



# **TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY**

## **LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY PROCEDURAL PLAN**

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## 1. **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this document is to detail the procedures the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) will use to identify and assist people who are limited in their proficiency in the English language. It seeks to fulfill THA's legal obligation to make its services meaningfully accessible to Limited English Proficient (hereinafter "LEP") persons (hereinafter "LEPP"). The Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI, is the primary source of this legal obligation. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has also provided "guidance". *See Final Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons*, 72 FR 2732 (January 22, 2007). THA's various program documents conform to this procedural plan, including its Administration Plan governing its rental assistance programs and its Property Management Policies governing its tax credit/project based housing programs. This document also describes the business processes that put its procedures into operations and where the reader can locate further information.

## 2. **IDENTIFYING LEPP AND RECORDING THEIR LANGUAGE NEEDS**

### 2.1 **Identifying a Limited English Proficient Person (LEPP)**

#### 2.1.1 *Who is a Limited English Proficient Person (LEPP)?*

LEPP are defined as individuals who do not speak English as their primary language, and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

#### 2.1.2 *How to tell if someone is LEP.*

THA staff should make appropriate efforts to determine if a person is a Limited English Proficient Person (LEPP). There could be several ways to tell:

- (a) The person may request language help. Notices posted in THA offices in the major non-English languages spoken by LEPPs in Tacoma will help individuals to self-identify as needing language assistance.
- (b) All THA offices will have "I speak cards posters" and language identification cards. They will show a variety of languages. These should encourage LEP persons needing language assistance to self-identify.
- (c) The LEPP may indicate in other ways that he or she needs language services. THA staff should be alert for this. THA staff, for example, may have reason to believe that a person needs language services even if the

person does not request help or even declines help. Asking someone if they speak or understand English is not very helpful since a “yes” or “no” answer does not show that the person understands the question. A better test of a person’s command of English is to engage him or her in general conversation that would test their fluency.

- (d) Some LEPPs are not able to read in their native languages. THA staff should be alert to whether the LEPP can read any language. If not, oral interpretation and/or translation will be necessary

## **2.2 Recording the Language Needs of a LEPP**

When THA staff identifies a person as a LEPP, staff must record this fact in the appropriate client or applicant files and in the appropriate electronic record in THA’s software client database. Staff should also document the person’s native language and whether he or she is literate in that language. Recording this information serves several purposes. It alerts staff about this client’s need for language services in future communications. It helps THA build a data base to identify its LEPP population language needs and track how those needs change.

## **3. NOTICE OF LEP SERVICES TO LEP PERSONS**

THA will provide the following types of notice to LEPPs in the prime non-English languages of THA:

### **3.1 Postings**

THA shall post for public view materials alerting LEPPs that THA has free language interpretation services available to those who need assistance. Posting locations shall include bulletin boards in tenant buildings as well within the entrance area to all our public offices, including the Administration office, the Family Investment Center, and our offices at all our properties.

### **3.2 Outreach Documents**

THA shall include the following statement in the major non-English languages in THA cover letters:

*“THA wants to make sure you understand all documents you may receive from us. Do you need this document in your language? If so, please let us know. You can contact THA at the number at the bottom of the letter. THA will try to find someone to read it to you in your language. We can also try other ways to speak with you or write you in your language.”*

### **3.3 Community Outreach**

The Civil Rights Compliance Auditor (CRCA) will regularly consult with community organizations that serve, or that are comprised of, LEPPs in Tacoma. This consultation will serve the following purposes:

- (a) to enlist the help of the organizations to spread the word that THA offers language services to LEPPs;
- (b) to invite suggestions on how THA can improve its services to LEPPs

### **3.4 Advertisement of LEPP Services**

THA will periodically advertise its services in local newspapers or broadcast media that publish or transmit in the major non-English languages of THA.

#### **4. ORAL COMMUNICATION: INTERPRETATION SERVICES**

“Interpretation” refers to oral communication between languages.

##### **4.1 Available Interpretation Services**

All THA staff that come in contact with LEPP’s will provide necessary interpretation services to them either over the phone or in-person.

THA’s CRCA is responsible for making these services available to THA’s staff as needed. The CRCA office will be responsible for training THA staff for use of the over the phone interpretation services. The CRCA will assign THA departments and staff the appropriate vendor coding to use internally to assist in properly charging the use of the interpretation services.

##### **4.2 In All Languages**

THA will provide reasonably available interpretation services under this plan in any language, even if the language is not one of the major non-English languages of THA.

THA will have access to interpretation services in most any language THA is likely to encounter.

##### **4.3 Type and Source of Interpretation Services**

Exhibit A to this document shows the type and source of interpretation services. THA staff shall choose the appropriate one that suits the needs of the situation.

