



Los Angeles County  
Department of Public Social Services  
Language Access Plan

SEPTEMBER 2023

# DPSS LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

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# DPSS LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

## I. Introduction

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) provides services to a highly diverse population of over **4.3**<sup>1</sup> million individuals. Of this population, **40%** identify their preferred spoken language as non-English. This Language Access Plan (LAP) outlines DPSS' commitment to providing equitable and reliable access to all its programs, benefits, and services. This includes language assistance services for persons with Non-English (NE), Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, or have other communication challenges that require equally effective communication. Providing language access for persons with NE/LEP is vital to DPSS' commitment to strengthening language access, advancing equity, providing support to underserved communities, and combatting discrimination based on national origin.

### Background

In February 2003, DPSS established the Civil Rights Section (CRS) as the Central Coordinating Office (CCO) to ensure nondiscrimination in the delivery of services as mandated by federal and state laws. The CCO ensures the provision of appropriate language assistance to persons with NE/LEP as required by law. DPSS implemented the Translations Unit to assist the department in translating forms, notices, and other documents in all DPSS threshold languages, and to ensure accuracy in a linguistically sensitive and timely manner. The department also maintains an automated internal system for tracking timely completion of document translation requests.

### Policy Statement

It is departmental policy to provide language assistance services free of charge and without undue delay for persons with NE/LEP and persons with other communication challenges that require equally effective communication to ensure equitable access to all its programs, benefits, services, and activities. DPSS is required to provide persons with NE/LEP an equal opportunity to benefit from or have access to services that are provided in English.<sup>2</sup>

## II. Purpose and Authority

The LAP serves as the central resource of information for DPSS personnel, contractors, customers, and the public. This LAP shares DPSS' established policies and procedures to ensure equitable, timely, and quality language assistance services for persons with NE/LEP across all DPSS programs. This LAP identifies the CRS as the department's CCO tasked with coordinating and ensuring the provision of language assistance services to persons with NE/LEP.

This LAP also provides a framework for ensuring that DPSS staff are aware of the requirements and methods for accessing and providing language access services for persons with NE/LEP in their preferred language free of charge and without delay at

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<sup>1</sup> County of Los Angeles Department of Public Social Services, Department "At A Glance" Statistical Report: [DPSS Statistical Report \(lacounty.gov\)](https://www.lacounty.gov/dpss-statistical-report)

<sup>2</sup> Executive Order 13166 "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency." <https://www.justice.gov/crt/executive-order-13166>

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any interaction and at any point of contact. This must be provided regardless of the language population size, type of communication, or proportion of the number of users of the language in the general population. The DPSS LAP is publicly available online at [Your Civil Rights, Appeals, and State Hearings \(lacounty.gov\)](https://www.lacounty.gov/civilrights/appeals/statehearings).

The DPSS LAP is in alignment with the Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion (ARDI) initiative and the Strategic Goals provided in the **Report Back on Strengthening Language Access in County Services (October 17, 2022)**,<sup>3</sup> adopted by the Board of Supervisors on March 7, 2023,<sup>4</sup> by the Los Angeles County Office of Immigrant Affairs (OIA) and the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA). These goals include:

- 1. Collect and Use Language Need Data to Improve County Service Delivery and Inclusion:** Regularly collect data on language needs and preferred language requests and use data to improve customer service and resource allocation for all public-facing county departments.
- 2. Increase the Availability and Quality of Spoken and Signed Interpreter Services:** Establish protocols for quality spoken and signed language services that are clearly communicated to the public for all public-facing county departments.
- 3. Increase the Availability and Quality of Document Translation:** Establish protocols for the translation of information and documents identified as vital for the public for all public-facing county departments.
- 4. Develop Departmental Language Access Plans:** Review language access strategies on a regular basis for all public-facing county departments.
- 5. Conduct Training:** Plan for providing ongoing training for staff on the provision of language accessibility and cultural responsiveness for all public-facing county departments.
- 6. Effectively Respond to Language Access Complaints:** Establish protocols for the collection of and effective response to language access complaints for all public-facing county departments.
- 7. Ensure Quality of Outsourced Language Access Services:** Establish protocols for the regular assessment of their department's language services vendors and strategic partnerships for all public-facing county departments.

