

An Examination of MC311 Calls by Preferred Language

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MC311 provides the public with a single point of contact for non-emergency information on County services and programs. Individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) have two options for communicating with MC311 customer service representatives (CSRs): they can (1) select to speak with a Spanish-speaking CSR at the beginning of their call or (2) they can communicate with a CSR using a telephone interpretation service (over 150 languages available). The Council requested this project in order to better understand cultural competency issues in the County by examining data from the County's MC311 system on interactions with LEP individuals.

Cultural Competency

Cultural competency is having awareness of varying cultural and community norms of diverse populations and providing equal access to service delivery. The five essential elements of cultural competency are:

1. Value diversity by respecting different cultural customs, values, and communication methods;
2. Cultivate cultural awareness;
3. Understand the dynamics of cultural interactions;
4. Acquire and Institutionalize cultural knowledge; and
5. Design and adapt service delivery to the diversity of the community.

Best Practices and MC311

According to data from the U.S. Census Bureau, there are 926,231 people in Montgomery County. Of these, 61% (564,386) speak only English at home. 15% of individuals speak English less than "very well," and in 7% of households, no person in the household aged 14 or older speaks English "very well".

OLO researched best practices for ensuring equal access for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) for 311 programs. Overall, the policies and practices of MC311 highlighted below align with the identified best practices, including:

- Access to the MC311 system through telephone and web-based channels;
- Translation services to all callers, including 17 Spanish-speaking customer service representatives or telephone translation services;
- Community outreach including flyers/palm cards in multiple languages, meeting with community groups, and television/radio/newspaper advertisement in Spanish; and
- Monthly reports on customer request statistics.

Total Non-English MC311 Calls

During 2012-2013, MC311 received over 950,000 calls. The data show that:

- Of the approximate 40,000 calls per month, 4.4% were non-English calls;
- About 1,590 calls per month (4% of all 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; and
- On average, 18 calls per month required interpretation for languages other than Spanish.

Other Jurisdictions. The percentage of MC311 calls from callers requesting to speak in languages other than English exceeds percentages reported to OLO by 311 programs in other jurisdictions, including Prince George's County (2%), Washington, DC (less than 1%) and the City of Philadelphia (less than 1%)

MC311 Top Request Topics by Preferred Language

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 table below shows the top five request topics for all calls and for those where the caller had a preferred language of Spanish.

Rank	Topic	# of Requests	% Total Requests	% Topic Requests in Spanish
All Callers				
1	Ride On Real Time Arrival Information	88,430	18%	2%
2	Trash/Recycling Pick Up Request or Question	48,800	10%	3%
3	General Discussion of Individual Property Tax Bill (Finance Department)	24,568	5%	1%
4	Schedule/Cancel DPS Inspections	21,402	4%	3%
5	Ride-On Trip Planning	16,999	3%	2%
Spanish-Preferred Callers				
1	Manna Food Center Related	3,458	0.71%	59%
2	Food Stamps/Cash Assistance	1,870	0.38%	21%
3	Ride On Real Time Arrival Information	1,751	0.36%	2%
4	Trash/Recycling Pick Up Request or Question	1,471	0.30%	3%
5	Information about Medicaid/Medical Assistance/Health Care Reform/MCHP	1,136	0.23%	23%

Manna also had the highest percentage of requests with a preferred language of Spanish – about 59% of all Manna related requests had a Spanish preference. The table below summarizes the five service request topics with the highest percentages of Spanish calls within the call the topic.

Rank	Topic	% of Topic Requests in Spanish
1	Manna Food Center	59%
2	Information on Medicaid/Medical Assistance/Health Care Reform/MCHP	23%
3	Food Stamps/Cash Assistance	21%
4	Information on Vaccinations/Clinics/Direct Medical Services	9%
5	Contacting Case Worker or DHHS	9%

Call Characteristics

OLO compared the following call characteristics of calls from Spanish speakers with those of other calls: talk time, hold time, and work completion time after the call. 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.

Length of Time to Close Requests

OLO compared the number of days it took to close service requests among requests with preferred languages of English and Spanish. For this comparison, OLO examined how many business days it took to close requests on average for the top 10 specific service request categories from Spanish-speaking callers. OLO did not find significant differences in the lengths of time to close requests between requests made by callers requesting to speak in Spanish and other requests.

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CHAPTER I. Authority, Scope, and Organization of Report

A. Authority

Council Resolution 17-830, *Fiscal Year 2014 Work Program of the Office of Legislative Oversight*

B. Scope of Report

As part of the Executive's vision to "Create greater responsiveness and accountability in meeting the needs of a very diverse county," the County established an integrated Customer Service Center. MC311, established in June 2010, provides the public with a single point of contact for non-emergency information on County services and programs. The FY14 approved budget for MC311 was \$3.6 million and 35.9 workyears.

In the FY14 OLO work program, the Council placed emphasis on several overall topic areas, including cultural competency. Cultural competency is having awareness of varying cultural and community norms of diverse populations and embracing the principles of equal access and non-discriminatory practices in service delivery. One aspect of cultural competency is linguistic competency, which is the ability of an organization to communicate effectively with diverse audiences.

This project aims to enhance the County Council's awareness of cultural competency issues in the County by examining data from the County's MC311 program on interactions with individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). To provide the Council with a better understanding of cultural competency in the County's MC311 program, this OLO report includes:

- Descriptions and case studies of best practices in cultural competency and 311 program outreach for LEP individuals;
- A summary of MC311 operations, including services and outreach for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP); and
- An analysis of data on MC311 calls, with a focus on those where the caller communicated in a language other than English.

C. Organization

Chapter II, Cultural Competency and 311 Best Practices, provides a brief description of cultural competency as well as an overview of best practices and case studies from other jurisdictions regarding language and community outreach for 311 programs.

Chapter III, MC311 Overview, describes MC311 services, operations, community outreach, and performance measures.

Chapter IV, Data on Non-English MC311 Calls, describes data on all MC311 requests, with a focus on callers that requested to speak in a language other than English.

Chapter V, Findings, summarizes the findings of the report.

Chapter VI, Agency Comments presents comments from the County's Chief Administrative Officer on the final draft of this report.

D. Methodology

Office of Legislative Oversight staff members Kristen Latham and Natalia Carrizosa conducted this study. The research consisted of examining data on MC311 calls from the County's Siebel CRM system, which is used to manage and track MC311 calls. OLO also met with MC311 staff to better understand MC311 operations and outreach to different communities in the County.

E. Acknowledgements

OLO received a high level of cooperation from County Government staff involved in this study. OLO appreciates the time commitment, the expertise, and the insights provided by all staff who participated. In particular, OLO acknowledges the following staff for their assistance: Fariba Kassiri, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer; Leslie Hamm, MC311 Director and Stephen Heissner, Brian Roberts, and Debbie Richards of MC311.

In addition, OLO greatly appreciates the valuable time and information provided by: Stephen Williams (District of Columbia), Graham Quinn (Philadelphia, PA), Lisa Allen (Baltimore City, MD) and Jennifer Hawkins (Prince George's County, MD).

CHAPTER II. Cultural Competency and 311 Best Practices

In the FY14 OLO work program, the Council placed emphasis on several overall topic areas, including cultural competence. This report examining the similarities and differences between English and non-English Calls to MC311, is one of eight OLO FY14 projects that will consider cultural competency within its project scope.¹ Together, this body of projects is intended to enhance the County Council's awareness of cultural competency issues in the County.

This chapter provides a brief description of cultural competency, including guiding principles and best practices, as well as an overview of best practices and case studies from other jurisdictions regarding language and community outreach for 311 programs. The chapter includes detailed summaries of NYC311 and Philly311, both of which have extensive language-related access and outreach efforts:

- **Section A** summarizes cultural competency, including general best practices;
- **Section B** details cultural competency best practices specific to local 311 systems; and
- **Section C** provides a review of two jurisdictions' (New York City and Philadelphia) efforts regarding 311 system language access and outreach.

A. Cultural Competency

Most literature regarding cultural competency involves healthcare or education; OLO reviewed general resources as well as those in those particular fields of study.²

In recent years, demographic changes have occurred throughout the United States. In many jurisdictions, minority and immigrant populations have grown and local governments have had to learn to adapt culturally and linguistically. In order to improve the quality of services and avoid disparities in service delivery, many local jurisdictions have been proactive in meeting the needs of these communities.

