

Suffolk County Comptroller
Language Access Plan

County Agency: Department of Audit and Control

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I. Policy:

It is the Suffolk County Comptroller Office of the Department of Audit and Control's (AAC) policy to provide meaningful access to all individuals applying for and/or participating in services and programs administered by our agency.

II. Purpose & Background:

Pursuant to Suffolk County Executive Order No. 10-2012, the Office of the Suffolk County Comptroller will ensure that people with limited English proficiency (LEP) have access to programs and services offered by the Department of Audit and Control. AAC administers the collection of delinquent property taxes, the county hotel/motel tax and bail. Among many other responsibilities, our agency processes Certificate of Residence requests, investigates fraud allegations and handles the registration of Non-Profit Veterans Organizations. The Comptroller's Language Access Plan ("Plan") details the ways we will improve the experience of all individuals in Suffolk County whose primary language is not English.

III. Federal Authorities:

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000 et seq.; 45 CFR §80, Nondiscrimination based on race, color or national origin for any programs receiving federal financial assistance. Failure to provide meaningful access to program information, benefits and/or services due to an applicant/recipient's LEP is considered discrimination based on national origin.

Presidential Executive Order 13166 (August 11, 2000) federally funded agencies must take reasonable steps to ensure that people who have limited English proficiency (LEP) have access to the recipient's programs and services.

NYS Governor Executive Order No. 26 Statewide Language Access Policy (October 14, 2011)

Suffolk County Executive Order 10-2012 Countywide Language Access Policy (November 9, 2012)

IV. Definitions

Limited English Proficiency ("LEP") – describes a person who is unable to speak, read, write or understand the English language at a level that permits them to interact effectively with social service providers and other county agencies.

County Agency ("Agency") – any agency, department, division of office of Suffolk County government which provides programs and/or services to the public.

Vital Documents – those documents most commonly distributed to the public and to individuals in County correctional facilities that contain or elicit important and necessary information regarding the provision of basic County services.

Translation – converting written documents from one language into another.

Interpretation – the oral or spoken transfer of a message from one language into another language.

Meaningful Access – is language assistance that results in accurate and effective communication between an agency and an individual, at no cost to the individual.

V. LEP Population Assessment:

Suffolk County's population is diverse and includes many taxpayers whose primary language is not English. According to the most recent census, the six (6) most common non-English languages spoken by individuals with limited English proficiency within Suffolk County are: **Spanish, Mandarin Chinese, Polish, Italian, Portuguese and Haitian Creole**. In order to best serve all residents, the Department of Audit and Control has developed this plan which will provide meaningful access in the aforementioned languages.

VI. Translation of Written Documents:

AAC will have all vital documents translated into the six most commonly encountered languages in Suffolk County.

VII. Existing Processes:

The Suffolk County Department of Audit and Control does not encourage LEP individuals or families to use friends, family members or minors as interpreters. However, if an LEP individual insists that a friend, family member or minor serve as an interpreter, it is allowed. Spanish-speaking individuals are assisted during walk-in visits or on phone calls to our Riverhead Center by a bilingual employee. There is another bilingual employee who helps Spanish-speaking callers who dial the general information line into the Administration Division in Hauppauge.

VIII. Administration:

The Language Access Coordinator will conduct an assessment to ensure that all new vital documents are translated and that the plan is updated biennially. The LAC will also utilize census data to determine if there are any changes in the six (6) most common languages spoken by individuals with LEP and take

appropriate action(s). Deidre Wyman of the Comptroller's Office is the current LAC.

IX. Complaints:

All complaints will be reviewed, investigated and responded to. The LAC will work to resolve all issues promptly.