DPSS has established written policies and procedures for the provision of language assistance services for persons with NE/LEP. These policies, protocols, and procedures are in alignment with applicable federal, state, and local guidance and regulations governing language assistance requirements.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/178487.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/178489.pdf>

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DPSS' language access service requirements are based on the following federal and state guidelines:

1. Americans with Disabilities Act Title II (ADA) of 1990<sup>5</sup> prohibits discrimination based on disability in services programs and activities provided by state and local government entities.
2. California Civil Rights Act, also known as the Unruh Act of 1959<sup>6</sup>, prohibits discrimination by agencies that receive state funds and requires them to provide equal access to benefits without regard to the beneficiary's race, color, national origin including language, or ethnic group identification among other classifications.
3. California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Manual Division 21<sup>7</sup> Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs.
4. California's Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act (1973)<sup>8</sup> establishes minimum requirements for language access by requiring public agencies to have a certain number of qualified bilingual staff and requires documents to be translated into preferred languages.
5. California Government Code 10553 and 10554<sup>9</sup> Welfare and Institutions Code.
6. California Government Section 11135<sup>10</sup> prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, ethnic group identification, age, mental disability, physical disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, or sexual orientation, be unlawfully denied full and equal access to the benefits of, or be unlawfully subjected to discrimination under, any program or activity that is conducted, operated, or administered by the state or by any state agency, is funded directly by the state, or receives any financial assistance from the state.

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<sup>5</sup> Communicating Effectively with People with Disabilities, <https://www.ada.gov/topics/effective-communication/>

<sup>6</sup> UNRUH Civil Rights Act of 1959

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=CIV&sectionNum=51](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=CIV&sectionNum=51)

<sup>7</sup> Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs,

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl00/pdf/00-30.PDF>

<sup>8</sup> "The Dymally-Alatorre Bilingual Services Act," Migration Policy Institute,

[www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/language\\_portal/Dymally-Alatorre%20Act\\_0.pdf](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/language_portal/Dymally-Alatorre%20Act_0.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> California Government Code 10553 and 10554 "Welfare and Institutions Code."

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=WIC&division=9.&title=&part=2.&chapter=2.&article=1](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=WIC&division=9.&title=&part=2.&chapter=2.&article=1).

<sup>10</sup> "California Code 11135" Prohibits Discrimination on the basis of "race, national origin, ethnic group identification, religion, age, sexual orientation, color or disability.

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=11135&lawCode=GOV](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=11135&lawCode=GOV)

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7. Executive Order 13166<sup>11</sup> requires that federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of federal financial assistance take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to NE/LEP applicants and beneficiaries consistent with and without unduly burdening the fundamental mission of the agency.
8. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964<sup>12</sup> prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in any program or activity that receives federal funds or other federal financial assistance.

### III. Definition of Terms

**American Sign Language Video Remote Interpreting (ASL-VRI):** Vendor application service utilized by DPSS staff to communicate with customers who are hearing impaired or deaf and identify ASL as their preferred spoken language.

**Americans With Disabilities (ADA) Act Title II (Effective Communication):** Refers to the ADA Title II requirements that state and local governments communicate effectively with people who have communication disabilities.

**Anti-Racism, Diversity and Inclusion (ARDI):** Refers to DPSS' commitment to create and foster an anti-racist, multicultural environment where our customers and employees can thrive.

**Civil Rights Complaint:** Complaint of discriminatory treatment based on a protected category, such as national origin including language.

**Civil Rights Hotline:** Dedicated telephone line in the Civil Rights Compliance Unit for the purpose of receiving civil rights complaints from DPSS customers related to civil rights protected categories, one of which is national origin, including language.