Definition. Cultural competency is having awareness of varying cultural and community norms of diverse populations and embraces the principles of equal access and non-discriminatory practices in service delivery. There are five essential elements of the cultural competency of individuals and institutions:

1. Value diversity by respecting different cultural backgrounds and customs, different ways of communicating, and different traditions and values;
2. Cultural self-awareness where individuals within institutions understand that their own cultures - all of their experiences, background, knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, and interests - shape their sense of who they are, where they fit into communities and society, and how they interact with the public;
3. Understand the dynamics of cultural interactions by knowing that there are many factors that can affect interactions across cultures, including historical cultural experiences and relationships between cultures in a local community;

¹ The other OLO FY 14 projects are: (a) Procurement and Small, Minority, Female, Disabled and Locally Owned Businesses; (b) Juvenile Justice; (c) Developmental Education; (d) Montgomery County Public Schools' High School Consortia; (e) School Demographic Makeup among MCPS Students and Educators; (f) Workforce Development Services; and (g) After School Programs and their Impact.

² Resources used for this section include the National Center for Cultural Competence (Georgetown University); "Servicing Diverse Communities," ICMA; "Culture, Language, and Health Literacy," US Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA); "Why Cultural Competence," website with numerous links from National Education Association.

4. Acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge based on an understanding of the cultural and diversity found in one's community; and
5. Design and adapt service delivery systems to meet the needs of the cultural diversity communities being served.

Organizations that demonstrate cultural competency have a defined set of values and behaviors, along with established policies and infrastructure to work effectively with diverse communities. Cultural competency is also incorporated into policy making, administration, practice and service delivery.

Linguistic Competency. One aspect of cultural competency is linguistic competency, which is the ability of an organization to communicate effectively with diverse audiences.

Best Practices in Cultural Competency. In order to achieve cultural competency, organizations must identify the needs of different populations and create policies/implement services that are matched to those unique needs of the communities served. Community engagement and inclusion is the key to an organization's cultural competency. Some other specific best practices include:

- Work in conjunction with established networks within culturally diverse communities (e.g. civic and advocacy associations; local merchants; and ethnic, social, and religious organizations);
- Work with diverse community representatives to conduct a needs assessment;
- Have community members participate in boards/committees;
- Conduct extensive and consistent outreach with a variety of media including ethnic radio and television, written materials, and other social media;
- Develop materials for specific cultural, ethnic and linguistic groups including legally binding documents, web-related content and public awareness campaign materials;
- Make services easily accessible and welcoming;
- Build organizational capacity to meet community needs including bilingual/bicultural or multilingual/multicultural staff; foreign language interpretation services; and TTY and other assistive technology devices; and
- Ensure that government staff are knowledgeable about cultural difference and are sensitive and respectful of all cultures served.

B. Best Practices for Language and Community Outreach in 311 Programs

Initially created to reduce the burden on 911 systems, 311 systems provide residents with an easy way to connect with their local government programs and services. The city of Baltimore was the first municipality in the nation to implement a 311 system in 1996. Shortly afterwards, the Federal Communications Commission approved the use of the number nationwide. According to an ICMA survey, 42% of local governments have either implemented some type of 311 customer service system or are considering adopting one. More specifically, 15% have implemented a 311 system and 27% are considering adopting one. Local 311 systems include Prince George's County and Washington, D.C, in addition to Baltimore.

This section summarizes best practices that OLO found regarding language-related practices in the creation and implementation of a 311 system. When analyzing the potential use of these approaches and tools, a jurisdiction must review the message each tool delivers, the audience reached, and the cost of distribution and determine the best course of action to reach the broadest audience possible.

Utilize Diverse Approaches to 311 Promotion. Diverse approaches to program promotion should be used to reach diverse audiences. Specifically, messages to limited English proficient (LEP) residents should offer

targeted information on relevant issues to the specific community. Some specific methods of promotion could include:

- Advertising on public transit/bus shelters, inserts in utility bills, and posters/magnets/postcards;
- Meeting/disseminating information to neighborhood associations, religious organizations, and ethnic/community organizations; and
- Outreach via ethnic newspapers, radio, and television.

Have a Clear Vision Statement With Support from City Officials. 311 systems should have a clear and direct vision statement to engage residents of all communities. In addition, top city leaders (political, governmental, business, and community) should be involved in the promotion of the system.

A high level of visibility helps citizens realize that their jurisdiction's leadership is attempting to improve customer service and service delivery.

Be Transparent about System Data and Enable Resident Feedback. The government should enable residents to track progress of their individual service requests and key 311 system data (such as information on calls, waiting times, abandoned calls, and service delivery times) should be regularly reported to all stakeholders, including residents. In addition, the jurisdiction should establish numerous venues (surveys, public meetings, open houses, etc.) for residents to provide feedback on the 311 system and service delivery.

Use New and Diverse Technology for Several Languages. In order to maximize the use of a 311 system among all residents, a local government should adopt numerous methods of communication for residents. Some common methods may include: walk-in facilities; phone self-service/phone calls; web self-service/web chats; mobile applications; email; social media; and text messaging. To fully maximize utilization, some of these methods should be available in several of the most prevalent languages spoken in a jurisdiction.

Conduct Extensive Technical and Diversity Training of Staff. In addition to technical training of the 311 system, call center employees should have thorough training on the local government services and programs available. Diversity training for employees should help them better understand different cultural backgrounds and therefore be better prepared to respond to service requests and questions.

Conduct Internal Agency Needs Assessments for Service and Language Needs. In order to provide effective language assistance services, agencies should identify their priorities and available resources. As part of that analysis, agencies should identify its eligible service population, the frequency and type of services requested by LEP communities, and the resources available.

C. Case Studies on Language Practices in 311 Programs

OLO was able to find detailed summaries of what two jurisdictions, New York City and Philadelphia, have done for outreach to immigrant and LEP communities regarding their local 311 systems. The following is a summary of those efforts. OLO was not able to find any details about the outreach/language efforts of local jurisdictions with 311 systems.

NYC311. New York City established its 311 system in 2003. NYC 311 is operational 24/7 and has a full-time staff of 400 call takers, receiving an average of 45,000 calls per day. Services are currently offered through phone calls or text messaging, online forms, mobile applications, and other social media. Additionally, the phone line can communicate in over 180 languages, the website is available in 72 languages, and the mobile application is available in 17 languages.

In 2005, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs formed an Interagency Task Force on Language Access, which was a working group of representatives from over 30 City agencies that met regularly to share language access best practices and learn about ways to improve their language access service provision. In July 2008, the Mayor of NYC signed an executive order that created a centralized language access policy for the City and mandated that all City agencies that provide direct public services offer access in other languages. Some of the specific outreach efforts concerning NYC311 and language include:

- 311 Language Access Campaign. Started in 2008, the 311 Language Access campaign was a public outreach effort targeting immigrants and LEP residents. The awareness campaign provided outreach in seven languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian and Spanish) and included advertisement in subways, taxis, bus shelters, City agency offices and community-based organizations, check cashing stores, community newspapers and on street posts.
- Language Access Implementation Plans. Each City agency was required to develop a plan that outlined how the agency will provide meaningful access to the LEP community and work with NYC311. The plans included a population assessment, translation of public documents, interpretation services, and language access training. Each City agency has a Language Access Coordinator (LAC), who is responsible for liaising with the Mayor's Office to ensure compliance with their respective agency's language access policy and protocol.
- Language Gateway. In April 2010, the Mayor's Office created a multilingual web portal called the Language Gateway which provides essential City documents to the LEP community. The current system includes 190 documents from 21 City agencies in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Russian.
- Monitoring of Language Access Programs. The Mayor's office implemented several oversight tools to ensure that language access programs are working including survey cards to gather feedback from LEP customers, inclusion of language access indicators in the Mayor's Management Report, and site visits conducted at agency public points of contact.
- One NYC One Nation. Established in 2011, the initiative aims to empower and educate immigrant and LEP communities through the leveraging of resources from community, non-profit and City leaders, including the use of the NYC311.

Philly311. The Philadelphia 311 Contact Center was launched in December 2008 and is comprised of a call center, walk-in facility, back-office operations, and mobile application. 311 operators are able to connect to interpreters that speak almost 200 languages.

