plan to help guide departmental implementation.

VI. Review Date

- a. This Policy will be reviewed for continuance by April 18, 2028.

VII. Board Action

- a. Legistar File Number 23-281, April 18, 2023.