

MEMORANDUM

March 7, 2014

TO: Government Operations & Fiscal Policy Committee

FROM: Kristen Latham, Legislative Analyst
Natalia Carrizosa, Legislative Analyst
Office of Legislative Oversight

SUBJECT: Worksession on OLO Report 2014-5: An Examination of MC311 Calls by Preferred Language

On March 10th, the GO Committee will hold a joint worksession on OLO Report 2014-5: *An Examination of MC311 Calls by Preferred Language*. The Council received and released this report on March 4th, 2014. This is one of numerous OLO reports that aim to enhance the County Council's awareness of cultural competency issues in the County. This report focuses on the County's efforts to ensure that individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) have equal access to County services via MC311

Executive Branch representatives expected to attend the Committee worksession include:

Department/Office	Representative
Public Information Office	Patrick Lacefield, Director
MC311	Leslie Hamm, Director

This packet is organized as follows:

- **Section A** summarizes OLO's findings; and
- **Section B** summarizes OLO's recommendations for Council Action and comments on the report from the Chief Administrative Officer.

A. Summary of Findings in Report 2014-2

OLO staff will provide the Committee with an overview of the report. Key findings from the report include:

- **Montgomery County 311's efforts to ensure equal access for limited-English proficiency (LEP) individuals generally align with common practices used in other jurisdictions.** Some practices include: (1) web and phone access; (2) readily available translation services; (3) community outreach; and (4) transparent data.
- **Fifteen percent of individuals speak English less than "very well" in Montgomery County.** Of the almost one million people in the County, approximately 61% speak only English at home, followed by 16% of people who speak Spanish at home.
- **During 2012-13, MC311 received about 956,000 calls, of which approximately 4.4% had a request to speak in Spanish.** About 1,590 calls per month (4% of calls) were from callers requesting to speak with a Spanish-speaking representative and 150 calls per month were from Spanish speakers who used the telephone interpretation service. In addition, there were an average of 18 calls per month for a language other than Spanish.
- **OLO found that the most common MC311 requests from callers requesting to speak in Spanish were different from the most common requests from all callers.** The top five English-preferred requests were two Ride-On related topics, trash/recycling, property tax information, and DPS inspections. The top five Spanish-preferred call requests had two of the same topics (Ride-On arrival and trash/recycling) as English; the other three top topics were HHS-related (Manna Food Center, Food Stamps/cash assistance, and Medicaid/medical assistance).
- **Seven of the top thirty call topics had more than five percent of calls requested in Spanish.** "Manna Food Center Related" calls had the highest percent of calls for a topic with a preferred language of Spanish – about 59%. This was followed by "Information on Medicaid/Medical Assistance/Health Care Report/MCHP" at 23% and "Food Stamps/Cash Assistance" at 21%.
- **There was no significant difference in the lengths of time to close requests between requests made by callers requesting to speak in Spanish and other requests.** For most request categories, the data do not show sizeable differences in the average numbers of days to close requests between English-preferred language requests and Spanish-preferred language requests.
- **MC311 customer service representatives (CSR) spent an average of 40 seconds longer speaking on each call with callers that requested to speak in Spanish compared with other callers.** The data show that hold times and after call work times were similar among calls where the caller selected to speak with a Spanish-speaking CSR versus other regular calls, but that for Spanish calls talk times were about 40 seconds longer on average than other calls.

B. Summary of County Executive's Response to the Report

In response, the County's Chief Administrative Officers agreed with the report and in particular that MC311 is currently aligned with best practices. The County also states that it will review New York City and Philadelphia's efforts to grow its' own effort in outreach to different communities and reports that it already begun to develop a Neighborhood Liaison Program similar to Philadelphia.