In 2013, the City of Philadelphia established the Mayor's Office of Immigrant and Multicultural Affairs (MOIMA), which promotes the well-being of immigrant communities by lowering access barriers to city resources and services as well as encouraging civic participation among communities. Specifically, the City has created a Language Access Program that enables departments to offer services in more than 120 languages and create plans to improve the quality of services provided to immigrants and LEP communities. Specific outreach and functions include:

- Mobile Application. City residents can report service problems through the mobile application in the following 16 languages: Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Russian, Cambodian, Italian, Vietnamese, Arabic, French, German, Greek, Turkish, Serbian, Polish and French.

- Philly311 Widget. The Language Assistance Widget, created in 2013, helps non-English speaking residents learn about language services and community resources through the Philly311 Mobile App. Available in five languages (Spanish, Korean, Russian, Chinese and Vietnamese), the widget provides information on interpretation/document translation services, contacts for community groups, and a language access card.
- Neighborhood Liaison Program. The program, launched in 2009, has trained over 600 City residents as liaisons for the Philly311 team. Liaisons are given individual accounts to directly enter service requests into the city work system.
- Citizens Engagement Academy. Created in 2011, the Academy connects citizens with local government through education. The Academy trained over 100 community leaders on city functions and provided a forum for citizens to voice concerns.

Chapter III. MC311 Overview

As part of the Executive’s vision to “Create greater responsiveness and accountability in meeting the needs of a very diverse county,” the County established an integrated Customer Service Center (with a Customer Relationship Management or CRM system¹). MC311, established in June 2010, provides the public with a single point of contact for non-emergency information on County services and programs. The FY14 approved budget for MC311 was \$3.6 million and 35.9 workyears.

MC311 aims to increase accountability, responsiveness and efficiency of County Government through: (1) a single access point for the public; (2) allowing the customer to track the status of his service request; and (3) recordation and monitoring of the number and nature of requests and the timeliness of service delivery. This chapter describes MC311 services, operations, community outreach, and performance measures:

- **Section A** provides a brief overview of MC311 services and staffing;
- **Section B** describes MC311 operations, including non-English language services;
- **Section C** examines the community outreach efforts of MC311; and
- **Section D** describes general MC311 performance measures.

A. MC311 Services and Staffing

The MC311 Customer Service Center provides the public with a single three-digit number (311) to call for County information and services. The Call Center is open Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and the MC311 website, which also provides information and enables service requests, is available 24 hours a day. This overview focuses on the Call Center.

Typically, there are four types of requests to MC311:

- **General Information Requests**, which are handled directly by MC311 representatives.
- **Requests for County Services**, which are sent to the appropriate County department.
- **Referrals to County Experts**, which are information requests that are sent to the department with the specific knowledge or expertise.
- **Complaints, Compliments and Comments**, which are forwarded to the relevant department.²

Staffing. Most of the staff for MC311 are customer services representatives (CSRs) and include both full-time and contracted staff. MC311 staff report that many contracted employees become full-time staff. Executive Branch staff report that there are currently 44 CSRs in MC311, which are divided into two tiers. All staff are trained in basic MC311 operations; “Tier 1” representatives are generalists and handle all calls based on a prescribed script from the system database. “Tier 2” staff, which are CSRs that are experts in a particular topic field (with access to department specific information) or have non-English language skills. Of all CSRs, there are currently 17 Spanish-speaking CSRs³, seven Health and Human Services specialists, 11 Finance specialists, and 8 Permitting Services specialists. MC311 aims to have one Tier 2 CSR for each field on each shift.

¹ CRM - Customer Relationship Management, defined in the Oxford dictionary as “denoting strategies and software that enable a company to organize and optimize its customer relations.”

² As of July 2013, MC311 no longer tracks “Referrals” and “Complaints, Compliments and Comments” as separate categories – these types of requests are logged within the other two categories.

³ Staff report that MC311 used to have CSRs who spoke other languages, but those staff are no longer employed at MC311.

B. MC311 Operations

MC311 is a customer relationship management system that integrates web-based information, a phone system, and a service database. Some specific technical aspects of the system include:

- Real-time integration of case management, geographical information systems, and web service;
- Computer and telephone integration; and
- Connection between the case management system and an Oracle database for tracking/reporting.

When someone calls into MC311, there is a brief welcome message announcing the ability to select a preferred language (English or Spanish). After selection, the caller is connected with a Customer Service Representative (CSR), who will ask the caller some basic questions. The CSR will fill in the fields in the MC311 data system based on the answers, which will automatically update relevant fields and assist the CSR in identifying the answer or next steps. The CSR will then provide the requested information, send the caller to a Tier 2 CSR (if necessary), or send a service request to the appropriate department. The caller is provided a service request number for tracking the progress of the request.

Language Assistance. MC311 offers two methods for callers who prefer a language other than English to interact with CSRs. The caller can either prompt to speak with a Spanish-speaking CSR or can speak with a CSR in over 150 languages using a telephone interpretation service. For the interpretation service, MC311 currently piggybacks off another County contract with the telephone interpretation provider Voiance.

MC311 staff report that if a caller is attempting to speak in English but is difficult to understand, the CSR will ask them if using the interpretation service would help. They also report that it is not uncommon for Spanish-speaking callers to not prompt Spanish initially and later request interpretation.

Voiance Service Usage. County staff report that MC311 uses the interpretation service sparingly, but it is efficient and effective when it is used. According to a recent CountyStat report, there were 20 different languages engaged in the interpretation service; the most frequent languages were Spanish, Mandarin, Amharic, and French. Staff hypothesize that two of the reasons that the use of the interpretation service is sparse is because (1) the County has a high density of educated people who speak English in addition to their native language and choose to speak English when contacting MC311 and (2) the population that prefers to speak in other languages may be hesitant to contact government officials.

Call Closure. MC311 considers a request “closed” when the relevant department closes the request. For general information requests, MC311 CSRs provide an answer and close the request. If a service request is sent to another County department, the department will close the request within the MC311 system.

C. MC311 Community Outreach Efforts

MC311 has undertaken numerous efforts to increase awareness of the system to diverse communities:

- The distribution of flyers in a variety of languages;
- County Executive meetings with local community groups;
- Attendance at County events such as 50+ Expo, World Refugee Awareness Day, and Elder Abuse Awareness Day (all events have a Spanish speaking CSR present);
- Palm cards available in English, Spanish, Mandarin, Korean, Vietnamese, French, and Arabic (along with some online content); and
- Televised and web-based Spanish public service announcements.

In addition, staff report that there used to be Spanish language radio and newspaper advertisements, but with budget constraints, they have been temporarily discontinued. County staff report that the advertising budget for MC311 is approximately \$100,000 annually; however, staff report that in previous years that funding has been reallocated for more pressing MC311 needs (such as IT system functions).

D. MC311 Performance Measures

MC311 collects an extensive amount of performance data in order to review the efficiency of County Government service delivery and to acquire an understanding of the services most important to customers. CountyStat produces a detailed performance review on MC311 semi-annually, continually monitoring the operational efficiency and customer feedback of MC311. Using the MC311 Dashboard, OLO collected the following performance data. Overall, OLO found that MC311 has exceeded all performance goals.

Key MC311 Performance Targets and Measures January 1, 2011 – December 31, 2013

Performance Metric	Performance Goal	Actual Performance
Call Answer Rate	More than 95% of calls answered	97.94%
Call Abandon Rate	Fewer than 5% of calls abandoned	2.06%
Speed of Answer	Average of 20 seconds or less	19 seconds
Average Call Handling Time	4 minutes (240 seconds)	223 seconds
Service Request Accuracy Rate	98% of Service Requests closed according to established performance standards	99.28%

Bi-Annual Customer Survey. MC311 sends out an electronic survey twice a year to any MC311 customer who provided an email address in a specified time period (for both web and phone requests). The last survey available, conducted in July 2013, was for customers between May 15-June 15, 2013. Another survey is scheduled for January 2014.

For the July survey, there were 5,354 survey emails sent out, with 464 responses. Overall, the survey found that over 85% of respondents were satisfied with:

- *For phone requests:* the time it took to reach a representative, the handling of the call, and the overall experience; and
- *For web requests:* the ease of using the website, the ability to find the information that the customer was looking for, and overall experience.

