

Best Practices for Language Access and Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Inclusiveness is the bedrock of fair housing laws and regulations. FHIP and FHAP programs and services must¹ be readily accessible to complainants coming forward with fair housing concerns including those with [limited English proficiency \(LEP\)](#). Federal laws protect the rights of persons with LEP and require FHIPs and FHAPs to provide language assistance.

Defining LEP

LEP is defined for persons who, as a result of national origin, do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand. According to 2019 estimates, 8.2% of people in the United States reported speaking English less than “very well.”²

FHIPs and FHAPs must:

- Examine the public-facing services that your agency provides
- Identify the language needs within your service area
- Develop and implement a system of resources to provide meaningful access by LEP persons
- Remove language-restricted barriers to housing

Best Practices

To achieve those goals, consider the following,

- FHIP/FHAP Management
 - Identify at least three of the most common languages spoken in your jurisdiction. [LEP.gov has data maps for language access on the state and local levels.](#)
 - Conduct an agency self-assessment to create or update your language access plan that ensures effective communication at all points of contact between LEP persons and the agency. Use the [Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs](#) for additional guidance.
 - Share your plan and train your staff and other stakeholders regarding requirements, procedures, and available tools to ensure everyone provides high-quality customer services to all your clients.

¹ HUD’s Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient (LEP) Person
<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2007/01/22/07-217/final-guidance-to-federal-financial-assistance-recipients-regarding-title-vi-prohibition-against>

² U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, “2019:ACS 1-Year Estimates Data Profiles”
<https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?d=ACS%201-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&tid=ACSDP1Y2019.DP02&hidePreview=false>

- Intake and investigative processes
 - Provide information and materials that reflect your community:
 - Website to include a link to HUD's [Complaint Filing in Languages Other than English](#)
 - Pre-complaint questionnaires and notification letters in languages other than English
 - FAQs or outward facing information regarding the fair housing complaint process in languages other than English
 - Provide prompt access to staff or translators who speak languages other than English. Consider telephonic translation services to provide on-the-spot translation services to triage complaints during intake and to interview LEP parties during an investigation.
 - Have language identification and "I Speak" cards readily available at public-facing areas to quickly triage an aggrieved party's language needs. [Additional information can be found on the LEP.gov page.](#)

- Conciliation
 - Clearly and plainly state the purpose and possible outcomes of the conciliation process for the complainant. Have a translator available during each conciliation discussion.
 - Agreement should be prepared in both English and the LEP party's primary language.

- Education and outreach materials
 - Translate all education and outreach materials to the most common languages spoken in your jurisdiction.
 - Utilize existing translated outreach materials from [FHEO's LEP website](#) and [NFHA's Fair Housing Resource Center](#)
 - Conduct virtual and in-person outreach workshops in the appropriate language(s).
 - Work with grassroots community-based organizations to determine the fair housing needs of the LEP community.
 - Schedule outreach opportunities in places with significant numbers of LEP persons