

New Hampshire Judicial Branch



Language Access Plan 2023



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POINTS OF CONTACT

The best way to let a court know an interpreter is needed is to contact the court to request an interpreter as far in advance of the hearing as possible. Contact the Judicial Branch's Information Center at 1-855-212-1234 or visit your local court and a Judicial Branch staff member will be able to have an interpreter assist with the phone call.

Within the Judicial Branch's Administrative Office of Courts, the Language Access Coordinator works with court staff to assist with language access needs and respond to complaints or other issues that may arise.

Complaints about language access services in state courts can be made in writing using a complaint form, which can be downloaded at

<https://www.courts.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt471/files/documents/2021-04/nhjb-3038-aoc.pdf>.

Frequently asked questions and other information about the Judicial Branch's language access services can be found on the Judicial Branch's website at

<https://www.courts.nh.gov/your-visit/interpreter-services>.

For more information, please contact:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

New Hampshire's courts provide accessible, prompt, and efficient forums for the fair and independent administration of justice, with respect for the dignity of all we serve. Equal access to justice is at the core of our mission and eliminating language barriers is essential to providing meaningful access to justice for all.

The NHJB has developed its Language Access Plan (LAP) to detail how limited English proficiency (LEP), deaf, and hard of hearing individuals are being assisted with interpretive services within our state courts. For individuals who do not speak English as their primary language, access to the judicial system can be stressful and their ability to be well represented can be at risk. Likewise, individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing face similar access challenges when navigating the judicial process.

The goal of the LAP is to document three key priorities of the Judicial Branch's language access program: (1) access to justice; (2) effective delivery of justice; and (3) ensure public trust and confidence. Delivery on these priorities is not limited to providing access to interpretation services, but also includes the expansion of language access services by improving services through collaboration with local and national stakeholders, surveying courts to assess language access needs, and implementing changes as needs are identified. An ongoing project that will improve court access for LEP and deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals includes delivery of information to better inform litigants about how to meaningfully participate in their court process and hearing.

NEW HAMPSHIRE JUDICIAL BRANCH'S 2020 LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

I. History of the New Hampshire Judicial Branch's Language Access Plan

In April 2012, the NHJB's Administrative Council designated a committee to recommend improvements to foreign language interpreter services in New Hampshire's State courts. The committee was asked to review and analyze vendor bids for the provision of foreign language and American Sign Language interpreter services in New Hampshire courts, and to develop a Language Services Plan (now referred to as the Language Access Plan) for the statewide court system. On December 24, 2013, the New Hampshire Supreme Court adopted a Language Services Plan.

In April 2017, the Administrative Council designated a Language Access Committee to review the existing Language Services Plan, provide statistical updates, and make recommendations about additional steps to be considered to better serve the LEP, deaf, and hard of hearing populations. By Order dated February 6, 2018, the New Hampshire Supreme Court adopted an updated Language Access Plan. In November 2019, the Administrative Council appointed members to serve on a Language Access Committee to prepare the 2020 Language Access Plan. The 2020 LAP established a permanent Language Access Coordinator and a Language Access Committee.

In March 2021, the NHJB contracted with the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to review the court system's existing language access services and LAP and to make recommendations for improvements to the existing LAP and services. Utilizing NCSC's depth of experience and understanding of language access needs, the NHJB and NCSC designed a four-prong approach to assess the LAP and to develop additional language access resources. This approach consisted of the following steps:

1. Conduct a review of current language access services and the existing LAP;
2. Conduct qualitative interviews via telephone with NHJB court staff and stakeholders to review statewide language interpreter use and needs, language access services currently provided, and the language access program structure;

3. Develop language access resources and/or multilingual informational content; and
4. Develop an evaluation plan for the ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the language access plan and services, as well as the effectiveness of other online and hard-copy multilingual content created.

Following its review of the NHJB's 2020 LAP, the NCSC described it as "a strong policy statement of the [B]ranch's commitment to providing language access services to its LEP and [deaf and hard of hearing] court users and addresses the major considerations of any language access planning effort. Additionally, courts and organizations are making significant efforts to help provide language access services to those court users who need them."