Chapter IV. Data on Non-English Language MC311 Calls

As described in Chapter 3, MC311 has two options for callers with limited English proficiency (LEP). First, Spanish speakers can select, at the beginning of their call, to speak with a Spanish-speaking customer service representative (CSR). Additionally, LEP individuals can communicate with any CSR with the assistance of a telephone interpretation service.

This chapter describes data on MC311 requests from callers that requested to speak in a language other than English, with a focus on Spanish-language calls. OLO analyzed data from the County's Siebel CRM system, which is used to manage and track MC311 requests, as well as invoices from Voiance, the telephone interpretation service provider for MC311. For context, OLO also examined U.S. Census Bureau data on language communities in the County. The chapter is organized as follows:

- **Section A** describes data from the U.S. Census Bureau on language communities in the County;
- **Section B** examines overall numbers of requests and trends by preferred language, including a comparison to other jurisdictions;
- **Section C** analyzes differences in the types of requests made depending on language used;
- **Section D** describes the length of time it takes to close requests by preferred language; and
- **Section E** describes the call characteristics of calls from Spanish speakers.

A Note on MC311 Data Used in This Chapter

OLO examined two types of data from the County's Siebel CRM system for this report: call center data (supplemented with data from invoices for the Voiance telephone interpretation service) and request data. Call center data provide the most accurate measure of the numbers non-English language calls, but request data have the most detail about the requests made by callers, as described below:

- **Call center data** provide performance data on each call received by the MC311 call center, such as call durations and percentages of abandoned calls, and can show how many calls were made where the caller requested to speak with a Spanish-speaking CSR for calls made during or after July of 2011. Separate data from Voiance invoices show how many calls used the telephone interpretation service for any language.
- **Request data** include information on each request made to MC311, including the department associated with the request, the general category and specific type of request, and the length of time it took to close the request. Most requests made by phone have a "preferred language" associated with them; if the caller making the request selected the option to speak with a Spanish-speaking CSR, Spanish is automatically selected as the preferred language. Otherwise, the default preferred language is English. If the telephone interpretation service is used, the CSR must manually select the appropriate preferred language.

Executive branch staff report that preferred language data may not provide an accurate measure of the numbers of non-English language requests due to human error and system malfunctions. OLO found that preferred language data on languages other than English and Spanish showed significant inconsistencies with data from the Voiance invoices. As a result, OLO chose to focus its detailed analysis on English and Spanish language requests in calendar year 2013, for which request data appear to be highly consistent with call center data.

OLO's analysis includes only those MC311 requests for which preferred language data are available. Of the approximately 569,000 MC311 requests tracked during 2013, 87% had preferred language data available, and 99% of these had preferred languages of either English or Spanish. Data on MC311 requests made via the web (approximately 7% in 2013) do not include preferred language data.

It is not possible to link call center data to request data, i.e. to determine which requests were made during which calls.

A. County Population Characteristics

Almost 40% of County residents speak languages other than English at home. To better understand the characteristics of the population that may make use of MC311’s non-English language services, OLO examined U.S. Census Bureau data on language communities in the County.

The U.S. Census Bureau categorizes individuals in different ways with respect to language, including by the language spoken at home and by their level of English proficiency. Proficiency in English is determined through a survey asking respondents to describe themselves as speaking English “very well,” “well,” “not well” or “not at all”. Additionally, households are categorized based on whether any person in the household aged 14 and over speaks English very well. Data on poverty levels, modes of transportation used, and education levels of language communities in the County are also available.

Languages spoken at home. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey 2012 estimates, there are 926,231 people in Montgomery County. Of these, 61% (564,386) speak only English at home. The following summarizes the languages spoken at home in the County:

Language Spoken at Home

Language Spoken at Home	Percent of Residents
Only English	61%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	16%
Other Indo-European languages	6%
Other and unspecified languages	4%
Chinese	4%
French (including Patois, Creole, Cajun)	3%
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages	2%
Korean, Slavic Language, Vietnamese, Tagalog, or German/Other West Germanic (Each)	1%

English proficiency. 39% of the population that speaks a language other than English at home speaks English “less than very well.” Specifically, Spanish and Asian languages have higher rates of people speaking English less than “very well”:

Language	Population	Percent that Speak English Less “Very Well”
Any Language other than English Spoken at Home	361,845	39%
Spanish	144,106	46%
Other Indo-European languages	95,235	25%
Asian and Pacific Islander languages	86,193	45%
Other languages	36,311	28%

Of the total population, 15% of individuals speak English less than “very well.” Additionally, in 7% of households, no person in the household aged 14 or older speaks English “very well”.

Poverty. According to Census Data, 61,994 people in the County had an income below the poverty line in the past 12 months. Of that population, 47% speak English only at home, followed by 26% speaking Spanish, 10% speaking other Indo-European languages, 9% speaking Asian and Pacific Island languages, and 7% speaking other languages.

Mode of Transportation. The Survey provides data on how the County population commutes to work including (1) taking car/truck alone or in a car pool (75% of population); (2) taking public transportation (16% of population); or (3) other, including taking a taxi, walking/biking or working from home (9% of population). Those who speak English, those who speak a language other than English but speak English “very well,” and those who do not speak English “very well” all showed similar breakdowns of transportation mode use.

Education. For County residents aged 25 years or older (about 680,000 in total), 57% percent of the population had a bachelor’s degree or higher. Another 20% had some college education, while 14% had high school education and 9% had less than a high school education. For those that spoke a language other than English at home, the breakdown was as follows.

Education Level in Montgomery County, by Language Spoken

	Total Population	Less than High School	High School	Some College	Bachelors Degree or Higher
Speak only English	413,807	4%	13%	20%	64%
Speak Spanish	96,884	32%	23%	22%	23%
Speak other Indo-European languages	73,795	7%	11%	17%	65%
Speak Asian and Pacific Island languages	67,267	11%	13%	16%	60%
Speak other languages	28,541	9%	21%	26%	43%

Language by Council District. In May 2012, the Montgomery County Planning Department released a report that summarized population demographics and land use information by Council District. The data, from 2010, show that Districts Two through Five have roughly 19-22% each of residents who speak a language other than English. District One accounts for the remaining 14%.

Language Spoken at Home by Council District, 2010 Data

	County	District				
		1	2	3	4	5
Total Population	962,877	194,290	191,269	191,446	193,062	192,810
Number of Residents that Speak a Language Other than English at Home	375,522	52,458	72,682	80,407	81,086	77,124
Share of District Residents that Speak a Language other than English at Home	39%	27%	38%	42%	42%	40%
English-Proficient	24%	19%	22%	24%	23%	23%
Not English-Proficient	16%	8%	15%	18%	19%	17%

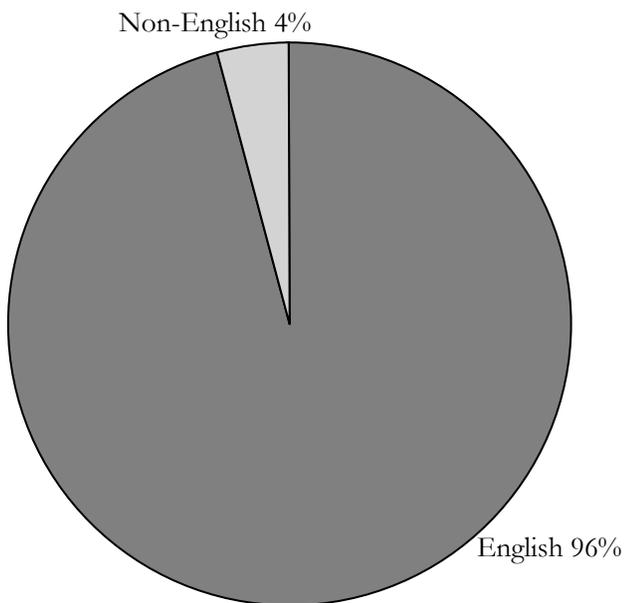
B. Non-English Language Calls: Totals and Trends

This section describes the overall numbers of non-English MC311 calls and trends over the past two years. Additionally, this section shows the percentages of non-English MC311 requests by department and type (service request, general information, referral, or complaint / compliment) during calendar year 2013.

