

# INTERPRETER ADVOCACY

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## Community Organizations

**IKIGAI**

San Antonio, TX  
[ikigaiusa.org](http://ikigaiusa.org)



*IKIGAI – Integrated Knowledge Institute for the Greater Advancement of Interpreters*

## Advocacy for Interpreters through Community Organizations

Interpreters can take advantage of community groups working with populations that generally communicate in languages other than English or are known to be Limited English Proficient (LEP) segments of the local population. Community organizations are excellent avenues to disseminate information about language minorities' rights to meaningful language access while at the same time creating awareness about the importance of competent and qualified language services providers, such as duly credentialed translators and interpreters.

This resource has been created to help interpreters with local advocacy efforts. It includes a sample press release for the event, and suggested segments for a presentation that can be combined in modular fashion to accommodate time limitations. Feel free to add information to what is provided here.

There are also pages with handout templates that can be reproduced digitally or in hard copies for attendees to take with them.

Please visit IKIGAI's webpage to learn more about IKIGAI.

I wish you the greatest success with your interpreter advocacy efforts.

Janis Palma  
President, IKIGAI  
ikigai.interpreters@gmail.com



## SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE FOR A PUBLIC EVENT

[Note to presenter: You may use the sponsoring organizations' letterhead or any other format they may have for their own press releases. If they do not have one, use this one as a template.]

[Community organization's logo]  
 Community organization's address  
 Phone number  
 Email  
 Web page

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Date]

The [name of community organization] is sponsoring an open forum on language rights, language access and language justice on [date], at [time]. This free event will take place at [address] and is open to the public. Everyone is welcome to attend and participate.

Our guest speaker is [name of interpreter who will be presenting], [brief information about the presenter to provide potential attendees with some context].

Contact person: [name of the organization's contact person for the press]

Phone:

Email:



## Language Rights, Language Access, Language Justice

### Program:

- Introduction of presenter (interpreter) by sponsor
  - o Presenter thanks sponsoring organization
- What does language justice mean?
- Language access as conceptualized by law and DOJ guidance
- Language rights of Limited English Speaking (LEP) individuals in different settings
- Q&A with attendees
- (If a donor is available, have refreshments at the end of the presentation)

### **What does language justice mean?**

Every individual in a diverse society such as ours can decide which language they prefer to use when communicating with others. Sometimes that language can be the one most widely used by a given community, such as English or Spanish. Sometimes, however, it is a language understood by only a few members of the community.

Language justice means that everyone can communicate and have full access to all services and information available to every citizen or resident, even if the languages they speak and understand are different from those of other citizens and residents of their community. When different languages are spoken, interpreters and translators can provide the necessary services for communication and understanding to take place within any social group, no matter how large or how small. It is important, nonetheless, for those interpreters and translators to be fully proficient, trained and educated in all aspects that

enable them to provide accurate, faithful, and at times confidential communications between those who do not speak or understand the same language.

With language justice, no single language is more important than any other; no single language is used to limit the access of other language speakers to full participation in society. Public signs, for example, are correctly translated so everyone has access to the same information without distortions, misspellings, and other errors that can make a translation unintelligible for the intended audience.

Language justice is also a significant driver of social and racial justice, allowing equal access and equal protections to everyone, regardless of their race, color, gender or sexual preference, religious or political ideas and beliefs, age, disability, national origin, and, yes, native language.

[Note to presenter: you can use these links to find more information about Language Justice if you wish to expand on this segment:

[http://antenaantena.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/langjust\\_eng.pdf](http://antenaantena.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/langjust_eng.pdf)

<https://languagejusticerva.org/>

<https://www.api-gbv.org/resources/language-justice-principles-for-everyday-practice-and-during-covid-19/>

<https://www.thepraxisproject.org/resource/2012/languagejustice>



## Language Access as conceptualized by law and DOJ guidance

In 1964 Congress passed a law called the **Civil Rights Act**. Title VI of this Act was meant to prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Language was not explicitly mentioned, so even though language is intrinsically tied to national origin, it was not until 2002, when President Carter signed Executive Order 13166, that discrimination based on national origin included the failure to provide meaningful access to Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals. The Order, called “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency,” also made it clear that all federal agencies had to meet the same standards as every other entity receiving federal funds.

If a recipient of federal assistance is found to have discriminated, the aggrieved individuals may file an administrative complaint with the federal agency that provides the funds to the recipient, or file a lawsuit in federal court for the appropriate relief. However, there have been some judicial decisions that limit or even preclude individuals from taking legal action against an agency, which may force them to take administrative actions only.