This updated 2023 Language Access Plan takes into consideration recommendations from NCSC and other stakeholders to further the NHJB's effort to ensure all persons have meaningful access to justice.

II. New Hampshire Judicial Branch's Initiatives for 2023-2024.

The NHJB sought input from NCSC and the Access to Justice Commission's Language Access Subcommittee to identify additional language access tools and multilingual resources that should be incorporated into the NHJB's language access program. The NHJB will continue to expand existing initiatives and will begin several new initiatives during the next two years to improve access to courts and court services for LEP, deaf, and hard of hearing individuals. This will include:

- Broadening available multilingual resources such as infographics, brochures, and explainer documents for commonly used forms.
- Improve multilingual signage at courthouses.
- Develop multilingual videos about court processes and procedures which include closed captioning.
- Create online training modules and tip sheets about the Language Access Plan, working with interpreters, and working with LEP court users.
- Provide additional staff and judicial training and provide greater opportunity for judges to collaborate and get tips and insights from one another. As is noted below, following the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent state of emergency, New Hampshire has seen a greater dependence on remote

technology by interpreters in place of in-court interpreter services. This is not unique to New Hampshire, but is a trend that has been seen nationwide. The NHJB intends to explore the benefits and difficulties remote interpretation creates and provide specific training for judges to address this trend.

- Improve access to commonly used forms in multiple languages.¹
- Expand language access feedback and complaint opportunities by developing on-line surveys to be completed by users of the Court's LEP services as well as community organizations that service LEP individuals. The NHJB will also work toward implementing a simpler electronic complaint and comment system to allow participants to provide feedback.
- Develop programs with the New Hampshire Bar Association to educate attorneys about LEP resources and working with LEP clients.

As new material is developed and existing material updated, QR codes will be incorporated into the material to ensure users have access to the latest information on the NHJB's website.

IV. Legal Standard on Access to Court Services

The NHJB recognizes that it has both a statutory and constitutional obligation to ensure that all citizens who access the state courts are able to meaningfully participate in the process.² Courts are required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to the information and services they provide.

The guidance published by the United States Department of Justice (DOJ)³ describes four factors to help governments determine whether the standard of "reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access" by LEP individuals is being satisfied. These factors are:

- Number or proportion of LEP individuals in the eligible service population;
- Frequency of contact with the program;

¹ For case types that allow self-represented parties to file through TurboCourt, parties can also use the translate function in TurboCourt to view the questions in multiple languages with Google Translate.

² See Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended (Title VI), 42 U.S.C. § 2000d, and the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as amended (Safe Streets Act), 42 U.S.C. § 3789d(c)(1).

³ *Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons*, 67 Fed. Reg. 41455 (June 18, 2002). A copy of the DOJ Guidance can be downloaded here: <https://www.hhs.gov/civil-rights/for-individuals/special-topics/limited-english-proficiency/guidance-federal-financial-assistance-recipients-title-vi/index.html>.

- Nature and importance of the program; and
- Resources available and costs.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 601; 42 U.S.C. 2000d *et seq.* and its implementing regulations provide that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance. The Supreme Court, in *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974), interpreted Title VI regulations to hold that Title VI prohibits conduct that has a disproportionate effect on LEP persons because such conduct constitutes national origin discrimination. The following core set of laws, policies, regulations, and tools formulate the legal standards for language access accountability and nondiscrimination compliance:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;⁴
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973;⁵
- Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (2000);⁶
- October 26, 2001 DOJ Clarifying Memorandum Regarding Limited English Proficiency and Executive Order 13166;⁷
- Language Access Planning and Technical Assistance Tool for Courts.⁸
- September 2015 USDOJ booklet, *Language Access in State Courts*.⁹

Additionally, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates interpretive services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. The duty to provide accommodations to those who are deaf or hard of hearing is covered by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Title II provides that “no qualified individual with a disability shall, on the basis of disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any public entity.” 28 C.F.R.

⁴ <https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/TitleVI>.

⁵ <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/oasam/centers-offices/civil-rights-center/statutes/section-504-rehabilitation-act-of-1973>.