**GEN 1365 Multilingual Notice of Language Services:** This form is provided/mailed to persons with NE/LEP whose preferred language is not English or a DPSS threshold language when translated forms, documents, or informational materials are not available in the DPSS non-threshold languages.

**GEN 1365A Notice of Language Services – Fair Hearings:** This form is sent to the claimant along with the Statement of Position when their preferred language is not English after their Appeals Hearing.

**Interpreting:** The transmission of a message from one language into another using spoken or sign language and expressing it accurately and with appropriate cultural relevance without adding, deleting, or changing the content, register, or tone of the message (e.g., interpreting during any interaction with DPSS customers including interviews).

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<sup>11</sup> "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency," National Archives – Federal Register (August 16, 2020), [www.federalregister.gov/documents/2000/08/16/00-20938/improving-access-to-services-for-persons-with-limited-english-proficiency](http://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2000/08/16/00-20938/improving-access-to-services-for-persons-with-limited-english-proficiency)

<sup>12</sup> "Limited English Proficient (LEP)," U.S. Department of Justice – Office of Justice Programs (January 7, 2020), [Civil Rights | Limited English Proficient \(LEP\) | Office of Justice Programs \(ojp.gov\)](http://CivilRights|LimitedEnglishProficient(LEP)|OfficeofJusticePrograms(ojp.gov))

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**Language Access:** The rights of individuals with NE/LEP to receive meaningful, timely access to federally and state funded programs and services.

**Linguistic Variant:** The distinct form of a language used by members of a specific regional or social group or their ancestors. Linguistic variant or variation are often preferred terms over their synonym, dialect, because of the use of the Spanish term *dialecto* as a racist slur targeting people who speak Latin American indigenous languages. For example, if the customer identifies their preferred language as an indigenous language such as Zapotec or K'iche' but they also speak Spanish, then the customer should be offered interpretive services in their preferred language of Zapotec or K'iche', not Spanish.

**Non-English (NE) or Limited English Proficient (LEP):** Refers to persons whose preferred language is non-English, do not speak English and/or have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English, and interpretation or translation services must be used to effectively communicate program information and requirements. Sign language is subject to this definition.

**Preferred Language:** The spoken, signed, and/or written language an individual indicates they prefer to use to have meaningful access to a program or activity. The determination of a person's preferred language must be made by the individual, not by DPSS staff.

**Qualified Bilingual Employee or Staff:** A DPSS employee who, in addition to possessing the necessary qualifications for the classification, is certified through an exam process established and approved by DPSS' Bureau of Human Resources (BHR) to be proficient in oral and/or written communication in the non-English language of the person served.

**Qualified Interpreter:** A person with advanced oral or signing proficiency in their working languages who adheres to the interpreter's code of ethics and confidentiality, and who can interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary. This person is a neutral third party who has been determined to be qualified by a formal certifying body.

**Qualified Translator:** A person with advanced written proficiency in their working languages, knowledge of professional practices, and adherence to the translator's code of ethics who has been determined to be qualified by a formal certifying body.

**Sight Translation:** Refers to reading a text out loud in a different language (i.e., oral interpretation of a document) without changing the meaning based on a visual review of the original text document.

**Sign Language:** Refers to the use of fingers and hands to communicate with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Threshold Language:** Refers to the languages which have been identified by DPSS' BHR as constituting 5% or more of the caseload for any program or location. BHR utilizes the CDSS Division 21 standard for determination and identification of the DPSS threshold languages. Identification of threshold languages is primarily used for

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the proactive language services planning, such as translation of vital documents and hiring and placement of qualified bilingual employees. All individuals are entitled to meaningful language access. Other aspects of meaningful access, such as the provision of spoken, signed interpreting, and sight translation services, shall not be limited to the threshold languages. Currently, DPSS identifies the DPSS threshold languages as Armenian, Cambodian, Chinese, English, Farsi, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

**Translation:** Using written language to transmit text from one language into another while preserving the meaning, register, and tone of the message. (e.g., translating documents).