## 5. TRANSLATING DOCUMENTS

“Translation” refers to written communication between languages.

### 5.1 Determining THA’s Major Languages

THA used the US Census Bureau 2010 census to determine those major languages that THA recognizes as meeting the LEP threshold as described in the HUD Final Guidance (72 FR 2732 (January 22, 2007)) within the households in THA’s programs of either 1,000 LEP persons or 5% of the total. Those languages are set forth in Exhibit B. Staff will continue to track those households who identify themselves as LEP. As THA tracks those households more closely, THA will have more accurate data to determine those languages meeting the threshold.

### 5.2 Translation of THA Documents into THA Major Languages

#### 5.2.1 *Notice of Availability of Translated Documents in THA Major Languages*

THA will provide cover letters for all THA documents sent to our applicants, clients, and tenants. *See* Exhibit C. Each cover letters will be translated in the top 10 languages most requested by THA LEPPs. The list of these languages shows in Exhibit C. Each recipient, whether LEPP or not, will receive such a cover letter that conveys its contents in all these languages.

#### 5.2.2 *Translation of Documents*

THA will provide a translated version of a vital document in any of THA’s major languages upon request. A document is “vital” for these purposes if it does any of the following: it denies an application for housing or services; it terminates or threatens termination of a tenancy or rental subsidy; it announces new program rules that the recipient must follow or risk termination; t announces a new THA program the recipient may find useful for their household success in our housing programs. The extent of the translation will be one of the following:

Full Written Translation	This is a translation of the full document into a written version of the document in the other languages. The translated version will have substantially the same meaning and formatting as the English version.
Full Written Translation of Vital Portions of Document and Summary of Non-Vital Portions	Some vital documents include both vital and non-vital information. Non-vital portions of particularly lengthy documents will be summarized rather than fully translated. THA will attach this summary to the full English version of the document.
Oral Translation	THA will also offer oral translation of the full document upon request and free of charge.
Cover Note	For other THA documents given to LEPPs, THA will include a copy of <i>THA CR-20(3) Offer of Oral Translation of Documents</i> . This form includes the following statement in the major non-English languages of THA: <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: fit-content;">If you need help to understand this document in your own language, you may call (253) 207-4421.</div>

THA staff should first consult the on-line library of translated documents to see if one has already been created. If not, he or she should consult the CRCA, who will arrange any necessary translation.

#### 5.2.3 *Library of Translated Documents*

The CRCA will arrange for an on-line library of translated documents available to all THA staff.

#### 5.2.4 *Creation of New Documents*

When the Administration Department creates a new THA document, it shall consult with the CRCA. The CRCA shall determine if THA should translate it into THA's major languages even in advance of any request for translation.

#### 5.2.5 *Web Site Documents*

THA's website will provide a language translator feature for the text in the web site and for documents available on the web site. The Administration Department will be responsible for this work. The CRCA will monitor it.

### 5.3 **English Version of Documents Shall Govern**

The English version of each document shall govern its meaning.



**6. BILINGUAL STAFF**

THA will endeavor to attract, hire and retain staff who speak, write and read in THA's major languages. Such staff offer several advantages to THA and to LEPPs.

- They can provide interpretation and translation services easily and economically..
- By conversing in the native language of an LEPP, these staff can help an LEPP feel more comfortable with THA. These staff can also help an LEPP feel more confident that THA is serious about its wish to be accessible to all persons across language lines.

## EXHIBIT A

### Limited English Proficiency Plan

#### INTERPRETATION SERVICES

“Interpretation” refers to oral communication between languages.

Below is a list of interpretation services for oral encounters with LEPPs. The Civil Rights Compliance Auditor shall be responsible for ensuring their availability as necessary. Staff should select the particular interpretation service that they find to be appropriate for the encounter. The list below suggests uses for each service.

Interpretative Service	Comments	Suggested Uses
<p><b>LEPP choice of interpreter: family members, friends, or other persons the LEPP would identify.</b></p>	<p>THA will allow a LEPP to use, at his or her own expense, an interpreter of his or her own choice in limited circumstances. THA will not encourage or require the use of interpreters of the LEPP’s choice. Instead, THA staff will offer appropriate interpretation services through bilingual staff, telephone interpreter services, competent community volunteers or contract professional interpreters in accordance with this policy. In limited circumstances, THA will accommodate the LEPP’s wish to use an interpreter of his or her own choice.</p> <p>Allowing the use of interpreter of the LEPP’s choice has advantages or disadvantages.</p> <p><b>Advantages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A LEPP may have more confidence in his or her own interpreter.</li> <li>● A LEPP may be more comfortable with an in-person interpreter when the only available alternative is to use telephone interpreter services.</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● It can be hard to assess the competency or reliability of such interpreters. Family or friends, even if fully bilingual, are unlikely to have had training on interpretation.</li> </ul>	<p>Because of the disadvantages, THA will not use family or friends as interpreters for the following matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● matters that the staff conclude may present a conflict with the interests of the interpreter;</li> <li>● grievance hearings.</li> </ul> <p>Whenever a LEPP offers to provide an interpreter, THA staff shall offer to provide an interpreter at THA’s expense.</p>