⁶ <https://www.justice.gov/crt/executive-order-13166>.

⁷ <https://www.justice.gov/crt/federal-coordination-and-compliance-section-190>.

⁸

https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/resources/February_2014_Language_Access_Planning_and_Technical_Assistance_Tool_for_Courts_508_Version.pdf.

⁹ <https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/892036/download>.

§35.130(a). Public entities are prohibited from “provid[ing] a qualified individual with a disability with an aid, benefit, or service that is not as effective in affording equal opportunity to obtain the same result, to gain the same benefit, or to reach the same level of achievement as that provided to others,” 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(iii), or from “provid[ing] different or separate aids, benefits, or services to individuals with disabilities ... than is provided to others unless such action is necessary to provide qualified individuals with disabilities with aids, benefits, or services that are as effective as those provided to others,” 28 C.F.R. § 35.130(b)(iv).

Regarding communication with individuals with disabilities, public entities are required to “furnish appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to afford an individual with a disability an equal opportunity to participate in, and enjoy the benefit of, a service, program, or activity conducted by a public entity.” 28 C.F.R. §35.160(b)(1). Public entities are to give “primary consideration” to the individual's requests in determining what auxiliary aid or service is necessary. 28 C.F.R. §35.160(b)(2). This directive is included because of the wide variety of disabilities and situations requiring auxiliary aids and services for individuals with a disability. App. A, 28 C.F.R. §35.160 (explaining that in some situations where the information being communicated is complex or is exchanged for a lengthy period of time, a qualified interpreter rather than less complicated and expensive aids may be required). These directives do not require the entity to “take any action that it can demonstrate would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of a service, program, or activity or in undue financial and administrative burdens,” but the entity has the burden of showing such fundamental alteration or undue burden. 28 C.F.R. § 35.164. See *Gregory v. Admin. Off. of the Cts. of State of New Jersey*, 168 F. Supp. 2d 319, 330 (D.N.J. 2001).

V. New Hampshire Language Data

The LEP population is identified from U.S. Census Bureau data. The Census Bureau, which used to collect language data every 10 years, now does so annually through the American Community Survey (ACS).¹⁰ The ACS survey for 2021 estimates the State’s total population of residents five years of age or older at

¹⁰ <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>.

1,326,772. The tables below elaborate on the composition of languages which are spoken by New Hampshire at home.

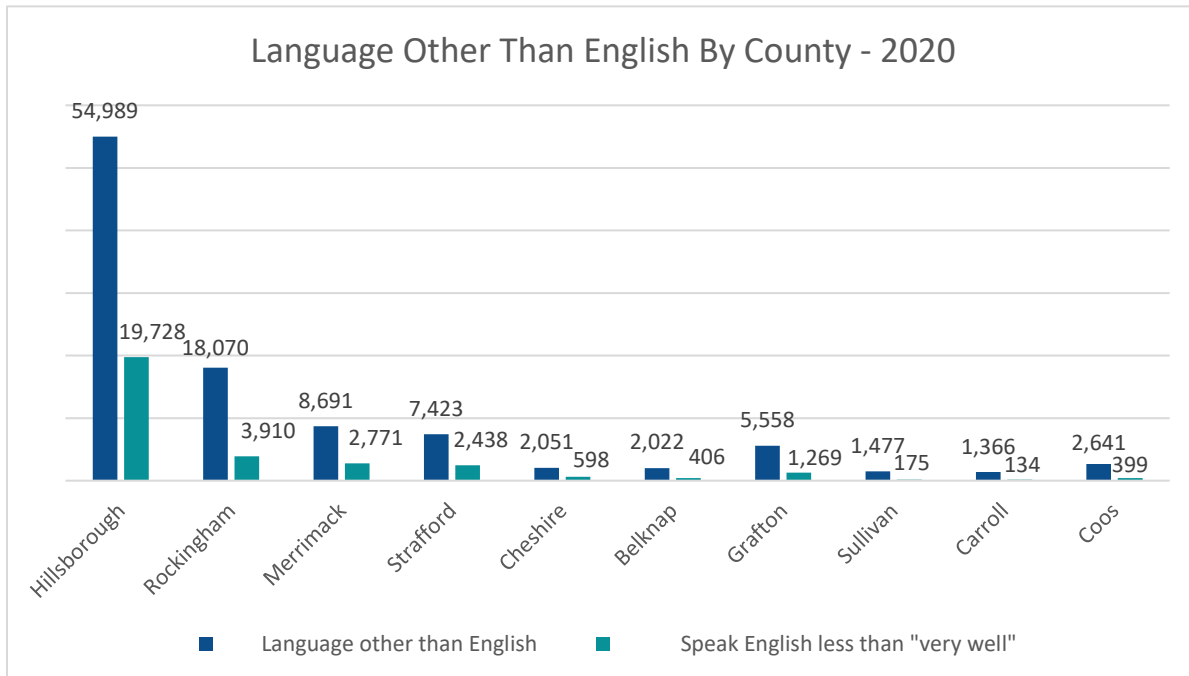
Characteristics of Language Spoken at Home of the N.H. Population in 2021¹¹