**Vital Documents:** Paper or electronic written material that contains information which is critical and necessary for an individual to obtain and/or keep any aid, benefit, service, training, activities, or is required by law. Vital documents include, but are not limited to: applications; Semi-Annual Reporting (SAR)<sup>7</sup> Eligibility Status Report; redetermination; recertification; renewal forms; consent and complaint forms; notices of rights and responsibilities; notices informing persons with NE/LEP of the availability of free language assistance; notices that require a response from DPSS customers; forms requiring customer's signature; and any documents relating to legal rights of the person with NE/LEP. Translation of vital documents and forms is conducted by qualified human translators, and made readily available and accessible in an electronic format, hard copy, upon request, and on the DPSS website. Non-vital documents include documents that are not critical to access benefits or services (e.g., promotional information such as lists of local foodbanks, lists of local homeless shelters, or Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) services flyers).

#### IV. Designated Language Access Liaison

In January 2023, the Civil Rights Section designated a Language Access Liaison to develop the DPSS LAP. The Language Access Liaison's responsibilities include regular reviews of the departmental language access strategies, coordinating, monitoring, and overseeing language access services for the department. The Language Access Liaison is also tasked with oversight of the department's language services, which includes the Translations Unit.

##### DPSS Translations Unit

The DPSS Translations Unit is comprised of 18 translators. Each translator has been certified in both written translation and oral interpretation in their designated threshold language. The translators are assigned for each DPSS threshold language. The Unit is responsible for the translation of all General Relief program forms including applications, Notices of Action, and informational materials in all the departmental threshold languages.

CDSS provides CalWORKs, Refugee Cash Assistance, CalFresh, and CAPI program vital documents and forms in all the CDSS threshold languages including the DPSS threshold languages. The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) provides translated vital documents and forms for the Medi-Cal program in all the



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DHCS threshold languages including the DPSS threshold languages. The CDSS, DHCS, and translated vital documents and forms are translated by human translators. The DPSS Translations Unit is responsible for the written translation of departmental forms, notices, and informational materials. The DPSS Translations Unit does not translate CDSS or DHCS notices or informational materials.

Additionally, translators in the Translations Unit are certified as Language Proficiency Examiners and collaborate with BHR by assisting with Language Proficiency Examinations for the language certification of DPSS bilingual staff in the DPSS threshold languages. The Translations Unit also conducts outgoing voice recordings for the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, as needed, in the DPSS threshold languages.

### Translation, Interpretation Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance for documents translated by the Translations Unit is conducted by a two-person review as a validation process to ensure document accuracy. Two translators must review and reconcile each document translated. Internal document translation request turnaround timeframes are tracked and monitored through an automated tracking system to ensure efficiency.

Telephone interpretive services provided to DPSS customers by county contracted vendors are monitored for quality assurance by reviewing the Language Interpretation Services Master Agreement (LISMA) incident reports that are submitted by DPSS staff. Each incident report is evaluated and investigated by the contractor and a resolution is provided to DPSS. The Internal Services Department has protocols in place to review the certifications and credentials of contract providers per the LISMA.

Staff are required to document that free language services in the customers preferred language were offered and provided. Documentation of language interpreter services shall be completed in accordance with procedural guidelines outlined in Civil Right Section Manual Letter 17-01 and 17-02.

