

5. Interpreting and Translation

This chapter includes:

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- **Policies for interpreting**
- **Procedures for interpreting**
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- **Policies for translation**
- **Procedures for translation**

Definitions for interpreting

Interpreting/interpretation

Interpretation is the translation of a spoken message from one language to another, preserving the intent and meaning of the original message.

Policies for interpreting

Interpreters must be offered for free, if needed.

The city of Minneapolis must provide an interpreter, free of charge, to people who speak little or no English if needed to access city services.

Public meetings will have interpreters available, if needed.

Public meeting notices should include a line advising LEP individuals that interpreters will be provided upon request if there is at least 5 business days notice.

The city will use competent, trained and culturally sensitive interpreters.

Interpretation is more than simply being able to speak two languages. Interpreters are trained professionals who abide by a code of ethics and professional practice standards.

City interpreters or city employees who provide interpreting services must demonstrate competence.

A competent interpreter should demonstrate (at minimum):

- evidence of training that includes skills and ethics of interpreting;
- proficiency in English and the other language, as documented in an objective language proficiency test;
- ability to convey information in both languages, accurately and completely, as demonstrated by a simulated interpreting encounter;
- fundamental knowledge in both languages of any specialized terms or concepts related to the organization's program or activity; and
- sensitivity to the LEP person's culture.

Competency standards apply to all interpreters used to deliver city services.

Interpreting services for the city will be carried out by trained, professional interpreters, whether city staff, contractors or telephone interpreters. City staff who work as interpreters must demonstrate competence as defined above. With contract interpreters and telephone interpreters, competency is assumed, but contracting agencies should demonstrate how competency is assessed.

Volunteers should not interpret unless shown to be competent, according to city standards.

Volunteers, friends or family members whose competence has not been assessed should not be relied upon. The use of untrained volunteers exposes the city to liability, based on its legal obligation to provide competent interpreter services.

Children may not interpret.

For reasons of accuracy, confidentiality and family dynamics, minor children (under 18) may not interpret for family members or other LEP individuals. (This policy does not apply in serious emergency cases, when a minor child is the only available potential interpreter.

Volunteers may interpret for LEP voters.

According to election law, “a voter in need of assistance may obtain the assistance of any individual the voter chooses, except for the voter’s employer, union agent, or a candidate for election. ...” For a full explanation of assistance to LEP voters, see *MN Statute 204C.15—assistance to voters*.

Individuals may use their own adult volunteer interpreters under some limited circumstances.

Staff should never urge or require those who speak little or no English to provide their own interpreter. However, individuals may use their own interpreter if they waive their right to one provided by the city, and if the potential interpreter has demonstrated competence. If the effectiveness of service is compromised or the LEP person’s privacy may be violated, an interpreter should be used.

Individuals using volunteer interpreters should sign a waiver form.

Individuals waiving the right to an interpreter provided by the city may be asked to sign a waiver form in their own language. For a sample waiver form, see *Waiver of interpreter services* online at CityTalk. Click on “Work Tools” and then on “Language and Translation Services.”

Interpreting must be timely.

Access to interpreting services in all city departments must be timely. No one can be denied access to services based on the lack of interpreter availability.

Procedures for interpreting

How to provide interpreting

Interpreting can be provided in a variety of ways (in descending order of

preference);

- by bilingual staff trained in interpreting;
- by MMS or other city staff interpreters;
- by contract or free-lance professional interpreters;
- by professional telephone interpreters;
- by bilingual department staff; and
- by competent volunteer interpreters.

How to access a city interpreter through Minneapolis Multicultural Services

1. Identify which language the person speaks.

Simply ask the person what language s/he speaks, or (if the individual is onsite and not on the phone) ask him or her to point to the preferred language on a Language Identification Card . For a sample of a language identification card, see “I Speak” cards online at CityTalk. Click on “Work Tools” and then on “Language and Translation Services.”