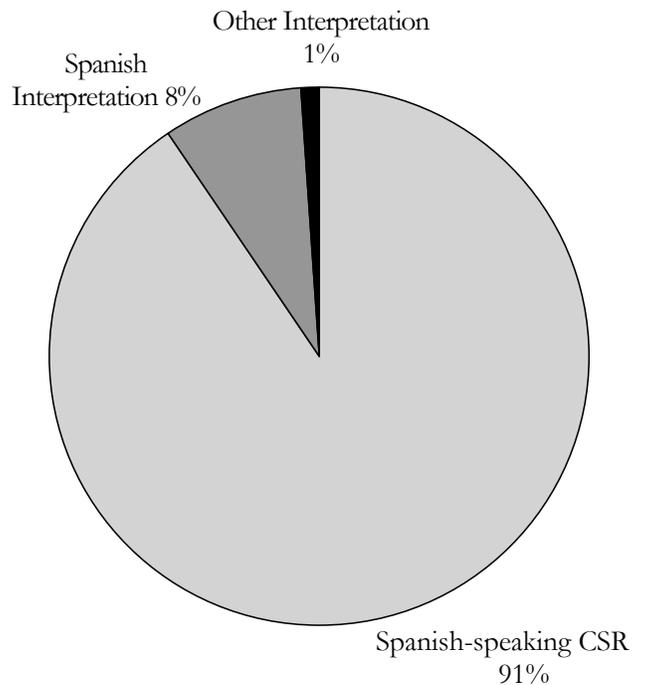
Total calls, 2012-2013. Call center data show that from January 2012 through December 2013:

- Of the 40,000 total MC311 calls received per month, 4.4% were non-English calls;
- 4% or 1,590 calls per month were from callers requesting to speak with a Spanish-speaking representative, and an additional 150 calls per month were from Spanish speakers who used the telephone interpretation service.¹
- 18 calls per month, on average, required interpretation for languages other than Spanish; and
- The most frequently used languages other than Spanish were Mandarin, Amharic, and Korean.

All MC311 Calls, English and Non-English, 2012-2013



Non-English Calls By Language and Language Service, 2012-2013



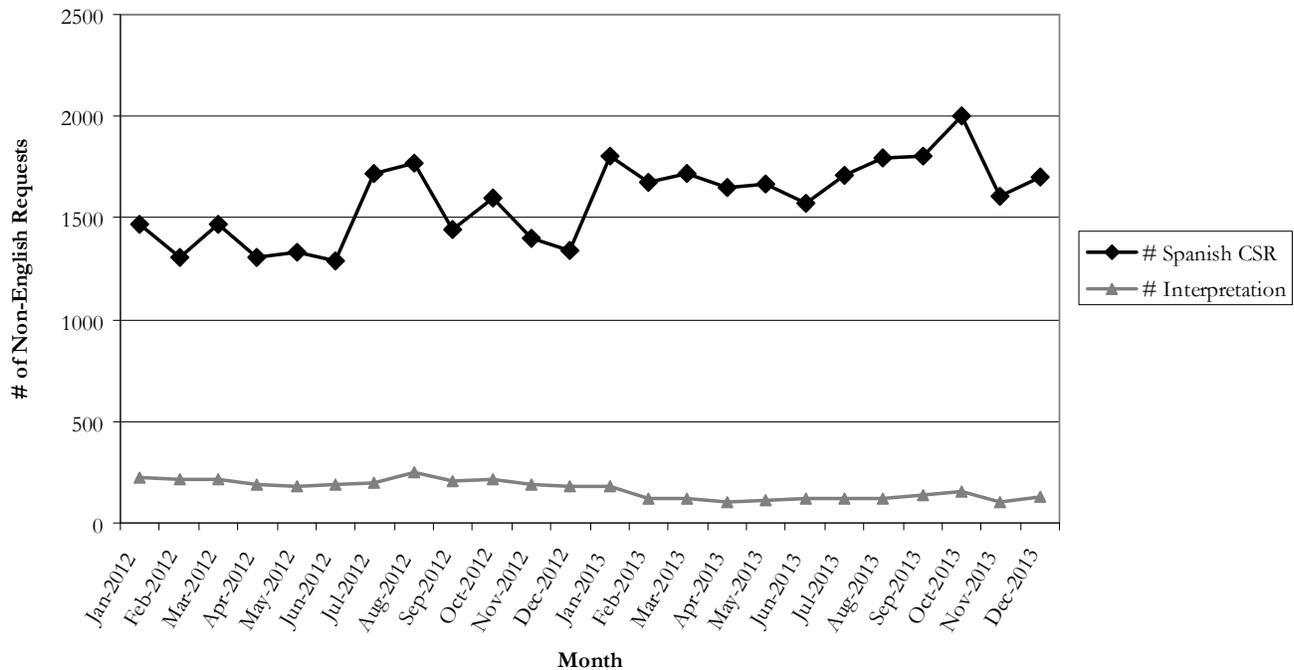
Source: MC311 call center data, Siebel CRM system and Voiance data

¹ MC311 staff report that it is not uncommon for Spanish-speaking callers to not prompt Spanish initially and later request the Spanish CSR or the interpretation service.

Call trends, 2012-2013. OLO also examined trends over time in the numbers of non-English calls. As the chart indicates, in calendar years 2012 and 2013:

- The monthly number of calls where the caller requested to speak with a Spanish-speaking CSR ranged from a minimum of 1,300 to a maximum of 2,000;
- Average monthly Spanish-speaking CSR call numbers increased from 1,500 in 2012 to 1,700 in 2013;
- Interpretation service usage ranged from a minimum of 100 to a maximum of 250 calls per month; and
- The average monthly calls using the interpretation service decreased from 200 in 2012 to 130 in 2013.

Monthly Non-English MC311 Calls, January 2012 to December 2013



Source: MC311 call center data, Siebel CRM system and Voiance data

Comparison to Other Jurisdictions. OLO contacted numerous jurisdictions with 311 systems to determine the percent of calls received that are not in English during 2013. OLO found that Montgomery County had a higher percent of all calls that were received in Spanish compared with the three jurisdictions that provided data.

311 System Calls, 2013

Jurisdiction	% Population who Speak English Less than "Very Well"	# 311 Calls	# 311 Calls Non-English	% Non-English
Prince George's County, MD	8.6%	200,000	3,700	2%
Washington, DC	4.5%	2,000,000	11,956	Less than 1%
Philadelphia, PA	9.5%	1,169,788	1,000	Less than 1%

Source: OLO Contacted Jurisdictions

Spanish and English MC311 Requests by Type, 2013. The “type” of an MC311 request refers to whether the request is for general information, a service to be fulfilled, a referral, a complaint or a compliment. The table below shows that, similar to English language requests, about 77% of Spanish requests were general information requests.

English and Spanish Preferred Language MC311 Requests by Type, 2013

Request Type	English	Spanish
General Information	77%	77%
Service Request	18%	19%
Referral*	4%	4%
Complaint/Compliment*	1%	0%

*As of July of 2013 MC311 no longer uses the “referral” and “complaint/compliment” categories

C. Types of Requests by Preferred Language

OLO examined MC311 request data to determine the percentages of requests with a preferred language of Spanish, by department. As stated earlier, only requests where the preferred language was either English or Spanish were included. The table below shows that, among the County departments that received at least 15,000 MC311 requests, the Department of Health and Human Services had the highest percentage of Spanish requests in 2013 at 15%, followed by non-Montgomery County Government agencies and organizations at 11%.

Percent of MC311 Requests With a Preferred Language of Spanish by Department, 2013²

Department	Total*	% Spanish
DOT	139,970	2%
DEP	65,443	3%
DPS	64,666	3%
Non-MCG	51,957	11%
FIN	45,572	1%
HHS	30,766	15%
DHCA	16,776	4%
All Others	54,755	2%
All Departments	469,905*	4%

* The numbers in the total column refer to the total number of requests with a preferred language of English or Spanish and do not include web requests.

OLO grouped the individual MC311 requests into larger topic areas to get a sense of the types of calls by overall topic. This section provides a brief summary of the types of calls that MC311 receives across all departments.

Formation of Topics. In order to sort the requests, OLO identified overarching topic areas with significant numbers of requests in the six largest departments (by volume of calls), along with “Non-Montgomery County Government (Non-MCG) calls. These departments include Transportation (DOT), Health and Human Services (DHHS), Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA), Finance (Finance), Environmental

² The Public Information Office had a total of 34,206 calls in 2013. However, 21,496 of these calls were hang-ups/dropped calls, which OLO did not include in this data. Therefore, the PIO was included in the “Other” departments.