### V. Language Access Services Policies and Procedures

The department has Language Access policies and procedures that provide needed guidance to staff (including contracted staff) to assist persons with NE/LEP. These policies align with state and federal regulations and include the requirement to ask every applicant their preferred spoken, sign, and written language and document the response in the electronic system (CalSAWS). Additionally, language assistance service is required to be offered to persons with NE/LEP at all points of contact with applicants/customers which includes but is not limited to the following access points:

- Customer Service Center (CSC) – General Inquiry
- CSC – Intake
- District and regional offices
- DPSS contractor locations

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- Hearings and appeals
- IHSS home visits
- Quality Control (QC) interviews
- Renewal Line
- Sites with co-located DPSS staff, such as Linkages
- Welfare fraud interviews

The department is required to have certified bilingual employees available to provide language assistance services to customers in the DPSS threshold languages, currently identified as Armenian, Cambodian, Chinese, English, Farsi, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese. The department also utilizes vendor telephone interpreter services to provide language assistance services to NE/LEP customers that identify their preferred spoken/written language as a DPSS threshold/non-threshold language for in-person and over the telephone interactions to ensure services without undue delay.

Additionally, the following language access services are in place to assist customers:

- Access to the California Relay Service.
- American Sign Language – Video Remote Interpretive Services (ASL-VRI) on demand provided by county approved vendor.
- Engagement with community members and stakeholders to identify emerging and unaddressed language needs, enhanced multilingual strategies to provide meaningful language access, and develop appropriate outreach efforts and content.
- In-person American Sign Language Interpreter Services provided by a county approved vendor.
- Telephone Interpretive Services available in over 240 languages provided by county approved vendors.
- Translation of DPSS website and social media posts/web sliders into Spanish by DPSS Translations Unit staff. All other DPSS threshold language translations available via Google Translate.
- Translation of forms, notices, and informational material is provided to DPSS customers in the DPSS threshold languages and non-threshold languages upon request.
- Translation of non-threshold language documents are completed by a county approved vendor upon request.
- TTY (Teletypewriter/Text Telephone) Services.

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## Language Access Services Training

Departmental and contracted staff receive language access training to ensure they are knowledgeable and aware of language access service policies, procedures, and resources. These trainings are provided by the DPSS Academy at onboarding, annually and biennially, as follows:

- Web-based civil rights training includes a module on the provision of Language Access Services.

The training includes the following DPSS and contracted staff's responsibilities:

- Assist persons with NE/LEP to identify spoken and written preferred language at all points of contact, during in-person and/or over the telephone interactions without undue delay. The determination of a person's preferred language must be made by the individual, not by DPSS staff. For example, an individual may be able to engage in brief simple communication in English, Spanish or other language identified as their preferred language, but for more complex interactions, an interpreter may need to be requested.
- Collect and verify the preferred spoken and written language data from customers and document the case record.
- Communicate in ASL with customers that are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and whose preferred language is ASL. (Note, not all persons with hearing deficits know or use ASL).
- Identify linguistic variant when assisting a customer with NE/LEP to ensure that the appropriate language access services are accessed/provided (e.g., customer discloses that they are from Mexico and are not proficient in Spanish, reporting that their preferred language is Zapotec).
- Inform customers of potential communication errors when using their own interpreter and that the county cannot guarantee the interpreter will maintain confidentiality for any information obtained through the interpretation process.
- Provide services using forms in the customers preferred written language.
- Prominently display language access posters in departmental lobbies and lobby service windows to inform the public about language access services.
- Provide the GEN 1365 Multilingual Notice of Language Services form in person or via mail to persons with NE/LEP whose preferred language is other than English or the DPSS threshold languages when translated forms, documents, informational materials are not available in the DPSS non-threshold languages.
- Provide the GEN 1365A Notice of Language Services – Fair Hearings. This form is sent to the claimant along with the Statement of Position when their preferred language is not English after their Appeals Hearing.
- Reception staff in DPSS office lobbies are required to use the Language Identification Guide Card to assist the customer to identify their preferred spoken and written language.