Label	Total	Percent of Total Population 5 and over	Speak English "very well"	Speak English "less than very well"
Total Population 5 years and over	1,291,567			
Speak only English	1,224,596	92.3%		
Speak Spanish	31,841	2.4%	23,560	8,281
Speak other languages	70,335	5.30%	50,473	19,862

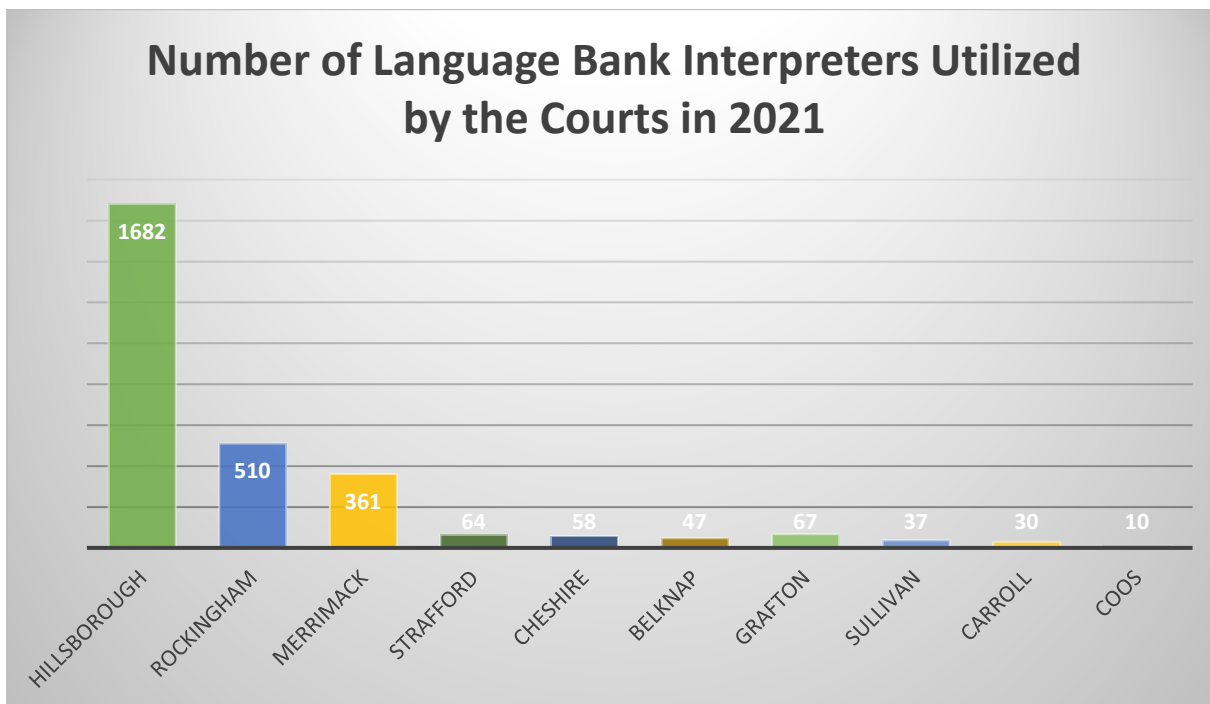
The ACS reports that 7.7 percent of individuals in the state five years of age and older speak a language other than English at home. Of this 7.7 percent, 28 percent (28,143 individuals) speak English less than very well.