Protection (DEP), and Permitting Services (DPS). OLO then grouped all remaining County departments into “Other.”

When creating the overall topics, OLO grouped all requests in the department by which they were identified within the Siebel system. In some cases, OLO found that similar request topics occurred across two departments. For example, questions about property taxes were found in both Finance and Non-MCG. In these cases, OLO kept the topics separate and included them in their respective departments. **For a complete list of the sorted requests into topic areas and the number of requests in each, please contact OLO.**

For this section, OLO focused on calendar year 2013; during this time period, MC311 received approximately 567,000 requests. Of those requests, approximately 78,000 were removed from the data set because either (1) the preferred language was not tracked (73,000 SRs) or (2) the preferred language was not English or Spanish (4,800 requests).³

MC311 Requests by Topic. The table on the next page shows the top thirty MC311 call request topics in 2013 for all County Departments. This table shows that approximately 18% of all MC311 requests were for Ride On real time arrival information, almost double of any other topic. Of those calls, only 2% had a preferred language of Spanish. In addition, there were approximately 22,800 (5% of all calls) calls that were hang-ups, dropped calls, or a solution was not found. Seven percent of these calls had a Spanish language preference.

³ MC311 staff report that the County’s Siebel CRM preferred language data may not provide an accurate measure of the numbers of non-English language requests due to human error and system malfunctions. Executive staff report that Voiance data is a more accurate measure. Therefore, OLO did not include requests with preferred languages other than English and Spanish in this analysis. This includes the exclusion of 4,849 SRs in which a language other than English and Spanish was preferred.

**Top 30 MC311 Requests by Topic, All Calls
Calendar Year 2013**

Rank	Topic	# of Requests	% Total Requests	% Topic Requests in Spanish
1	Ride On Real Time Arrival Information	88,430	18%	2%
2	Trash/Recycling Pick Up Request or Question	48,800	10%	3%
3	General Discussion of Individual Property Tax Bill (Finance Department)	24,568	5%	1%
4	Schedule/Cancel DPS Inspections	21,402	4%	3%
5	Ride-On Trip Planning	16,999	3%	2%
6	DPS Contact Information/Location	15,655	3%	3%
7	Information Requests on Building Codes/Fee Schedules/Inspection & Permit Status	14,890	3%	1%
8	Contact Information for State/Federal/Transportation Agencies	12,812	3%	4%
9	Other Ride On (Not Arrival Time or Trip Planning)	12,277	3%	3%
10	Recycling Bin Request/Removal/Repair	11,880	2%	5%
11	General County Information/Status of County Government	11,210	2%	2%
12	Issue/Concern/Status of Tax Bill, Payment, Refund	9,793	2%	2%
13	Tax Information (Non-MCG)	9,069	2%	4%
14	Food Stamps/Cash Assistance	8,764	2%	21%
15	Road Services/Maintenance	8,058	2%	1%
16	General Finance Department Information Requests	6,832	1%	2%
17	Tree Maintenance/Leaf-Related	6,542	1%	2%
18	Address/Hours of County Facilities	6,190	1%	3%
19	Landlord Tenant Issues	6,077	1%	5%
20	Manna Food Center Related	5,837	1%	59%
21	Information on Medicaid/Medical Assistance/Health Care Reform/MCHP	5,019	1%	23%
22	General Police Information	4,933	1%	3%
23	Contact Other Local 311 System	4,900	1%	7%
24	Animal Services/Dead Animal/Animal Nuisance	4,754	1%	2%
25	County Employment Issues - Not Benefits Related	4,321	1%	1%
26	Contact for Other Municipalities	4,260	1%	4%
27	Contacting Case Worker or HHS	3,698	1%	9%
28	Contacting Other County Agencies	3,580	1%	4%
29	Vaccinations/Clinics/Direct Medical Services	3,179	1%	9%
30	Housing/Rental Assistance/Homeless	2,555	1%	7%

Source: MC311 Siebel System

OLO also looked at the most prevalent types of requests with preferred languages of English and Spanish. Because of the high percentages of English-preferred requests, the top requests for English-preferred requests are the same as for all requests. OLO found that, for requests with a preferred language of Spanish, the most prevalent topic area was the Manna Food Center.⁴ These requests were almost double all other topics for requests with a Spanish-speaking preference. In addition to the topics listed below, there were 1,540 calls with a preferred language of Spanish which were hang-ups, dropped calls, or a solution was not found.

**Top Ten MC311 Requests by Topic for Calls in which Preferred Language was Spanish
Calendar Year 2013**

Rank	Topic	# of Requests in Spanish	% Total Requests	% Topic Requests in Spanish
1	Manna Food Center Related	3,458	0.71%	59%
2	Food Stamps/Cash Assistance	1,870	0.38%	21%
3	Ride On Real Time Arrival Information	1,751	0.36%	2%
4	Trash/Recycling Pick Up Request or Question	1,471	0.30%	3%
5	Information about Medicaid/Medical Assistance/Health Care Reform/MCHP	1,136	0.23%	23%
6	Schedule/Cancel DPS Inspections	717	0.15%	3%
7	Recycling Bin Request/Removal/Repair	545	0.11%	5%
8	Contact Information for State/Federal/Transportation Agency	490	0.10%	4%
9	Contact Information or Location for DPS	481	0.10%	3%
10	Ride On (Not Arrival or Trip Planning)	368	.08%	4%

Source: MC311 Siebel System

Manna also had the highest percentage of requests with a preferred language of Spanish – about 59% of all Manna related requests had a Spanish preference. Health and Human Services related issues accounted for most of the remaining top ten request topics that had the highest percentages of requests with a Spanish language preference.

**MC311 Topics with Largest Percentages of Calls with Preferred Language of Spanish
Calendar Year 2013**

Rank	Topic	% of Topic Requests in Spanish
1	Manna Food Center	59%
2	Information on Medicaid/Medical Assistance/Health Care Reform/MCHP	23%
3	Food Stamps/Cash Assistance	21%
4	Information on Vaccinations/Clinics/Direct Medical Services	9%
5	Contacting Case Worker or DHHS	9%
6	Information on Energy/Utilities	9%
7	Housing Complaint/Code Enforcement	7%
8	Information on Housing/Rental Assistance/Homeless	7%
9	Contacting Other Local 311	7%
10	Landlord Tenant Issues	5%

*The topic DHHS “Other” had 11% of all calls with a preferred language of Spanish.

Source: MC311 Siebel System

⁴ In order to receive food from the Manna Food Center, an individual must receive a referral, which involves answering a few questions to verify eligibility. Calling MC311 is one way to obtain a referral; individuals can also contact the Manna Food Center directly or contact one of numerous other referral agencies.

When reviewing call topics with more than one thousand calls, the topics with the lowest percentages of calls with a preferred language of Spanish (1% or less) were: (1) information on building codes/inspection status/fee schedules; (2) road service/maintenance; (3) general discussion of individual property tax bill; and (4) county employment issues (not benefits related).

OLO also looked at top MC311 request topics within each of the top County departments. The following tables show the top types of requests by customers who prefer English versus those that preferred Spanish.⁵ Highlights of the data include:

- Seven of the eight departments had the same top three topic areas in both English and Spanish, with five of those also having the topics occurring in the same order for both English and Spanish.
- There were only three topics in which Spanish requests represented more than 10% of calls in that topic: 59% of Manna Food Center calls, 23% of Medicaid/Medical Assistance/Health Care Reform/MCHP calls, and 21% of Food Stamp/Cash Assistance calls.
- The most common topic area for requests with a preferred language of Spanish was the Manna Food Center; however, DHHS had the highest number of Spanish calls for a specific department.

⁵ The top topics listed in each department account for the following percent of all calls in each department as follows: 58% in Non-MCG; 80% in DPS; 90% in Finance; 69% in DHCA; 84% in DOT; 93% in DEP; 57% in DHHS; and 29% in All Other Departments.