The same year of E.O. 13166, the Department of Justice published a document called “Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—National Origin Discrimination Against Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP); Policy Guidance” to “provide a general framework by which agencies can determine when LEP assistance is required in their federally assisted programs and activities and what the nature of that assistance should be.”

Later in 2022, the DOJ published a “Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons” in the *Federal Register*, after receiving comments from the public to a version published in 2001. This Guidance also replaces the one published in 2000.

In 2011, the Federal Coordination and Compliance Section of the DOJ Civil Rights Division published a “Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs.” The goal of this publication was to ensure that the target agencies communicated effectively with Limited English Proficient (LEP) individuals. Then in 2012 the DOJ published its own “Language Access Plan.” There are several definitions in that Plan, including what is a Limited English Proficient (LEP) individual:

“Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. LEP individuals may be competent in English for certain types of communication (e.g., speaking or understanding), but still be LEP for other purposes (e.g., reading or writing).”

The document also defines the concept of “meaningful access”:

“Language assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the LEP individual. For LEP individuals, meaningful access denotes access that is not significantly restricted, delayed or inferior as compared to programs or activities provided to English proficient individuals.”

There is a lot more information about language access plans for different agencies receiving federal funding and resources available at LEP.gov and these other web pages:

- 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title VI: <https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/TitleVI#5>
- Executive Order 13166: <https://www.lep.gov/executive-order-13166>

- DOJ - Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964— National Origin Discrimination Against Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP); Policy Guidance:  
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2000/08/16/00-20867/enforcement-of-title-vi-of-the-civil-rights-act-of-1964-national-origin-discrimination-against>
- DOJ - Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons:  
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2002/06/18/02-15207/guidance-to-federal-financial-assistance-recipients-regarding-title-vi-prohibition-against-national>
- DOJ Civil Rights Division - Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs:  
[https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/resources/2011\\_Language\\_Access\\_Assessment\\_and\\_Planning\\_Tool.pdf](https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/resources/2011_Language_Access_Assessment_and_Planning_Tool.pdf)
- DOP Language Access Plan:  
<https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/open/legacy/2012/05/07/language-access-plan.pdf>

[Note to presenter: if you want to expand on this section during your presentation, you can also incorporate resources from LEP.gov]





## Language rights of Limited English Speaking (LEP) individuals in different settings

### 1- Schools

When teachers and school personnel need to communicate with students and parents who are not proficient in the English language, they should have a language access plan in place that provides for interpreters during oral exchanges and translators for written materials in English that need to be available in a language the students and their families can understand. This is the mandate of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166 of 2000.

If a school does not have an in-house translator or interpreter, and they do not have a language access plan in place to be able to seek contract interpreters or translators, parents can reach out to the American Association of Interpreters and Translators in Education (AAITE) at <https://www.aaite.org/> for assistance.

Should the school engage in regular noncompliance or egregious violations of this legal requirement, parents can also reach out to the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division to learn how they can file a complaint. Go to <https://civilrights.justice.gov/>.

### 2- Healthcare

Hospitals and many other healthcare providers these days will either have in-house interpreters or access to a video or telephone provider of language services. It is critically important for patients to be able to communicate with healthcare providers in the language they understand best and in which they feel most comfortable speaking, so having a competent interpreter can be a matter of life and death, quite literally.

Asking children or other family members to interpret puts them in the very difficult position of having to hear details about their relative's health

they may not want to hear. Furthermore, they may not have the proper range of vocabulary to perform this task accurately.

If the healthcare provider does not have a qualified interpreter available for a patient, there are two national organizations that certify medical interpreters and they both have web pages with directories where anyone can search for an interpreter who is certified in a specific language.

One is the National Board of Certification for Medical Interpreters (NBCMI), and their registry can be searched by language, location, name, etc.:

<https://www.certifiedmedicalinterpreters.org/search-cmi-registry>

The other one is the Certification Commission for Healthcare Interpreters (CCHI). They too have a searchable registry of certified interpreters at:

<https://cchi.learningbuilder.com/Search/Public/MemberRole/Registry>

By locating an interpreter through either one of these organizations, the patient can rest assured the interpreter will be highly competent in a medical environment.

### 3- Police encounters

When someone cannot communicate in English and they are stopped or questioned by any law enforcement authority, they don't have to speak to the officer without an impartial and competent interpreter present. "Competent" means someone who has been trained and credentialed by a recognized institution in the required language so they can perform the task of interpreting competently.