¹¹ Data available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=0400000US33&tid=ACSST5Y2020.S1601>

Broken down by county, and based on 2020 data¹², Hillsborough County has the highest population of LEP individuals.



The number of times Language Bank provided interpretation services for the Courts by county is consistent with the LEP population by county:



¹² Data available at: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?t=Language%20Spoken%20at%20Home&g=0400000US33%240500000&y=2020>

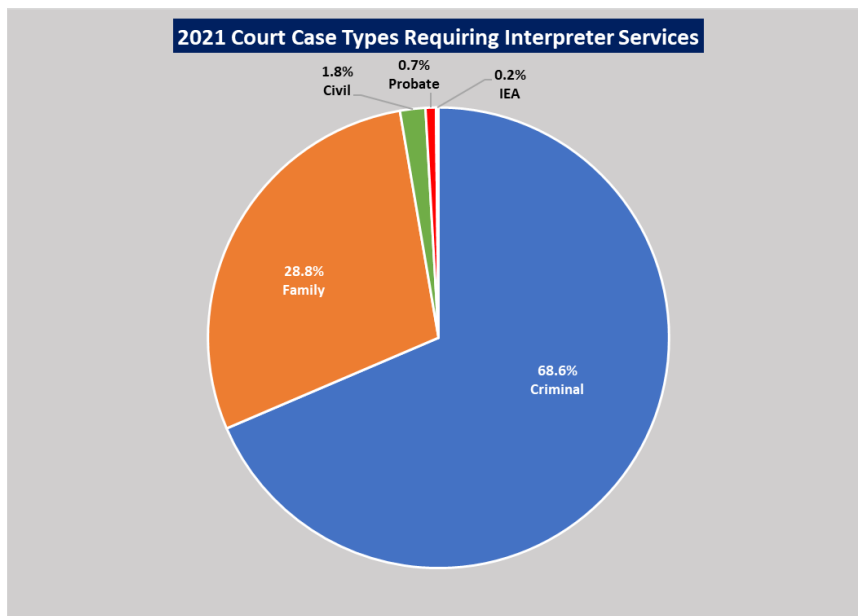
In 2021, the NCSC conducted telephone interviews with court staff and other stakeholders to better understand: (1) statewide language use and interpreter need; (2) language access services currently provided; and (3) the structure of the language access program. Interview participants included a wide range of individuals familiar with court interpretation and other language services the court provides; including a judicial officer; court staff; attorneys at New Hampshire Legal Assistance; a domestic violence/sexual assault advocate; NHJB Information Center staff; a public defender administrator; and a representative from Language Bank (the NHJB's vendor for interpreter services).

According to the participants interviewed, Spanish constitutes the greatest language access need, followed by Portuguese, French, Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), Arabic, and American Sign Language, as well as a variety of languages and dialects commonly spoken throughout Africa (Swahili, Somali, Maay Maay, Kinyarwanda, and Sudanese), Asia (Nepali, Urdu, Dari, Thai, Cambodian, Laotian), and Europe (Russian, Polish, Bosnian, Croatian). Language needs in New Hampshire tend to reflect various refugee or immigrant resettlement patterns throughout the State, which results in varied languages spoken among the courts depending on their locations and the resettlement trends occurring in those areas. Additionally, these needs can change rapidly, particularly in urban areas.