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## Dissemination and Promotion of Language Access Services

The department is required and committed to ensuring its customers are made aware of their civil rights and the various social services programs available to them. DPSS ensures that dissemination of information to the public is made accessible to NE/LEP customers and customers with disabilities, as well as the availability of language access services at no cost. The department disseminates and promotes the availability of language access services through the following methods:

- DPSS website videos provide closed captioning in the DPSS threshold languages.
- Electronic bulletin boards in all public facing offices promote language access services availability.
- Posters in DPSS lobbies inform customers of language access availability in threshold and non-threshold languages.
- Presentations by the department's Community Engagement Team.
- Social media posts are shared in English and Spanish.

## VI. Language Access Complaint Process

The department has a civil rights complaint process which aligns with the state and federal regulations and is revised as needed to comply with state changes and/or revisions to the policy. This process includes responding to language access complaints from the public. This process also provides available options for recourse when the complaint has not been resolved by the department. The complaint process is readily available on the DPSS website at [Your Civil Rights, Appeals, State Hearings \(lacounty.gov\)](http://Your Civil Rights, Appeals, State Hearings (lacounty.gov)). Customers have the right to file a civil rights complaint when they feel they have been discriminated against by departmental and/or contracted staff based on protected categories that include national origin including language.

DPSS provides the PA 607 Complaint of Discriminatory Treatment form that includes information on the protected categories and instructions on how complete and submit the form, as well as the complaint investigation process in the DPSS threshold languages.

DPSS also, provides the GEN 1179 Complaint of Discrimination (revised 05/18/2018) in the following California Department of Social Services (CDSS) threshold languages: Arabic, Hindi, Hmong, Japanese, Laotian, Mien, Portuguese, Punjabi, and Thai.

Customers may also file a complaint using any of the following methods:

- ADA PUB - 1 Americans with Disabilities Complaint form.
- Calling the DPSS Civil Rights Hotline.
- Notifying any DPSS staff member in person or over the telephone of the need to file a complaint.

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- The GEN 1179 Complaint of Discrimination is available electronically at [Civil Rights Section \(lacounty.gov\)](#), and in hard copy at any DPSS and contracted public facing office lobby in the remaining CDSS threshold languages as listed above.
- The PA 607 Complaint of Discriminatory Treatment form is available and may be submitted in the DPSS threshold languages via email, mail, telephone or in person. The PA 607 Complaint of Discriminatory Treatment form (revised 05/2023) is available online [Civil Rights Section \(lacounty.gov\)](#) and in hard copy at any DPSS public facing office lobby in the DPSS threshold languages, and the PA 607 is accepted in any language.

### VII. Monitoring of Public Facing DPSS Offices and Contract Offices

The Civil Rights Section conducts civil rights compliance reviews biennially at DPSS offices and contract offices to ensure compliance with civil rights requirements, including the provision of language access services for persons with NE/LEP. Additionally, CDSS conducts civil rights reviews of the department.

All departmental contracts include provisions that require contractors to include written assurance of nondiscrimination in programs and activities receiving federal or state financial assistance as defined in CDSS' Division 21.

### VIII. Threshold Language Determination Process

DPSS follows CDSS Division 21 standards to determine the departmental threshold languages. Specifically, the departmental threshold languages include those languages that make up 5%<sup>13</sup> or more of the caseload for any program or office location. This process is reviewed and updated annually. The current threshold languages are Armenian, Cambodian, Chinese, English, Farsi, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

The department conducts language reviews by program to ensure appropriate allocation of Bilingual Bonuses for bilingual staff to ensure compliance with state standards. Additionally, BHR conducts Language Proficiency Certification examinations for bilingual staff on an ongoing basis and oversees the approval of bilingual bonus allocations by office location.

### IX. Reports

- DPSS At-A-Glance Reports
- ASL-VRI Usage Reports

**CONTACT INFORMATION:** If you have feedback or concerns about language access services, you can email us at [DPSSLanguageServices@dpss.lacounty.gov](mailto:DPSSLanguageServices@dpss.lacounty.gov).

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<sup>13</sup>Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs,  
<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/lettersnotices/entres/getinfo/acl00/pdf/00-30.PDF>