

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR COMMUNICATION WITH PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

POLICY:

Goodhue County will take reasonable steps to ensure that persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) have meaningful access and an equal opportunity to participate in our services, activities, programs, and other benefits. The policy of Goodhue County is to ensure meaningful communication with LEP members of the public and their authorized representatives. All interpreters, translators and other aids needed to comply with this policy shall be provided without cost to the person being served, and members of the public and their families will be informed of the availability of such assistance free of charge.

Language assistance will be provided through use of competent bilingual staff, staff interpreters, contracts or formal arrangements with local organizations providing interpretation or translation services, or technology and telephonic interpretation services. All staff will be provided notice of this policy and procedure, and staff that may have direct contact with LEP individuals will be trained in effective communication techniques, including the effective use of an interpreter.

Goodhue County will conduct a regular review of the language access needs within Goodhue County, as well as update and monitor the implementation of this policy and these procedures every three years or more frequently if needed.

PROCEDURES:

The guidelines and procedures contained in this document apply to all County Departments and all County employees who interact directly and/or indirectly with LEP Individuals.

Each County Department is also required to:

- (a) Identify at least one individual on staff to serve as that Department's LEP Liaison. If staff is not designated, then the head of the department will act in this role.
- (b) Identify how the County's LEP Plan will apply within that specific department.
- (c) Produce its own guidelines for how to serve members of the public within that specific department.
- (d) Identify and implement an annual training schedule for all department staff which may include additional training for staff with more frequent use of interpreters or translated documents.
- (e) Budget for LEP services within that Department (if needed)
- (f) Track LEP services provided.

1. IDENTIFYING LEP PERSONS AND THEIR LANGUAGE

Goodhue County will promptly identify the language and communication needs of the LEP person. If necessary, staff will use a language identification card (or “I speak cards,”) or posters to determine the language. These materials will be provided to each department by the Goodhue County Communications Specialist. In addition, when records are kept of past interactions with members of the public or their family members, the language used to communicate with the LEP person will be included as part of the record.

2. OBTAINING A QUALIFIED INTERPRETER

The Department’s LEP Liaison are responsible for:

- (a)** Maintaining an accurate and current list showing the name, language, phone number and hours of availability of bilingual staff.
- (b)** Creating a process for contacting the appropriate bilingual staff member to interpret, if that employee speaks the needed language, is available and is qualified to interpret.
- (c)** Maintaining an accurate and current list of outside interpreters to obtain if a bilingual staff or staff interpreter is not available or does not speak the needed language.
 - This list will include the agency’s name with whom the department has contracted or made arrangements with to provide qualified interpreter services. It will also include the agencies telephone number and the hours of availability.

Some LEP persons may prefer or request to use a family member or friend as an interpreter. However, family members or friends of the LEP person will not be used as interpreters unless specifically requested by that individual and after the LEP person has understood that an offer of an interpreter at no charge to the person has been made by Goodhue County staff. Such an offer and the response will be documented in the person’s file. If the LEP person chooses to use a family member or friend as an interpreter, issues of competency of interpretation, confidentiality, privacy, and conflict of interest will be considered. If the family member or friend is not competent or appropriate for any of these reasons, competent interpreter services will be provided to the LEP person.

Children and other clients/patients/residents will not be used to interpret, to ensure confidentiality of information and accurate communication.

3. PROVIDING WRITTEN TRANSLATIONS

- (a)** When translation of documents is needed, each department in Goodhue County will submit documents for translation into frequently encountered languages to their Department’s LEP Liaison. Original documents being submitted for translation will be in final, approved form with updated and accurate information.

- (b) Goodhue County may provide translation of other written materials, if needed, as well as written notice of the availability of translation, free of charge, for LEP individuals.
- (c) The Goodhue County Communications Specialist will set benchmarks for translation of vital documents into additional languages over time.

4. PROVIDING NOTICE TO LEP PERSONS

Goodhue County will inform LEP persons of the availability of language assistance, free of charge, by providing written notice in languages LEP persons will understand. At a minimum, notices and signs will be posted and provided in intake areas and other points of entry. Notification will also be provided through one or more of the following: outreach documents, telephone voice mail menus, local newspapers, social media, and the Goodhue County website.

5. MONITORING LANGUAGE NEEDS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Every three years or more frequently if needed, Goodhue County will assess changes in demographics, types of services or other needs that may require reevaluation of this policy and its procedures. In addition, Goodhue County will regularly assess the efficacy of these procedures, including but not limited to mechanisms for securing interpreter services, equipment used for the delivery of language assistance, complaints filed by LEP persons, feedback from patients and community organizations, etc.