In 2021, Language Bank provided interpreter services in 54 languages for 2,673 individuals in New Hampshire's courts. In addition to interpreters hired for individuals, the Circuit Courts in Manchester, Nashua, and Salem have Spanish interpreters available for four hour blocks to provide interpreter services. Language Bank provided a total of 193 interpreters for block scheduling in 2021. The top ten languages interpreted by Language Bank in 2021 are shown in the following table:

Top 10 Languages Interpreted by Language Bank in NH Courts in 2021		
Language	Individual Data	Total Number (including blocks) ¹³
Spanish	1656	1849
Portuguese	211	211
Arabic	104	104
Swahili	86	86
American Sign Language	80	80
Kinyarwanda	77	77
Nepali	67	67
Chinese (Mandarin)	54	54
French	54	54
Vietnamese	32	32

When broken down by case type, the percentages of cases that required interpreter services is shown in the following chart:



VI. NHJB Contract for Interpreter Services

The NHJB utilizes an outside vendor to recruit, train, test, and provide interpretive services within New Hampshire state courts. Ascentria Community Services, Inc. (aka “Language Bank”) has been providing language interpretation and American Sign Language services since 2012. In 2019, after soliciting requests for proposals

¹³ Three of the Circuit Court locations, Salem, Nashua, and Manchester, have Spanish-speaking interpreters during scheduled blocks of times throughout the week to provide individuals with in-person translation services when communicating with clerk staff.

for language and American Sign Language services, the NHJB entered into a new four-year contract with Language Bank.

All of Language Bank's interpreters are required to abide by the New Hampshire Judicial Branch Code of Professional Responsibility for Interpreters. Language Bank uses objective language tests and screening for all foreign language interpreters to test their language abilities including English and the target language. Prior to providing any services, Language Bank's interpreters will have been observed in a legal setting by the Language Bank's Quality Assurance Specialist and must have taken a legal terminology test and have passed by at least seventy-five percent. All ASL interpreters who perform services are certified.

On the occasions when Language Bank is unable to provide interpreter services, the NHJB draws from a list of other vendors in the New England region who can provide foreign language and American Sign Language interpreters.

Along with the Language Bank, the NHJB uses Language Line to provide interpreter services in clerks' offices, in courtrooms, and for individuals who contact the NHJB Information Center. Language Line provides on-demand access to more than 11,000 professional interpreters nationwide in over 240 languages.

When the State of New Hampshire declared a state of emergency in March 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, New Hampshire's courts continued to operate, albeit with remote technology. Language Bank continued to provide remote interpreter services for New Hampshire's courts throughout the pandemic. As courts physically reopened and court proceedings have returned to live proceedings, interpreters have continued to utilize remote technologies to perform interpreter services. According to the NCSC, this trend of greater reliance on remote technology for interpreter services is a nationwide trend for court systems. The NHJB intends to explore the benefits and difficulties remote interpretation creates and provide specific training for judges to address this trend.

VII. Interpreter Services Provided in New Hampshire State Courts

A. Individuals Who Qualify for Interpreter Services Provided by the Court

In accordance with USDOJ's guidelines, the NHJB provides interpreter services free of charge to the following LEP individuals and people who are deaf or are hard of hearing:

- Parties, witnesses, jurors, as needed for court proceedings;
- The parent or legal guardian of a minor who is a party, victim or a testifying witness in a court proceeding;
- The legal guardian of an adult who is a party, victim or a testifying witness in a court proceeding;
- Those seeking access to NHJB information or services through the Information Center and/or a court clerk's office;
- Those having a significant interest in a court proceeding, as determined by the presiding judge. A "significant interest" will be determined based on an evaluation of the following factors:
 - The relationship of the individual to the matter before the court;
 - The seriousness of the matter; and
 - The impact of the outcome on the individual.

B. Identifying When an Interpreter is Appropriate for a Court Proceeding

Data has revealed that people who might need an interpreter in courts nationwide may not request one either because they do not realize that interpreters are available or, alternatively, because they do not realize the level of English proficiency or communication skills they will need to understand court proceedings. In our court system, NHJB staff members have the responsibility to help determine when an interpreter is needed. Each court uses various means to determine whether an individual has limited English proficiency or is deaf or hard of hearing and needs an interpreter for a court hearing. The individual who needs a court interpreter may self-identify prior to a court proceeding. Alternatively, the individual's lawyer, or anyone acting with permission on the individual's behalf, may request interpretive services. The need may also be identified by a court staff member, clerk, or judge prior to, or during, a court hearing.