2. Call Minneapolis Multicultural Services

Multicultural Services (MMS) is a division of the city’s Health and Family Support Department. MMS has Spanish and Somali speaking staff who can provide interpreter services free.

- For Spanish, please call 612-673-2700.
- For Somali, please call 612-673-3500. You may also share these phone numbers with your customers.
- For languages other than Spanish and Somali, please contact the division’s coordinator at 612-673-3737 or kristin.keller@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.
- MMS cannot guarantee that an interpreter will be available immediately. Please leave a message. Your call will be returned within 24 hours. If you need an interpreter immediately, follow the procedure below.

How to access a telephone interpreter

Follow the steps above to identify the language needed and to request a city interpreter. If staff are not available and you need an interpreter immediately, contact the city’s contracted telephone interpreting vendor. For online instructions on *How to access telephone interpreting services*, go to CityTalk. Click on “Work Tools” and then on “Language and Translation Services.”

How to access an interpreter through a contracted vendor

The city of Minneapolis has contracts with several vendors to provide interpreter services, as well as written translation of documents. Your department will be charged for using these services. For online instructions on *How to access contracted interpreting services*, go to CityTalk. Click on “Work Tools” and then on “Language and Translation Services.”

If you have frequent contact with individuals who speak limited or no English, please contact Multicultural Services Coordinator Kristin Keller at 612-673-3737 or kristin.keller@ci.minneapolis.mn.us to discuss how best to handle your interpretation needs.

How to work effectively with an interpreter

See online *Guidelines for working with interpreters*. Go to CityTalk. Click on “Work Tools” and then on “Language and Translation Services.”

How to work effectively with a telephone interpreter

See *Helpful Hints for Using Telephone Interpreters*. Go to CityTalk. Click on “Work Tools” and then on “Language and Translation Services.”

How to administer a waiver of the right to an interpreter

After working through an interpreter and ensuring that the individual waiving services can read in his or her preferred language, use the *Waiver of Interpreter Services* form online at CityTalk. Click on “Work Tools” and then on “Language and Translation Services.”

Definitions for translation

Translation/translating

Translation is the conversion of written communication from one language to another. An accurate translation is one that conveys the essential meaning of the original text.

Vital documents

Information or documents that are critical for accessing federally funded services or benefits, or are documents required by law. Documents that require a signature are considered vital. Vital documents include, but are not limited to:

- consent and complaint forms.
- intake forms with the potential for important consequences.
- written notices of eligibility criteria, rights, denial, loss, or decreases in benefits or services, actions affecting parental custody or child support, and other hearings.
- notices advising LEP persons of free language assistance.
- written tests that do not assess English language competency, but test competency for a particular license, job, or skill for which knowing English is not required.
- applications to participate in a recipient's program or activity or to receive recipient benefits or services.
- business cards or short descriptions of department or service.

Nonvital written materials could include:

- third party documents, forms, or pamphlets distributed by a recipient as a public service.
- for a non-governmental recipient, government documents and forms.
- large documents such as enrollment handbooks (although vital information contained in large documents may need to be translated).
- general information about the program intended for informational purposes only.

Policies for translation

Translation of vital documents must be offered, for free.

The city of Minneapolis must provide a translation of vital documents, free of charge, to people who speak little or no English if needed to access city services. City departments may want to work with Multicultural Services, the City Attorney's Office and LEP communities for suggestions regarding which documents would be

vital or helpful to have translated.

Vital documents must be in primary languages.

“Vital” documents must be available in the city’s primary languages or readily translated by an interpreter, upon request. Not all documents can be translated and available in every language. City departments must simply have the capacity to translate documents on request, in a timely fashion. (For further discussion and guidance on which documents should be translated, and when, see the *Department of Justice guidance* (67 FR 41466) in Section 8, Print resources, Part E, or refer to www.lep.gov.)

The city will use competent, trained and culturally sensitive translators.

Translation is more than simply being able to read and write in two languages. Translators are trained professionals who abide by a code of ethics and professional practice standards.

Vital documents are translated by competent staff, contract translators or interpreters, including telephone interpreters.