**Top MC311 Request Topics, By Department and Preferred Language
Calendar Year 2013**

Health and Human Services		
Topic	# of Requests	% of Topic Calls
English-Preferred Requests		
Food Stamps/Cash Assistance	6,894	79%
Contacting Case Worker or HHS	3,363	91%
Medicaid/Medical Assistance/Health Care Reform/MCHP	3,883	77%
Spanish-Preferred Requests		
Food Stamps/Cash Assistance	1,870	21%
Medicaid/Medical Assistance/Health Care Reform/MCHP	1,136	23%
Contacting Case Worker or HHS	335	9%

Permitting Services		
Topic	# of Requests	% of Topic Calls
English-Preferred Requests		
Schedule/Cancel DPS Inspections	20,685	97%
DPS Contact Information/Location	15,174	97%
Information Requests on Building Codes/Fee Schedules/Inspection & Permit Status	14,686	99%
Spanish-Preferred Requests		
Schedule/Cancel DPS Inspections	717	3%
DPS Contact Information/Location	481	3%
Information Requests on Building Codes/Fee Schedules/Inspection & Permit Status	204	1%

Finance		
Topic	# of Requests	% of Topic Calls
English-Preferred Requests		
General Discussion of Individual Property Tax Bill	24,265	99%
Issue/Concern/Status with Tax Bill, Payment, Refund	9,618	98%
General Information Requests	6,706	98%
Spanish-Preferred Requests		
General Discussion of Individual Property Tax Bill	303	1%
Issue/Concern/Status with Tax Bill, Payment, Refund	175	2%
General Information Requests	126	2%

Housing and Community Affairs		
Topic	# of Requests	% of Topic Calls
English-Preferred Requests		
Landlord Tenant Issues	5,749	95%
Housing Complaint/Code Enforcement	1,671	93%
MPDU Related	1,724	97%
Spanish-Preferred Requests		
Landlord Tenant Issues	328	5%
Housing Complaint/Code Enforcement	132	7%
MPDU Related	53	3%

Top MC311 Service Request Topics, By Department and Preferred Language

Calendar Year 2013 (Continued)

Transportation		
Topic	# of Requests	% of Topic Calls
English-Preferred Requests		
Ride On Real Time Arrival Information	86,679	98%
Ride On Trip Planning	16,688	98%
Other Ride On (Not Arrival Time or Trip Planning)	11,909	97%
Spanish-Preferred Requests		
Ride On Real Time Arrival Information	1,751	2%
All Other Ride On	368	3%
Other Ride On (Not Arrival Time or Trip Planning)	311	2%

Environmental Protection*		
Topic	# of Requests	% of Topic Calls
English-Preferred Requests		
Trash/Recycling Pick Up Request/Question	47,329	99%
Recycling Bin Request/Removal/Repair	11,335	98%
Spanish-Preferred Requests		
Trash/Recycling Pick Up Request/Question	1,471	1%
Recycling Bin Request/Removal/Repair	545	2%

*OLO only found two topic categories that were large enough to be grouped together.

All Other County Departments Top Three Call Topics by Preferred Language		
Topic	# of Requests	% of Topic Calls
English-Preferred Requests		
General Information/Status of County Government	10,939	98%
Address/Hours of County Facilities	6,023	97%
General Police Information	4,806	97%
Spanish-Preferred Requests		
General Information/Status of County Government	271	2%
Address/Hours of County Facilities	167	3%
General Police Information	127	3%

Non-MCG Services Top Three Call Topics by Preferred Language		
Topic	# of Requests	% of Topic Calls
English-Preferred Requests		
Contact Other State/Federal/Transportation Agency	12,322	96%
Tax Information	8,733	96%
Contact Other Local 311 Systems	4,577	93%
Spanish-Preferred Requests		
Manna Food Center-Related	3,458	59%
Contact Other State/Federal/Transportation Agency	490	4%
Tax Information	336	4%

Source: MC311 Siebel System

D. Length of Time to Close Service Requests by Preferred Language

OLO compared the number of days it took to close service requests with preferred languages of English and Spanish. For this comparison, OLO examined the average numbers of business days it took to close requests for each of the two preferred language groups within specific request topics.

OLO only examined requests for services, rather than for general information, and did not include requests where MC311 typically advises the caller to contact a department or non-County agency directly. It is important to note that differences in how long it takes to close requests can occur for different reasons, such as location, time of the year, and urgency of the specific request. OLO’s analysis provides only a simple comparison of the average numbers of days to close the requests and does not examine the causes of any differences.

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. The table shows that for the top ten service request categories for requests from Spanish-speaking callers, the average numbers of days to close the requests were similar among requests with preferred languages of English and Spanish for most request categories. The differences were largest for requests to contact an income supports case worker and for housing complaints – for these, requests with a preferred language of Spanish took 2 and 3 days longer, respectively, than those with a preferred language of English. These differences do not control for location, time of year or urgency of the caller’s specific request.

Days to Close Service Requests by Preferred Language, CY 2013

Rank	Request	Dept.	English Preferred		Spanish Preferred	
			Average Days to Close	# of Requests	Average Days to Close	# of Requests
1	Bulk Trash Pick-Up	DEP	2.1	14,145	2.2	830
2	Income Supports Application Status	HHS	2.1	2,830	2.4	768
3	22 Gallon Bin (Bottles/Cans Recycling)	DEP	5.5	6,010	5.7	389
4	Discuss Property Tax Bill	FIN	1.3	21,809	1.0	252
5	Contacting Income Supports Case Worker	HHS	5.1	1,418	7.1	231
6	Scrap Metal Pick-Up	DEP	2.8	7,737	2.5	156
7	Landlord Tenant Complaints	DHCA	1.5	4,311	2.2	156
8	Ride On Complaint	DOT	6.9	4,282	6.7	139
9	Permit, Plan Review or Inspection Status	DPS	1.9	5,526	1.7	130
10	Housing Complaints	DHCA	20.6	2,494	23.4	99

E. Call Characteristics

Finally, OLO compared the call characteristics of calls from Spanish speakers and other calls. OLO examined call center data in order to compare call times and examined request data to compare numbers of calls that CSRs were unable to place in a specific request category. OLO also looked at data on the languages spoken by callers using the telephone interpretation service.

The table shows the average seconds per call for the following categories for calls during CY 2013 where the caller selected to speak with a Spanish-speaking CSR and for other regular calls:

- **Talk time:** the average seconds per call that the CSR was speaking with the caller
- **Hold time:** the average seconds per call that the CSR placed the caller on hold for any reason, such as consulting with a supervisor
- **After call work time:** the average seconds per call that the CSR spent doing work related to a call but not during the call

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.

Number of Seconds Spent Per Call by Activity, CY 2013

	Spanish CSR	Other
# of Calls	20,703	469,568
Hold time	22	28
Talk time	210	173
After call work time	51	58

Additionally, the table shows the total numbers of calls with preferred languages of English and Spanish during CY 2013 where the CSR was unable to identify a specific request category or provide a solution for the caller, for example because the call was dropped. As shown in the table below, for 7% of Spanish calls, the CSR was unable to identify the caller’s request, compared with 5% of English requests.

Calls Where CSR Did Not Identify Specific Request Category or Solution, CY 2013

	Total	# Unidentified	% Unidentified
Spanish Requests	21,261	1,540	7%
English Requests	470,590	21,244	5%

Other languages. During CY 2013, the Voiance telephone interpretation service was used for languages other than Spanish for a total of 189 MC311 calls. 28 different languages (other than Spanish) were used. The table shows the number of calls for each language with at least 5 calls using the interpretation service over the course of the calendar year.

Top Languages Other Than Spanish for Which Telephone Interpretation Was Used, CY 2013

Language	# of Calls
Mandarin	55
Amharic (Ethiopia)	28
Korean	21
French	13
Russian	11
Cantonese	10
Farsi	8
Vietnamese	8
Brazil-Portuguese	5

CHAPTER V. Summary of Findings

In the FY14 Office of Legislative Oversight's work program, the Council placed emphasis on several overall topic areas, including cultural competency. This project aims to enhance the County Council's awareness of cultural competency issues in the County by reviewing the County's efforts to ensure that individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) have equal access to County services via MC311. MC311 is a customer relationship management system, integrating web-based information, a phone system, and a service database, that provides the public with a single three-digit telephone number or website to access County information and services. The remainder of this chapter provides a summary of OLO's findings.