In addition, an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing may request assistance by filing a request for an ADA accommodation using the request form available on the court's website or by contacting the ADA Coordinator, whose contact information is on the NHJB's website.

If an individual appears at a court with no interpreter and court staff is unsure what language the individual speaks, court staff use “I Speak” cards to help identify what language the individual speaks. These cards contain the sentence “I Speak {language}” translated from English into several different languages. LEP individuals can point to the phrase in their language so that an interpreter may be requested. When it appears that an individual has difficulty communicating, the NHJB’s policy is to proactively provide an interpreter to ensure the individual has full access to court services.

The NHJB has a Foreign Language Interpreter Bench Card and an American Sign Language Bench Card that provide both judges and clerks with necessary guidance on determining when an interpreter is needed for court proceedings, as well as instructions for all court participants. These guidelines allow for a clear record where interpreter services are employed, clarification for parties, counsel, witnesses, and jurors on the role of an interpreter, and the oath to administer to interpreters to be made part of the court record. The bench cards allow judges and clerks to properly swear in interpreters before they provide services, and to explain to jurors the role of an interpreter in a particular case. Interpreters abide by the New Hampshire Judicial Branch Code of Professional Responsibility for Interpreters, which is available on the NHJB website.

The NHJB has a duty to inform all LEP individuals and all individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing of the availability of interpreters, and that these services will be provided to them free of charge. This information is provided at the moment of their first encounter with the court. Notice is given by:

- Posting the availability of interpreters on the NHJB’s website, which can be translated via Google Translate;
- Having a brochure about the right to an interpreter in court made available on the NHJB website as well as shared with the New Hampshire Bar Association; New Hampshire Public Defender’s Office; and other legal service agencies;
- Placing signs prominently at the front of each court and in court clerks’ offices; and
- Using “I Speak” cards at court clerks’ offices.

To the extent possible, the NHJB should identify the need for interpreter services as early as possible to ensure that an interpreter will be available for the court proceeding. Once this information is obtained, the NHJB’s case management

system tracks interpreter needs through case records by use of interpreter flags that alert court staff, ensuring that they arrange for an interpreter for all future hearings in a particular case.

D. Types of Services Provided

1. Courtroom Proceedings

In providing interpreter services during courtroom proceedings, the court secures interpreter assistance in the following order of preference. First, the court will request the services of in-person interpreters. When an in-person interpreter is unavailable and, if circumstances are appropriate given the nature and seriousness of the proceeding, the court will request that Language Bank supply telephonic or remote interpreter services. All state courts have been equipped with necessary technology to conduct remote hearings. Remote interpreting will primarily be used if the court proceeding is short, if the distance an interpreter will have to travel is long, or if an uncommon language is requested. The presiding judge will determine whether remote interpretation is appropriate and the conditions under which such remote interpretation will be conducted.

2. Assistive Listening Technology Utilized in New Hampshire Courts

In addition to remote video interpretation, the NHJB utilizes other forms of technology to provide language access services. For example, every courthouse is equipped with portable assistive listening devices (ALD) that are available in the clerk's office. ALD devices help address listening challenges in the courtrooms in three ways: by minimizing background noise, reducing the effect of distance between the sound source and the deaf or hard of hearing individual, and overriding poor acoustics. In addition, the Language Bank provides American Sign Language interpreters and Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) for qualifying individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

3. Clerk's Offices

Three of the NHJB Circuit locations, Salem, Nashua, and Manchester, have Spanish-speaking interpreters during scheduled blocks of times throughout the week to provide individuals with in-person translation services when communicating with clerk staff. The clerk's office will provide interpreter services through Language

Line or in-person interpreters when scheduled in advance for all other courts or interpretive needs of foreign language, deaf or hard of hearing individuals when communicating with court staff.

4. Trial Courts Information Center

The NHJB's Information Center utilizes Language Line to assist LEP individuals. The NHJB has detailed instructions for Information Center employees to add an interpreter from Language Line to the call. This creates a three-party telephone connection and allows for immediate access to telephonic interpretation services so that the call with the LEP individual can continue without the need to call the individual back.

