

Annual Report on Language Access Implementation (FY2011)

System-wide Improvements

Between 2009 and 2010, Montgomery County government's executive branch undertook a series of systemic changes to improve linguistic access to government services for people with limited English proficiency (LEP). These included intensive work by the LEP Leadership Team, whose leadership and broad-based assessment led to the signing of the Executive Order on Language Access, enhanced and improved staff training and organizational communication, a new public Web site on LEP with online tools for searching translated documents and certified bilingual employees, and department-specific language access plans and evaluation.

Building on FY2010's improvements on accountability, communication and cost-effectiveness, FY2011 focused on finding ways to cut costs, preserving the limited resources while still meeting the same quality standards for making public services linguistically accessible. Highlights included:

1. **Public Services Announcement on LEP.** A 1-minute public services announcement (PSA) video on LEP was produced by the Montgomery County Public TV with assistance from the Language Access Coordinator and certified bilingual staff from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). It was posted on YouTube, the County's LEP Web site, and distributed to all PEG (Public, Educational and Government Access) channels to raise public awareness about the County government's ability to serve residents in different languages. The video is accessible on the LEP Web site at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/LEP.
2. **Reporting to Council on Work Progress.** In June of 2011, the County Council Government Operations Committee held a work session on Language Access in Montgomery County, including the executive branch of the County government, the Montgomery County Public Schools, Montgomery College, and Park and Planning. The Language Access Coordinator presented an overview of the executive branch's work and improvements on language access in the past two years.
3. **Change of contractors to reduce costs and improve translation consistency.** To save costs and improve translation consistency, HHS, which is the lead agency overseeing written translation and in-person interpretation contracts, decided to use the Maryland state's contractors instead of the three contractors we used for the past few years. Effective July 1, 2011 (beginning of FY2012), Shreiber is the sole contractor for written translation and Lion Bridges is the sole contractor for oral interpretation. For contact information on the new contractors, please visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov/lep.

4. **Better alignments of the bilingual certification program with needs.** There were two major changes to the certified bilingual employees program in the past fiscal year:
 - a. **Alignment with department staffing needs.** In October 2010, the Office of Human Resources, which oversees the language certified program, requested all department directors to assess their departments' needs for certified language employees to decide 1) if each certified employees' language skill is still needed for his or her job requirements, and 2) if the level of certification is appropriate for that particular need. The assessment was conducted in accordance with the Montgomery County Personnel Regulations (MCPR) 10-9 (c)(2), which requires directors to periodically review the multilingual pay differential and determine if a change is needed. The assessment led to 48 positions deemed no longer necessary by their departments and consequently removed from the certification program and 13 positions were changed from the advanced level to the basic level (see also "Changes to Certified Bilingual Employees" on page 3).
 - b. **Alignment with actual usage.** From the telephone interpretation usage records of FY10, it was clear that 96 percent of telephone interpretation needs were for just six languages—Spanish, Chinese, French, Korean, Vietnamese and Amharic (Ethiopian language). As a result, starting from May 1, 2011, only employees speaking these languages would be tested for certification to reflect the actual needs.
5. **MC311 as a primary interface with the public.** MC311 has significantly changed the way County government departments interact with the public. With MC311 serving as a central customer service center fielding service calls and public inquiries, it is able to gather more accurate data on over-the-phone interpretation needs while reducing the departments' direct call volume and the need for over-the-phone interpretation for simple inquiries.
6. **National recognition of Montgomery County's language access work.** In June of 2011, the Migration Policy Institute, an independent think tank dedicated to the analysis of the movement of people worldwide, invited the County's Language Access Coordinator to write about Montgomery County's efforts on improving language access in recent years. The article, "*Doing More with Less on Language Access*," has been published on MPI's Language Portal, www.migrationpolicy.org/languageportal.

Department-Level Improvements

As most of the major, system-wide improvements were made in FY10, work progress was much more incremental for FY11 at all levels, which was expected to be the case going forward. The LEP Leadership and Liaison teams focused on the following measures to gather data and measure progress at department levels:

- Changes to certified bilingual employee and impact on departments
- Display of language ID boards which serve both as a public communication tool and a tool for staff to have quick access to interpretation services
- Participation in staff training
- New translated documents in FY11

Below is a high-level summary of the areas of improvements among all departments and the areas in need of improvements, based on data submitted by the department liaisons.