A police officer or an employee of a law enforcement agency is not an impartial and neutral language mediator. They have a vested interest in the outcome of the questioning and therefore have a serious conflict of interest. Furthermore, since they are not professional interpreters they do not have

to abide by a professional code of ethics and can, whether intentionally or not, add or omit information.

Law enforcement agencies normally have access to interpreters, either in person or by phone. Having an interpreter present with no vested interest also provides an additional layer of assurance that the rights of the non-English speaker will be fully respected.

The right to an interpreter is even more critical than the right to a lawyer, because without the interpreter the LEP individual may not understand other rights, such as the right to remain silent. They probably will not know why the authorities are questioning them, and may not be able to understand the subtleties of sarcasm, irony, disbelief, polite requests or hostility that native speakers can discern from simple intonation.

Remember that “meaningful access” means that the LEP individual must receive accurate, timely, and effective communication that is not significantly restricted, delayed or inferior to the communication an English speaker would have.

[Note to presenter: As a community organization serving linguistic minorities, your sponsor may want to have a list of interpreters in various languages readily available for law enforcement as well as for members of their community, if they don't already have one. Help them get access to any local interpreters and translators association, as well as the NAJIT Member Director, at <https://najit.org/resources/find-interpreter/>]

#### 4- State Courts

All courts within any given state will either have staff interpreters or contract interpreters available for criminal cases involving witnesses or defendants who are Limited English Proficient. By law, they must all have a Language Access program, and someone in the central court administration will very likely be in charge of that program.

In legal matters it is critically important to have a competent interpreter who understands the protocols, the legal language, and the correct way in which to translate legal concepts, technical information, as well as formal and informal language, from and into English. Friends and family will not have that knowledge.

Furthermore, in court there are times when the interpretation must be done at the same time as others are speaking, which is known as **simultaneous interpreting**. That is a technique that interpreters learn through months of training. Bilingual friends and family with no training as interpreters will not be able to do this for the LEP individual.

There is another technique used for questions and answers, called **consecutive interpreting**. Since most courts will create a record of these questions-&-answers because they are usually evidence in the form of testimony, the interpreter must know how to preserve that testimony when translated from the foreign language into English, and how to convey the questions in the most precise manner so the witness knows exactly what is being asked. Bilingual friends and family with no training as interpreters will not be able to do this for the LEP individuals, either.

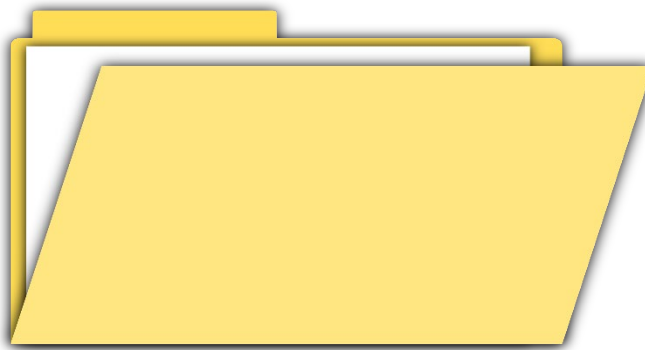
Having a competent interpreter is a fundamental right for LEP defendants in criminal matters, because without one their due process rights cannot be properly safeguarded. The LEP defendant's right to be present at every stage of a proceeding, to confront witnesses, and to have effective assistance of counsel will depend entirely on the quality of the interpreter's performance.

[Note to presenter: If you can, provide the web site link to their state Language Access Coordinator. You can find each state's Language Access office here:

<https://www.ncsc.org/consulting-and-research/areas-of-expertise/interpreter-info/resources-for-program-managers/lap-map/map>]

#### 5- Other state and federal government offices and agencies

Just like schools, all public agencies receiving federal funds must have a language access plan for their Limited English Proficient constituents. They can have their own bilingual staff to assist the public, or they can hire outside interpreters, whether in person, by phone or video, depending on the circumstances. These offices must also have informational materials translated into the languages used most frequently in their communities.