Cultural Competency

Cultural competency is having awareness of varying cultural and community norms of diverse populations and providing equal access service delivery. There are five essential elements of the cultural competency of an institution:

1. Value diversity by respecting different cultural customs, values, and communication methods;
2. Cultivate cultural awareness;
3. Understand the dynamics of cultural interactions;
4. Acquire and Institutionalize cultural knowledge; and
5. Design and adapt service delivery to the diversity of the community.

Organizations with cultural competency have a defined set of values and practices, along with established policies and infrastructure, to work effectively with diverse communities in a non-discriminatory manner. One key element of cultural competency is linguistic competency, the ability of an organization to communicate effectively with diverse audiences.

Best Practices

FINDING #1: Montgomery County 311's efforts to ensure equal access for limited-English proficiency (LEP) individuals generally align with best practices.

OLO identified the following best practices for ensuring equal access for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) for 311 programs:

- Have a clear vision statement;
- Diversify community outreach efforts, including tailoring messages to specific populations;
- Use diverse media and technology to promote 311 system and establish various methods of contacting 311 (including interpretation services);
- Conduct extensive technical and diversity training of staff;
- Conduct periodic internal agency needs assessments for service and language needs; and
- Provide transparent system data and enable resident feedback.

Overall, the policies and practices of MC311 align with the identified best practices for equal access to service delivery. Some specific practices include:

- Access to the MC311 system through telephone and web-based channels;
- Translation services to all callers, including 17 Spanish-speaking customer service representatives or telephone translation services for over 150 other languages;
- Community outreach including flyers/palm cards in multiple languages, meeting with community groups, and television/radio/newspaper advertisements in Spanish; and
- Monthly reports on customer request statistics.

Language Communities in Montgomery County

FINDING #2: In Montgomery County, 15% of individuals speak English less than “very well.” Additionally, in 7% of households, no person in the household aged 14 or older speaks English “very well”.

The U.S. Census Bureau categorizes individuals in different ways with respect to language, including by the language spoken at home and by their level of English proficiency. According to the American Community Survey 2012 estimates, there are 926,231 people in Montgomery County. Of these, 61% (564,386) speak only English at home. The table summarizes the languages spoken at home for others in the County.

**Language Spoken at Home, Montgomery County
2012 Estimates**

Language Spoken at Home	% of Residents
Only English	61%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	16%
Other Indo-European languages	6%
Other and unspecified languages	4%
Chinese	4%
French (including Patois, Creole, Cajun)	3%
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages	2%
Korean, Slavic Language, Vietnamese, Tagalog, or German/Other West Germanic (Each)	1%

Source: American Community Surveys, Census Bureau 2012

MC311 Language Data

FINDING #3: During 2012-13, MC311 received about 956,000 calls. Approximately 4.4% of all MC311 calls were from callers requesting to speak with a Spanish-speaking customer services representative (CSR) or callers that used the telephone interpretation service to communicate with a CSR.

MC311 offers to residents two methods for callers who prefer a language other than English to interact with customer service representatives (CSRs). The caller can either prompt to speak with a Spanish-speaking CSR or can speak with a CSR in any of over 150 languages using a telephone interpretation service. OLO examined MC311 call center data to analyze the totals and trends in non-English MC311 calls. The data show that from January 2012 through December 2013:

- Of the approximate 40,000 call requests per month, 4.4% were non-English calls;
- About 1,590 calls per month (4% of calls) were from callers requesting to speak with a Spanish-speaking representative, and an additional 150 calls per month were from Spanish speakers who used the telephone interpretation service;
- On average, 18 calls per month required interpretation for languages other than Spanish; and
- The average monthly number of Spanish-speaking CSR call requests increased 13% from 1,500 in 2012 to 1,700 in 2013;
- The average monthly calls using the interpretation service decreased 35% from 200 in 2012 to 130 in 2013.

FINDING #4: During calendar year 2013, the most common MC311 requests from callers requesting to speak in Spanish were different from the most common requests from all callers.

This table shows the top five request topics in both English and Spanish. Overall, “Ride On Real Time Arrival Information” was by far the largest request topic, accounting for approximately 90,000 requests (about 18% of all requests), of which 2% had a preferred language of Spanish. For requests in which the preferred language was Spanish, “Manna Food Center Related” requests were the most prevalent type of calls. These requests were almost double all other topics for calls with a Spanish-speaking preference.

Top Five Request Topics for English and Spanish Calls

Rank	Topic	# of Call Requests	% of All Call Request
English-Preferred Requests			
1	Ride On Real Time Arrival Information	88,430	18%
2	Trash/Recycling Pick Up Request or Question	48,800	10%
3	General Discussion of Individual Property Tax Bill (Finance Department)	24,568	5%
4	Schedule/Cancel DPS Inspections	21,402	4%
5	Ride-On Trip Planning	16,999	3%
Spanish-Preferred Requests			
1	Manna Food Center Related	3,458	0.71%
2	Food Stamps/Cash Assistance	1,870	0.38%
3	Ride On Real Time Arrival Information	1,751	0.36%
4	Trash/Recycling Pick Up Request or Question	1,471	0.30%
5	Information about Medicaid/Medical Assistance/Health Care Reform/MCHP	1,136	0.23%

Source: MC311 Siebel System

Percent of Spanish-Preferred Requests by Topic. Of the top thirty request topics received by MC311 in 2013, seven had Spanish requested for more than 5% of calls, with only three topics having more than ten 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%.

Number of Unidentified Call Topics. In 2013, there were approximately 23,000 calls during which the CSR was unable to identify or solve the caller’s request for a variety of reasons including a dropped call. Approximately 5% of English calls were unidentified, which is similar to the 7% of Spanish calls that were unidentified.

FINDING #5: 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.

OLO compared the number of days it took to close service requests among requests with preferred languages of English and Spanish. For this comparison, OLO examined how many business days it took to close requests on average for each of the two preferred language groups within the top 10 specific service request categories for Spanish-speaking callers.

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. The differences were largest for requests to contact an income supports case worker and for housing complaints – for these, requests with a preferred language of Spanish took 2 and 3 days longer, respectively, than those with a preferred language of English. These differences do not control for location, time of year or urgency of the caller’s specific request.

FINDING #6: During calendar year 2013, 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.

OLO compared the following call characteristics of calls from Spanish speakers with those of other calls:

- **Talk time:** the average seconds per call that the CSR was speaking with the caller;
- **Hold time:** the average seconds per call that the CSR placed the caller on hold for any reason, such as consulting with a supervisor; and
- **After call work time:** the average seconds per call that the CSR spent doing work related to a call but not during the call.

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.

Number of Seconds Spent Per Call by Activity, CY 2013

	Spanish CSR	Other
# of Calls	20,703	469,568
Hold time	22	28
Talk time	210	173
After call work time	51	58

Source: MC311 Siebel System

CHAPTER VI. Agency Comments on Final Draft

The Office of Legislative Oversight circulated a final draft of this report to the Chief Administrative Officer for Montgomery County. OLO appreciates the time taken by agency representatives to review the draft and provide comments. OLO's final report incorporates technical corrections and comments provided by agency staff.



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Timothy L. Firestine
Chief Administrative Officer

February 26, 2014

TO: Chris Cihlar, Director, Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: *TLF* Timothy L. Firestine, Chief Administrative Officer *Timothy L. Firestine*

SUBJECT: OLO DRAFT Report 2014-5, An Examination of MC311 Calls by Preferred Language

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Draft OLO Report No. 2014-5 regarding the examination of MC311 calls by preferred language. Your report accurately captures the processes, tools and procedures used by MC311 to assure equal access to all customers regardless of English language proficiency. I agree with your overall finding that "Montgomery County 311's efforts to ensure equal access for limited-English proficiency (LEP) individuals generally align with best practices".

The research conducted by Kristen Latham and Natalia Carrizosa resulted in a valuable report that will be useful to us as we continue to refine our business processes and outreach efforts. We will use the information on the extensive language-related access and outreach efforts in NYC and Philadelphia to continue growing our own efforts. In fact, we've already been working with the County's Regional Centers and their Citizen Advisory Boards to develop a Neighborhood Liaison Program similar to the one in Philadelphia.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this draft report and look forward to participating in the Council's review. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Fariba Kassiri at 240-777-2512 or fariba.kassiri@montgomerycountymd.gov.

cc: Fariba Kassiri, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Bonnie Kirkland, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
Patrick Lacefield, Director, Public Information Office
Leslie Hamm, Director of MC311, Public Information Office