Areas of Progress	Areas in Need of Improvements
+	Δ
Public Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language ID Boards • Bilingual voice mail messages Staff Training Telephone translation services	Loss of certified bilingual employees Written translation Direct outreach to the LEP community Reliability of interpretation and translation services

Changes to Certified Bilingual Employee

Sixteen departments reported minor changes, between 1-2 employees, in the number of certified bilingual employees. The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and the Department of Recreation have experienced more significant reductions in certified bilingual employees than most others due to budget-related restructuring and re-evaluation of certified employees. The decrease in the number of certified bilingual employees is primarily due to staff reduction related to budget cuts, shifts of some staff to MC311 as customer service representatives for more centralized services, and re-evaluation of the certification of bilingual employees by department leadership at the request of the Office of Human Resources.

The re-evaluation of certified bilingual employees also led to some employees with advanced certification being reduced to basic certification, and some with basic certification losing certification. For instance, some bilingual employees have lost their certification because of infrequent use of their services. In addition, an increasing number of certified bilingual employees only work part-time, or on an as-needed basis.

The total number of bilingual employees across all departments stands at 645 in FY2011, a decrease of 20 from 665 in FY2010, reflecting both the reduction of previously certified

employees and the increase of newly certified in top six languages indicated above (see 4-b on page 2).

Public Communication (Language ID Boards)

As a public communication tool, the language ID board has been widely used and displayed by almost departments that have needs, including those infrequent users of language assistance. Almost all departments responded having the language ID boards in prominent locations at front desks or major service areas to the general public. The idea of displaying the ID board is to convey accessibility and to provide the convenience for staff, no matter how infrequent the encounter. Many departments have other signs including multilingual flyers, brochures, and documents displayed as appropriate.

Some departments such as MC311 have no customer-interacting “front desk” but have Web presence as a public interface that demonstrates linguistic accessibility.

Staff Training

The Language Access Coordinator is in charge of staff training, from design to teaching, to make it more applicable and accessible to our County. Most departments have either all or the vast majority of their frontline employees trained or plan to be trained in the near future. Some departments took a step further by requiring non-frontline staff to attend the LEP training to ensure that the entire department is informed of the LEP policy and expectations.

The largest department with most frequent public interface—Health and Human Services, Fire and Rescue Services, and Police, offer their own customized language access trainings to better meet the needs of that specific department. HHS has implemented language access related classes since 2005 and mandated that all staff participate in a one-and-half hour training on the HHS LEP policy and plan. MC311 employees are trained in the etiquette of managing calls from LEP callers, and the Police officers receive eight hours of scenario-based training on cultural diversity including ways to help LEP persons. In total, 239 employees (excluding those trained through HSS and the Police) completed the LEP training in FY2011.

New Translated Materials

About one-third (10 out of 31) of the departments have had new documents translated in FY2011. Fiscal constraints certainly limited the departments’ ability to have more of their needed documents and information translated. Another deterrent is the complexity of written translation process, as multiple steps and parties are involved in each translation. Some departments found the process especially frustrating with different versions of a translation and no way of distinguishing the linguistic nuances.

All of the documents translated last year were translated into Spanish first, with half also translated into Chinese, with the exception of HHS, which translated 41 documents in

nine different languages. Since last year, all translated materials from departments have been posted on the County's LEP Web site.

Improvements

The enhanced focus on language access including staff training in the past two years has paid off in County departments' overall level of awareness and proactive efforts to make their services and information more LEP-friendly and accessible. For example:

- The Community Use of Public Facilities' computer kiosk in the reception area has a link to Babelfish's language translation Web site, which can be useful for basic communication.
- The Office of Consumer Protection has streamlined translation services by recruiting volunteer translators and is processing incoming non-English language complaints earlier to expedite service delivery.
- Several departments such as the Commission for Women and Department of Transportation have multilingual recording messages and phone hotlines.
- The Department of Environmental Protection has expanded its RainScapes program and multilingual outreach and education for its new Stormwater Permit.
- The Department of Transportation revised its Web page to make Web translations easier and its translated documents more accessible to LEP customers. It also targeted high incident areas for its Community Outreach Pedestrian Safety educational program in both English and Spanish.
- MC311, a critical customer interface office, has enhanced its bilingual staffing capacity, launched several Spanish language advertisements in print, radio and online, and aired a Spanish language public service announcement on County Cable TV and on the County Web site. In addition, it is planning to train all its customer service representatives how to say "Please hold" in several other languages to improve customer service experience and reduce call drops.
- To be more cost effective, Health and Human Services has invested in internal staff training capacity to reduce its dependency on contracted training services for all its hundreds of certified bilingual employees.
- The Department of Housing and Community Affairs participated in or organized 93 community events providing information and counseling in several languages.
- The Public Libraries and the Community Use of Public Facilities have made LEP staff training part of their organizations' staff performance plan and evaluation.