5. Court-Mandated Programs

The NHJB provides interpreter services for certain court programs, such as Drug Court proceedings, court-ordered mediations, neutral case evaluations, and mediations in Abuse and Neglect and Termination of Parental Rights cases. In addition, the NHJB provides interpreter services for individuals assigned to the Child Impact Program.

6. Non-Eligible Court-Related Events

Private attorneys, public defenders, county attorneys, or attorney general staff, are responsible for providing qualified interpretation and translation services for witness interviews, pre-trial transcriptions and translations, and attorney/client communications.

When the court orders an individual to participate in outside services such as driver's education classes, domestic violence programs, and mental health examinations, the Court does not provide an interpreter. LEP individuals, or those who are deaf or hard of hearing, who participate in these programs should be offered referrals to agencies that offer interpreter services. Programs that are a condition of probation or parole do not qualify for interpreters provided by the courts.

7. Domestic Violence Protocols

The New Hampshire Circuit Court's Domestic Violence Protocols include additional language access requirements that are unique to domestic violence cases. Protocol 5-7 provides the following:

Staff shall instruct the plaintiff to be specific when completing the petition about the facts causing fear for safety, including dates and times at which events occurred, if known. If the plaintiff has difficulty reading, hearing, writing, or understanding the English language, staff shall fill out the form or provide an interpreter. A note should be included on the petition, indicating that the information was written by the staff member as dictated by the plaintiff. The plaintiff shall still sign the petition.

These translation services are provided with the assistance of either a bilingual employee in the clerk's office or by a clerk with assistance from a remote interpreter through Language Line.

VIII. Complaint Procedure for Interpreter Services in New Hampshire Courts

Any individual who feels that the quality of the interpreter or translation service provided was inadequate, or that their rights to meaningful language access to the court have not been met by the NHJB, may file a written complaint with the Administrative Office of the Courts. The Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts, or the Director's designee, will review, investigate, and respond to any such administrative complaint within thirty (30) days of the date of its receipt. The Director, or the Director's designee, will take any necessary corrective action as soon as is practicable.

Complaint forms are posted on the NHJB website,¹⁴ and are available in the clerk's office at each court location. Completed complaint forms should be directed to:

Director, Administrative Office of the Courts
1 Granite Place, Suite N400
Concord, NH 03301
director@courts.state.nh.us

¹⁴ Complaint forms can be found at: <https://www.courts.nh.gov/your-visit/interpreter-services>.

IX. Training on Using Interpreters in New Hampshire Courts

Language Bank has developed a curriculum for training judges and court personnel on language access issues. The NHJB will provide the training on a bi-annual basis to judges. The NHJB also provides training to new judges and court employees as part of their new employee orientation. This curriculum includes identifying language needs of LEP individuals, and locating and obtaining sources of interpreter services. The training also covers working effectively with an interpreter in-person and on the telephone, tracking the need for interpreter services in the case management system, and understanding the role of the interpreter in court proceedings.

X. Conclusion

Building on the Language Access Plan developed in previous years, the NHJB continues to make progress in delivering interpretive services and resources in our state court system for individuals with limited English proficiency, as well as those who are deaf or hard of hearing. The NHJB is proud of the collaborative project we recently completed with NCSC relative to the LAP including learning from the NCSC that it is a comprehensive resource for the court staff and citizens we serve.

Using U.S. Census data, the NHJB has identified a population of nearly 30,000 New Hampshire residents who do not speak English well and for whom interpretive services could potentially be required. The NHJB utilizes Language Bank and Language Line to provide interpretive assistance meeting this potential need. If they are unable to meet a particular need, the NHJB has a list of alternative vendors to contact if Language Bank is unable to provide the necessary scheduled interpretation services.

The NHJB continues to identify and develop new resources for use on the website and in printed materials for LEP individuals, create additional trainings for new court staff and others, and, through the language access coordinator, engage in community outreach to bridge the gap between the court system and LEP populations in the state.

These efforts, and the continued services offered by the NHJB, will ensure that all New Hampshire's residents, no matter what language they speak, will find equal access to justice within the state's courts.



www.courts.state.nh.us