<b>Interpretative Service</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Suggested Uses</b>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family or friends may not be suitable to interpret matters that are confidential, embarrassing, or that present a conflict with their own interests.</li> </ul>	
<b>Community Volunteers</b>	<p>Volunteers save THA money.</p> <p>THA should make appropriate efforts to ensure that the volunteers are competent.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>intake interviews</li> <li>telephone conversations</li> </ul>
<b>Telephone Interpreter Services</b>	<p>Telephone interpreter services can offer fast interpreter assistance in many languages. They can help with telephone communication with a LEPP or with in-person communication using a speakerphone for the call to the interpreter.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>meetings with Section 8 participants about alleged program violations</li> </ul>
<b>Bi-Lingual Staff</b>	<p>THA will attempt to recruit and assign bi-lingual staff. Bi-lingual staff can provide language services for their own clients or for clients of other THA staff.</p> <p>The Civil Rights Compliance Auditor will keep and distribute to all staff an inventory of bi-lingual staff for this purpose. Such staff should receive training on interpretation skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>meetings with tenants about alleged lease violations</li> <li>annual review meetings with Section 8 participants or tenants</li> </ul>
<b>Contract Professional Interpreters</b>	<p>THA will use contract professional interpreters it needs a high degree of assurance about competence.</p> <p>THA will use contract professional interpreters at community meetings of LEPPs in any of the major non-English languages of THA. In general, there are several ways to do this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>language specific meetings</li> <li>multi-language meetings with persons grouped by language with their interpreter</li> <li>multi-language meetings using transmitters for interpreters and headphones for the LEPPs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>grievance hearings</li> <li>community meetings</li> </ul>



# TACOMA HOUSING AUTHORITY

## EXHIBIT B

### Determining THA's Major Limited English Proficiency Languages

THA will translate "vital documents" into the languages that meet the LEP threshold as described in the HUD Final Guidance (72 FR 2732 (January 22, 2007)). Under this guidance, a language qualifies for this purpose if either there are 1,000 LEP persons in that language among the population of THA's program participants or if 5% of the total population of program participants are LEP their spoken language. Those languages are show below. Staff will continue to track those households who identify themselves as LEP. As THA tracks those households more closely, THA will have more accurate data to determine those languages meeting the threshold.

<b>THA Major LEP Languages (Threshold described above)</b>
<b>Cambodian</b>
<b>Korean</b>
<b>Russian</b>
<b>Spanish</b>
<b>Vietnamese</b>

## EXHIBIT C

### Limited English Proficiency Plan

#### THA Cover Letters

Below is a list of THA cover letters to be used when mailing or handing certain documentation to applicants or clients. The cover letter will convey its mean in the top ten (10) languages that THA staff encounter among clients and applicants. As of the date of this exhibit, those languages are: Vietnamese, Cambodian (Khmer), Spanish, Korean, Russian, Ukrainian, Somali, Laotian, Burmese, and Arabic. The contact information of the staff person to contact will show in a graphic box in the upper right or in the footer of the letter.

The Civil Rights Compliance Auditor shall be responsible for ensuring that these cover letters are available as necessary and that they print automatically when printing various types of documents from THA's system.

THA Cover Letters	
Letter type	Text
Eviction Letter Cover Letter	“The attached document is important! It tells you that you are being evicted. It explains your right to appeal your eviction if you disagree with it. Call the number or send an email to the person shown in the box to the right. THA will try to find someone to read it to you in your language or try other ways to help you understand this in your own language.
Termination Letter Cover Letter	“The attached document is important! It tells you that we are ending your housing assistance. It explains your right to appeal if you disagree with this. Call the number or send an email to the person shown in the box to the right. THA will try to find someone to read it to you in your language or try other ways to help you understand this in your own language.
General THA Information Cover Letters	“THA wants to make sure you understand all documents you may receive from us. Do you need this document in your language? If so, please let us know. Call the number or send an email to the person shown in the box to the right. THA will try to find someone to read it to you in your language or try other ways to help you understand this in your own language.

THA Cover Letters	
Letter type	Text
Mass Mailing Cover Letter	<p>“THA wants to make sure you understand all documents you may receive from us. Do you need this document in your language? If so, please let us know. You can contact THA at the number or email below. They are both located at the bottom of the letter. THA will try to find someone to read it to you in your language or try other ways to help you understand this in your own language.”</p>