- Surveys and other methods of data collection are being used by departments not only to evaluate their own compliance with the LEP policy, but also to collect information about the LEP population that they serve to provide optimal service.

Challenges

Because of the budget limitations, departments are increasingly turning to the County's internal language resources, such as bilingual employees and even volunteers, before using a contractor. These "borrowed" employees have been a great value added in assisting with multilingual services. A couple of departments have also effectively partnered with community organizations to provide additional multilingual services.

There is still a need for direct outreach to the LEP community, including at public events and on the Web. Though the County has many resources for LEP individuals when they contact the County government, it is much more difficult to communicate the other way around—reaching out effectively to LEP individuals.

Unreliable methods of interpretation and translation continues to be an issue, as in the case of documents being translated by the County's bilingual employees with advanced certification not meeting the standards of a government publication. In some cases, departments had to resort to using family members or friends in communicating with LEP individuals when immediate language assistance is needed, which is not recommended but often necessary.

Spanish continues to be the predominant language in need of language assistance, and as a result, departments have made greater efforts to accommodate Spanish-speakers than for other language speakers. In fact, almost all of the added language resources such as translated documents or newly certified employees were in Spanish. The fact that Spanish-language speakers only account for 44 percent of all LEP language speakers but 86 percent of all telephone interpretation services means LEP individuals who speak other languages are not directly interacting with the County government nearly as much. This could be a combination of a lack of awareness about the availability of language assistance among the LEPs who speak other languages or the greater needs among Spanish-language speakers for County services.

Summary and FY12 Priorities

In spring of 2011, the LEP teams decided that departments should seek to collect data on the following:

1. Languages in need of assistance
2. Resources used to provide assistance
3. Services needed
4. Documents translated

Departments are expected to provide the above data as part of their annual evaluation but can develop their own mechanisms of collecting such data.

From departments' implementation reports, it was clear the tide has shifted from mandate to necessity. The mindset of many of the departments and County employees, especially those who frequently work with LEP individuals is changing from "what do I need to do to be in compliance?" to "how to reach the most people?" or "what's the best way to communicate this information or deliver this service?"

Looking ahead, the importance of language access will be reflected less in the number of employees trained or amount of resources used but rather in effectiveness of communication and service delivery and the lack of problems encountered. It is worth emphasizing that language access is about making public services more accessible to the public. LEP is not a special initiative, but rather a way of doing business for a local government whose constituency is as diverse as what we have in Montgomery County.

Charts and Figures

Total Costs of Contracted Language Services

Contractor	FY 2010	FY 2011
Translation International	\$43,319	\$46,339
Norther Virginia AHEC	\$37,845	\$55,090
CTS Language Link	\$27,313	\$28,003
LLE/Voiance (telephone interpretation)	\$342,609	\$285,117
Total	\$451,086	\$414,547

Top 10 Languages (of FY2011) Using Telephone Interpretation

Language	% of Calls	
	FY2010	FY2011
Spanish	88.6%	86.1%
Mandarin	1.8%	2.2%
French	1.8%	2.1%
Amharic (Ethiopia)	1.3%	1.5%
Korean	1.6%	1.4%
Vietnamese	1.3%	1.2%
Russian	0.4%	0.8%
Arabic	0.3%	0.6%
Farsi	0.5%	0.5%
Cantonese	0.3%	0.4%
Nepali	0.1%	0.3%
All Others	2.0%	3.0%

Telephone Interpretation Usage (FY2011)

Total Number of Calls	26,996
Total Minutes	261,070
Average Price Per Minute	\$1.10
Average Price for Spanish	\$1.09