Materials translated by an outside source must be evaluated for accuracy of translation.

City translators must demonstrate competence.

A competent translator should demonstrate (at minimum):

- Evidence of training that includes skills and ethics of translation;
- Proficiency in English and the other language, as documented in an objective language proficiency test;
- Ability to convey information in both languages, accurately and completely, as demonstrated by a simulated translation job; and
- Fundamental knowledge in both languages of any specialized terms or concepts;
- With approved contract translators, competency is assumed, but a demonstration of competency should be requested.

Volunteers should not translate materials unless shown to be competent, according to city standards.

Volunteers, friends or family members whose competence has not been assessed should not be relied upon. The use of untrained volunteers exposes the city to liability, based on its legal obligation to provide competent translation services.

Children may not provide translations.

For reasons of accuracy, confidentiality and family dynamics, minor children (under 18) should not translate vital documents for family members or other LEP

individuals. (This policy does not apply in *serious* emergency cases, when a minor child is the only available potential translator.)

Individuals may use their own adult volunteer translators under some limited circumstances.

Staff should never urge or require those who speak little or no English to provide their own translator. However, individuals may use their own translator if they waive their right to one provided by the city. If the effectiveness of service is compromised or the LEP person's privacy may be violated, a city translator should be used.

Individuals using volunteer translators should sign a waiver form.

Individuals waiving the right to translation may be asked to sign a waiver form in their own language. After working through an interpreter and ensuring that the individual waiving services can read in his or her preferred language, use the *Waiver of interpreter services* form online at CityTalk. Click on "Work Tools" and then on "Language and Translation."

Translation must be timely.

Access to translated materials in all city departments must be timely. No one can be denied access to services based on the lack of translated material or documents.

Procedures for translation

How to provide translations

Translation can be provided in a variety of ways;

- by bilingual staff trained in translation;
- by MMS or other city staff translators;
- by contract or free-lance professional translators or by contract interpreters providing oral, on-site translation;
- by telephone interpreters providing oral translation of written documents; or
- by competent volunteer translators.

How to access translation services provided by a telephone interpreter

If staff are not available and you need an interpreter immediately to provide on-site translation of a document, contact the city's contracted telephone interpreting vendor.

For online instructions on *How to access telephone interpreting services*, go to CityTalk. Click on "Work Tools" and then on "Language and Translation Services."

How to access translation services through a contracted vendor

The city of Minneapolis has contracts with several vendors to provide written translation of documents. Your department will be charged for using these services. For online instructions on *How to access contracted interpreting services*, go to CityTalk. Click on “Work Tools” and then on “Language and Translation Services.”

If you have frequent contact with individuals who speak limited or no English, please contact Kristin Keller at 612-or kristin.keller@ci.minneapolis.mn.us to discuss how best to handle your translation needs.

How to access translation services through Minneapolis Multicultural Services

1. *Identify which language the translation should be in.*
2. *Call Minneapolis Multicultural Services*

Multicultural Services (MMS) is a division of the city’s Health and Family Support Department. MMS has Spanish and Somali speaking staff who can provide translation services free, in some cases.

- For Spanish, please call 612-673-2700.
- For Somali, please call 612-673-3500. You may also share these phone numbers with your customers.
- For languages other than Spanish and Somali, please contact the division’s coordinator at 612-673-3737 or kristin.keller@ci.minneapolis.mn.us.

MMS cannot guarantee that a translation job will be completed immediately upon request. Please leave a message. Your call will be returned within 24 hours.

How to plan a translation project

See *The 39 Steps: Translation Specification Checklist* on CityTalk. Click on “Work Tools” and then on Language and Translation Services. Or read the checklist on the internet, www.iti.org.uk. Click on “Publications.”

How to check the accuracy of a translation

See *The 39 Steps: Translation Specification Checklist* on CityTalk. Click on “Work Tools” and then on Language and Translation Services. Or read the checklist on the internet, www.iti.org.uk. Click on “Publications.”

