

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY PLAN
181st JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
RANDALL AND POTTER COUNTIES

I. Legal Basis and Purpose

This document serves as the plan for the 181ST District Court to provide to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) services that are in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.; 45 C.F.R. § 80.1 et seq.; and 28 C.F.R. § 42.101–42.112). The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and reasonable language assistance to LEP persons who come in contact with the District Courts.

This LEP plan was developed to ensure meaningful access to court services for persons with limited English proficiency. Although court interpreters are provided for persons with a hearing loss, access services for them are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act rather than Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and therefore will not be addressed in this plan.

II. Needs Assessment

The 181ST District Court will make every effort to provide services to all LEP persons. The most common foreign language encountered throughout the 181ST District is Spanish.

This information is based on data collected from the U.S. Census Bureau and from the experience of court staff, and the plan is intended to address access to any LEP group that constitutes 5% of the community or more than 1,000 people, whichever is less.

III. Language Assistance Resources

A. Interpreters Used in the Courtroom

1. Providing Interpreters in the Courtroom

The 181ST District Court intends to provide spoken-language interpreters in court proceedings in accordance with both state and federal law.

For litigants and witnesses in juvenile hearings and all contempt proceedings, which are quasi-criminal, the court is mandated to provide interpreters and will provide interpreters at no cost to court users.

For litigants and witnesses in hearings involving domestic violence and elder abuse, family law and child support cases, the court will provide interpreters at no cost to court users to the extent that funding is provided.

Responsibility for the cost for spoken-language interpreters for non-indigent litigants and witnesses in other civil proceedings will be determined at the discretion of the officiating judge. Additionally, courts may use interpreters who are providing mandated interpreting services for issues such as criminal or juvenile cases for incidental use in civil courtrooms. The 181ST District Court recognize the significant benefits to both the public and the court by providing interpreters in civil cases and will attempt whenever possible to provide such interpreters through incidental use.

2. Determining the Need for an Interpreter in the Courtroom

The 181ST District Court may determine whether an LEP court customer needs an interpreter for a court hearing in various ways.

The need for a court interpreter may be identified prior to a court proceeding by the LEP person or by anyone acting, with permission, on his or her behalf.

The need for an interpreter also may be made known in the courtroom at the time of the proceeding. To the extent possible, advance notice of the need for an interpreter should be given to the court and all parties.

Also, the judge may determine that it is appropriate to provide an interpreter for a court matter.

Many people who need an interpreter will not request one because they do not realize that interpreters are available or because they do not recognize the level of English proficiency or communication skills needed to understand the court proceeding. Although the court does not have funding to provide interpreters for non-mandated proceedings, the court may be able to provide some assistance within existing funding restrictions and will endeavor to do so for non-mandated proceedings.

In a case where the court is mandated to provide an interpreter, but one is not available at the time of the proceeding, even after the court has made all reasonable efforts to locate one, as previously outlined in this plan, the case may be postponed and continued on a date when an interpreter can be provided.

3. Court Interpreter Qualifications

The 181ST District Courts hires interpreters for courtroom hearings in compliance with the rules and policies set forth by Chapter 57 of the Texas Government Code. The Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation maintains a statewide roster of licensed interpreters who may work in the courts.

This roster is available to court staff and the public on the Internet at www.license.state.tx.us/licensesearch.

For uncontested matters in which the court is not mandated to provide an interpreter, the party is responsible for obtaining and paying the cost of an interpreter. In those instances, the judge officiating may permit use of an unlicensed interpreter.

B. Language Services Outside the Courtroom

The 181ST District Court has designated the 181ST District Court Administrator's Office as the primary point of contact for all LEP services. All courthouse staff will be trained to direct anyone inquiring about LEP services to that office.

The 181ST District Court is taking reasonable steps to ensure that LEP individuals have meaningful access to services outside the courtroom. This is perhaps the most challenging situation facing court staff, because in most situations they are charged with assisting LEP individuals without an interpreter present. LEP individuals may come in contact with court personnel via the phone, the public counter, or other means.

The most common point of service outside the courtroom is at the District Clerk's public counters. Bilingual assistance is provided at the public counter by the placement of bilingual staff as is practical/possible. The court and district clerk also periodically calls on other bilingual staff from elsewhere in the court to assist at a public counter. No legal advice is provided.

Providing language services outside the courtroom entails both daily communications and interactions between court staff and LEP individuals to provide accessibility of court services, such as self-help and mediation services to LEP court users.

To facilitate communication between LEP individuals and court staff, the 181ST District Courts use the following resources to the degree that resources are available:

- Court interpreters;
- Bilingual employees;
- Bilingual volunteers;
- A court Web site with key documents translated into Spanish;
- Written information in Spanish on how to access and navigate the court;

To provide linguistically accessible services for LEP individuals, the 181ST District Court provides the following:

- Telephonic language assistance, and volunteers that provide self-help services to LEP persons in their primary language;
- Written informational and educational materials and instructions in Spanish,

C. Translated Forms and Documents

The 181ST District Court understands the importance of translating forms and documents so that LEP individuals have greater access to the courts' services. The 181ST District Court currently use forms and instructional materials printed in the English Language. In criminal cases, an attorney who is proficient in Spanish is appointed to translate fully the forms printed in the English Language.

Interpreters at court hearings are expected to provide sight translations of court documents and correspondence associated with the case.

Iç. Court Staff and Volunteer Recruitment

A. Bilingual Staff for Language Access

- ç. The 181ST District Court is an equal opportunity employer and often seeks to hire bilingual staff to serve its LEP constituents.
- çİ. The Court utilizes members of the District Probation Department, Court staff and interpreters to access with language access.

B. Volunteers for Language Access

The court also may attempt to use volunteers to assist with language access if available.

- To serve as interpreter volunteer by helping LEP individuals in areas outside of the courtroom, the volunteer should register with the District Court Administrator's Office.

V. Judicial and Staff Training

The 181ST District Court is committed to providing LEP training opportunities for all judicial officers and staff members. Training and learning opportunities currently offered by the 181ST District Court will be expanded or continued as needed. Those opportunities include:

- LEP plan training;
- New employee orientation training; and,
- Judicial officer orientation on the use of court interpreters and language competency.

VI. Public Notification and Evaluation of LEP Plan

A. LEP Plan Approval and Notification

The 181ST District Courts' LEP plan is subject to approval by the 181ST District Judge. Any revisions to the plan will be submitted to the 181ST District Judge for approval. Copies of the 181ST District Courts' LEP plan will be provided to the public on request. In addition, the 181ST District Court will post this plan on its public Web site.

B. Evaluation and review of the LEP Plan

The 181ST District Court will routinely assess whether changes to the LEP plan are needed. The plan will remain in effect unless modified or updated.

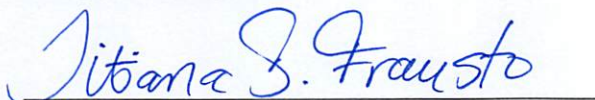
The 181ST District Judge will review the effectiveness of the 181ST District Courts' LEP plan periodically and update it as necessary. The evaluation may include identification of any problem areas and development of corrective action strategies. Elements of the evaluation may include:

- Number of LEP persons requesting court interpreters or language assistance and funding provided;
- Assessment of current language needs to determine if additional services or translated materials should be provided;
- Solicitation and review of feedback from LEP communities within the counties;
- Assessment of whether court staff adequately understand LEP policies and procedures and how to carry them out;
- Review of feedback from court employee training sessions; and,

C. LEP Plan Effective date:

May 16, 2025

D. Approved by:



JUDGE TITIANA D. FRAUSTO
181ST District Court