Department LEP Policy Implementation Checklist

Department	Liaison	Number of Certified Bilingual Employees in FY10-FY11			Language ID Boards displayed	Staff Training	New Materials/ Documents translated	Improvements/ Challenges
		Decreased	Same	Increased				
Commission for Women	Clotilde Puertolas		✓		✓	*		+
Community Use of Public Facilities	Anne Brown	*	*	*	✓	✓		+
Consumer Protection	Lorena Bailey			✓	✓	✓	✓	+
Correction and Rehabilitation	Art Wallenstein	✓			✓	✓		*
County Attorney's Office	Erin Ashbarry	✓			✓	✓		*
Economic Development	(Vacant)	✓			✓	✓	✓	+
Emergency Management and Homeland Security	Ellis Desiree		✓		N/A			-
Environmental Protection	Garry Tyran	✓			N/A	✓	✓	+
Finance	Phavann Chhuan	✓			✓	✓		
Fire Rescue Services	Leslie Maxim	*	*	*	✓	^	✓	+
General Services	Judy Davis			✓	✓			
Health and Human Services	Betty H. Lam			✓	✓	✓	✓	+
Housing and Community Affairs	Myriam Torrico	*	*	*	✓	✓	✓	+
Human Resources	Joe Heiney-Gonzalez		✓		✓	✓		*
Human Rights	Anis Ahmed		✓		✓	✓		*

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Intergovernmental Relations	Wanda Wells		✓		✓	✓	✓	*
Liquor Control	Lynn Duncan		✓		✓	✓		*
Management and Budget Office	Angela Dizelos		✓		✓	✓	✓	*
MC311	Traci Morris			✓	N/A	✓	N/A	+
Permitting Services	Reginald T. Jetter	✓			✓	✓	✓	+
Police	Terrence Pierce		✓		✓	✓		+
Public Information Office	Esther Bowring	*	*	*	✓	✓	✓	*
Public Libraries	Michelle Sellars	*	*	*	✓	✓	✓	*
Recreation	Elizabeth Ortega-Lohmeyer	*	*	*	✓	✓	*	-
Regional Services Center- BCC	Ken Hartman	*	*	*				*
Regional Services Center-Eastern	Anjoo Chohda	*	*	*	✓	✓	✓	*
Regional Services Center- Mid-County	(Vacant)	*	*	*				*
Regional Services Center- Silver Spring	Reemberto Rodriguez	*	*	*	✓	✓	✓	*
Regional Services Center- Upper County	Andrea Bush	*	*	*				*
Technology Services	Peris Rowell-Hann		✓			✓	✓	*
Transportation	Margaret Boumel		✓		✓	✓	✓	+

Notes:

* indicates no valid response or data submission as of August 2011.

+ indicates department's overall improvements on LEP implementation, based on self-reporting.

- indicates department's facing challenges on LEP implementation, based on self-reporting.

^ indicates that although department does not require staff to attend LEP training, it is planning for it.

LEP Department Liaisons (FY2012)		
Department	LEP Liaison	Extension
Commission for Women	Clotilde Puertolas	78335
Community Use of Public Facilities	Anne Brown	72723
Consumer Protection	Lorena Bailey	72723
Correction and Rehabilitation	Art Wallenstein	79978
County Attorney's Office	Erin Ashbarry	76744
County Executive's Office	Lily Qi	72524
Economic Development	(Vacant)	72077
Emergency Management and Homeland Security	Ellis Desiree	72422
Environmental Protection	Garry Tyran	77728
Finance	Phavann Chhuan	78955
Fire and Rescue Service	Leslie Maxam	38930
General Services	Judy Davis	76046
Health and Human Services	Betty Lam	71629
Housing and Community Affairs	Myriam Torrico	73627
Human Resources	Joe Heiney-Gonzalez	75070
Human Rights	Anis Ahmed	78454
Intergovernmental Relations	Wanda Wells	76550
Liquor Control	Lynn Duncan	71915
Management and Budget Office	Angela Dizelos	72758
MC311	Traci Morris	-
Permitting Services	Reginald Jetter	76275
Police	Terrence Pierce	35026
Public Information Office	Esther Bowring	76513
Public Libraries	Michelle Sellars	70196
Recreation	Elizabeth Ortega-Lohmeyer	-
Regional Service Center – Eastern	Anjoo Chohda	78411
Regional Service Center – Bethesda-Chevy Chase	Ken Hartman	78206
Regional Service Center – Mid-County	(Vacant)	78114
Regional Service Center – Silver Spring	Reemberto Rodriguez	75307
Regional Service Center – Upper County	Andrea Bush	78043
Technology Services	Peris Rowell-Hann	72985
Transportation	Margaret Boumel	77174