



Recommendations for Meeting and Document Translation

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Prepared for the Independent Review Panel
Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)

In order to assess the need for translation of outreach documents into appropriate languages and provide interpretation assistance at public meetings and events, DTSC considers the demographics of a community and regularly performs community surveys. This document briefly summarizes best practices and considerations from DTSC and other government agencies.

Perform a needs assessment

Continuously assess language assistance needs of the community to be served by identifying:

- Demographic information.
- Language(s) spoken at home.
- Frequency of contact with limited English proficiency (LEP) community members.
- Type of information to be provided.
- Resources available.

Provide for oral language assistance

State clearly in written outreach documents (brochures, booklets, pamphlets, flyers and website) that language services are available. Additionally:

- Work with community-based organizations to inform LEP persons of the language assistance availability.
- Include notices in local media (radio, television, print) and social media.
- Hire third party contractors or in house bilingual experts to provide interpretive services at public meetings.
- Ensure that at least twice the allotted time is allowed for a member of the public when addressing a public body if simultaneous translation is not used.

Develop written procedures

Provide guidance to employees through written procedures that address:

- Identified and assessed language needs.
- Procedures on how to access and request oral translation assistance.
- Written translation of materials and publications.

- Oral and written notification of the availability of language assistance.
- Staff training on language service provision.

Monitor and evaluate access to language assistance

Analysis of data collected provides an overview of how services are provided and should include:

- Data upon which the language needs assessment was based.
- The number of LEP persons, by language group, who received language services.

Additional considerations

- Create the meeting agenda, speakers and relevant information as early as possible. Translate into additional language(s) and distribute prior to the meeting.
- Create a list of commonly used terms to translate into additional language(s), and provide on a website as well as in-print.
- When providing oral language assistance, the translator should have knowledge of the formal and cultural aspects of the target language at a native level, including grammar, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and syntax as well as native-language knowledge of the source language, the language from which he or she is translating. The translator should also convey for meaning rather than word-for-word translations.
- Develop written documents to be understood by individuals with low literacy (such as language directed to a 6th grade level).
- Ensure there is a secondary language contact person as well as an email address and telephone number for appropriate feedback following a public meeting or event.

Sources: California Transportation Department (Caltrans), Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), West Contra Costa Unified School District, California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)