#### **OTHER RESOURCES:**

The following pages contain printable infographics in English and Spanish that the presenter can share with the sponsor organization and presentation attendees. These infographics can also be found at:

<https://www.ikigaiusa.org/community-outreach>

## Your Right to Meaningful Language Access



Su derecho a tener **acceso efectivo en su propio idioma**



When you don't speak or understand **ENGLISH**

- You have the right to a competent interpreter with whom you can communicate.
- You do not have to rely on family or friends to interpret for you.
- You can request an interpreter in any of these public agencies:



Quando no habla o entiende **INGLÉS**

- Usted tiene derecho a un intérprete competente con quien se pueda comunicar.
- Usted no tiene que depender de un pariente o una amistad que le interprete.
- Uted puede pedir un intérprete en cualquiera de estas agencias públicas:

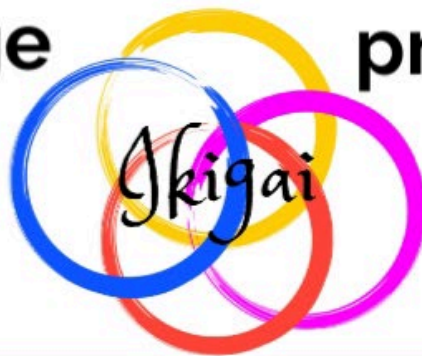
**IT'S THE LAW!**  
**¡ES LA LEY!**



- All state courts, including traffic and other minor violations courts.
- Public schools at all levels, including written materials sent to the student's home.
- Federal agencies that provide public benefits or services, like Social Security.
- State agencies that provide benefits or services, like Workers Compensation or Unemployment.
- Hospitals and other health providers.

- Todos los tribunales estatales, incluyendo los de tránsito y otras infracciones menores.
- Escuelas públicas en todos los niveles, incluyendo materiales por escrito que le envían al hogar del estudiante.
- Agencias federales que brindan beneficios o servicios públicos, como lo es el Seguro Social.
- Agencias estatales que brindan beneficios o servicios públicos, como lo es la Compensación Laboral o el Desempleo.
- Hospitales y otros proveedores de servicios de salud.

Your Right to  
**Meaningful  
Language  
Access**



Su derecho a  
tener **acceso  
efectivo en su  
propio idioma**



## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

- Meaningful Language Access is a right provided by the **1964 Civil Rights Act** under **Title VI**.
- Title VI was further expanded by **Executive Order 13166**, signed by President Clinton in 2000.
- The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has published a **Language Access Plan** plus guidance for all federal fund recipients to comply with Title VI and EO 13166.



## CONOZCA SUS DERECHOS

- El Acceso Efectivo en su Propio Idioma es un derecho que otorga la **Ley de Derechos Civiles de 1964 bajo su Título VI**.
- El alcance del **Título VI** se expandió con la **Orden Ejecutiva 13166**, firmada por el Presidente Clinton en el 2000.
- El Departamento de Justicia (DOJ) federal tiene un **Plan de Acceso al Idioma [Language Access Plan]** publicado, además de unas guías para toda entidad que reciba fondos federales, para asegurarse de que cumplan con el Título VI y la OE 13166.

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**ikigai**

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ikigai.interpreters@gmail.com*



## What are Certified Interpreters

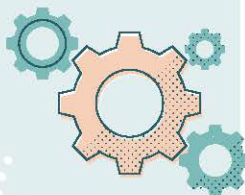


### Credentialed

Certified interpreters have taken an examination offered by an official entity, such as an office of court administration or a professional association, to demonstrate they have the knowledge and skills necessary to perform competently in a particular field.

### Professional

Certified interpreters are familiar with the proper code of professional conduct for the places where they are called upon to provide their services.



### Fully Proficient

Certified interpreters have a vast vocabulary in their two working languages, ranging from very formal and technical to informal street slang.

### Trained

Certified interpreters take courses to learn the interpreting techniques and terminologies required for their practical specializations, and continuing education to further their skills and knowledge.



Always seek a certified interpreter



# Qué son los intérpretes certificados

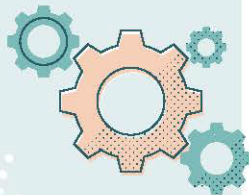


## Credenciales

Los intérpretes certificados han tomado un examen que ofrece alguna entidad oficial, como puede ser una oficina administrativa de tribunales o una asociación profesional, mediante el cual demuestran que poseen los conocimientos y las destrezas necesarias para desempeñarse de manera competente en un campo en particular.

## Profesionales

Los intérpretes certificados están familiarizados con el código de conducta profesional apropiado para los lugares donde se requieren sus servicios profesionales.



## Absoluto Dominio

Los intérpretes certificados dominan un amplio vocabulario en los idiomas en que trabajan, abarcando desde el nivel más formal y técnico hasta el argot de la calle más informal.

## Capacitados

Los intérpretes certificados toman cursos para aprender las técnicas de interpretación y terminologías que requieren sus especializaciones, así como también cursos de educación continuada para pulir y expandir sus destrezas y conocimientos.



Busque siempre a intérpretes certificados