

Phoenix Municipal Court

Language Access Plan (LAP)

I. Legal Basis and Purpose

This document serves as the plan for the Phoenix Municipal Court to provide to persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) services that are in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d et seq.; 45 C.F.R. § 80.1 et seq.; and 28 C.F.R. § 42.101–42.112). The purpose of this plan is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and reasonable language assistance to LEP persons who come in contact with the Phoenix Municipal Court.

This language access plan (LAP) was developed to ensure meaningful access to court services for persons with limited English proficiency. Although court interpreters are provided for persons with a hearing loss, access services for them are covered under the Americans with Disabilities Act rather than Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, and therefore will not be addressed in this plan.

II. Needs Assessment

A. Statewide

The State of Arizona provides court services to a wide range of people, including those who speak limited or no English. From a statewide perspective, the following languages were listed with the greatest number of speakers who spoke English less than “Very Well” in Arizona (according to the American Community Survey estimate report from the U.S. Census Bureau dated March 2022):

1. Spanish
2. Navajo
3. Vietnamese
4. Chinese
5. Arabic

B. Phoenix Municipal Court

The Phoenix Municipal Court is responsible for providing services identified in this plan to all LEP persons. However, the following list shows the foreign languages that are most frequently used in this court’s geographic area.

1. Spanish
2. Swahili
3. Arabic
4. Burmese
5. Kinyarwanda

This information is based on data collected by the City of Phoenix Municipal Court’s internal interpreter statistics. Internal statistics are kept and reviewed annually by the Court Interpreters Section of the Management Services Division. Statistics specify the work of individuals providing interpreter services within the court, as well as the various languages for which interpreter services are provided to persons with

limited English proficiency.

III. Language Assistance Resources

A. Interpreters Used in the Courtroom

1. Providing Interpreters in the Courtroom

In the Phoenix Municipal Court, court interpreters will be provided in all courtroom proceedings at no cost to all LEP witnesses; litigants; victims; parents, guardians, and family members of minor witnesses, victims, and/or litigants; as well as any other person whose presence or participation is necessary or appropriate as determined by the judicial officer. The Phoenix Municipal Court provides LEP persons meaningful access without distinguishing among civil, criminal, or administrative matters.

The Phoenix Municipal Court employs credentialed interpreters in the courtroom pursuant to the provisions of Arizona supreme court administrative order 2016-02 on the credentialing of court interpreters, and Arizona Code of Judicial Administration § 7-301 on continuing education requirements for credentialed interpreters. To comply with these authorities, the court will implement written policies regarding the use of interpreters (see Addendum A).

It is the responsibility of the private attorney, City of Phoenix Public Defender or City of Phoenix Prosecutor to provide qualified interpretation and translation services for witness interviews, pre-trial transcriptions and translations and attorney/client communications during out of court proceedings. The Phoenix Municipal Court maintains a standing Request For Qualifications ("RFQ") inviting providers of interpretation services to apply to enter into contracts with the City to be included on a qualified vendor list. Resulting interpreter contracts provide that in addition to the Court, the Public Defender Office and City Prosecutor may call on these providers to provide interpretation services in accordance with the terms and fee schedule set by the contract.

2. Determining the Need for an Interpreter in the Courtroom

The Phoenix Municipal Court may determine whether a court customer has limited English proficiency. Identification of language needs at the earliest point of contact is highly recommended. The need for a court interpreter may be identified prior to a court proceeding by the LEP person or on the LEP person's behalf by counter staff, Community Justice Resource Center staff or outside justice partners such as law enforcement, the City of Phoenix Prosecutor's Office, and the City of Phoenix Public Defender's Office. Courts should have a documented process to identify LEP needs for parties with notation in the physical and electronic case file.

Signage throughout the court building indicating interpreter services are available may also help to identify LEP individuals. The Phoenix Municipal Court will display these signs at the following locations: exterior areas of the Courthouse windows, customer front lobby metal detector entrance, information desk, 1st floor lobby area, customer service counters, and Court Administration reception desk.

The need for an interpreter also may be made known in the courtroom at the time of the proceeding. In a case where the court is mandated to provide an interpreter, but one is not available at the time of the proceeding, even after the court has made all reasonable efforts to locate one, as previously outlined in this plan, the case will be postponed and continued on a date when an interpreter can be provided.

3. Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) Interpretation Resources

Court Interpreter Registry, Roster of Credentialed Court Interpreters, and Listserv:

The AOC maintains a statewide registry of individuals who indicate they have interpreting experience and have expressed interest in working in the courts. The registry includes information on the individuals' credentialing status with the Arizona court interpreter credentialing program (ACICP). The court using interpreting services will determine the competence of the persons listed and their suitability for a given assignment. This registry is available to court staff on the Internet at <https://apps.azcourts.gov/registry>.

The AOC also maintains a public Arizona roster of credentialed court interpreters. The public roster lists the name, language, credential level, and contact information for those interpreters who have successfully earned an ACICP credential and who have consented to having their information appear in the public roster. The public roster is available on the Arizona judicial branch website at <https://www.azcourts.gov/interpreter/>.

Additionally, AOC created a statewide listserv to allow courts to communicate via email on court interpreter-related matters. The listserv is an excellent resource to locate referrals for specific language needs. Access codes and instructions to join the listserv, may be obtained from the AOC language access contact person.

Video Remote Interpreting:

The AOC has installed video conferencing equipment at the State Courts building that will allow courts with compatible technology to remotely conference an interpreter from the Phoenix metro area or from another court jurisdiction into their court to improve resource allocation and reduce time and costs associated with interpreter travel. The Phoenix Municipal Court administrators maintain the AOC LAP contact for more information on VRI connectivity and checklist for court proceedings most appropriate for video.

B. Language Services Outside the Courtroom

The Phoenix Municipal Court recognizes that it is responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure that LEP individuals have meaningful access to all court services and programs outside the courtroom. Court services and programs include but are not limited to self-help centers, clerk offices, intake officers, cashiers, and records room.

1. Assistance to Understand Court Procedures and Policies

Services offered by the court generally to English-speaking customers pursuant to the employee code of conduct (ACJA §1-303) must also be provided to LEP litigants in their language.

2. Assistance to Fill-Out Court Forms and Pleadings

The Phoenix Municipal Court will assist in the filling-out of court forms for those LEP court customers who are unable to do so either by themselves or with the assistance of another competent adult proficient in English and able to render assistance in a timely manner.

3. Court-Ordered Services and Programs

The court also is responsible for taking reasonable steps to ensure that LEP individuals have meaningful

access to all court-ordered services and programs. Court-ordered services and program include but is not limited to conciliation, mediation, arbitration, treatment or educational programs provided by a court employee or a private vendor under contract with the court. Contracts with vendors that provide direct services to court users must include the requirement that the vendor provide language services, including interpreters, for all LEP individuals.

The court uses the following resources to facilitate communication with LEP individuals and court staff or providers of court-ordered services:

- Staff court interpreters or independent interpreter contractors.
- Bilingual employees.
- “I Speak” cards, to identify the individual’s primary language.
- Written information in Spanish on how to access and navigate the court.
- Multilingual signage throughout courthouse locations in the following languages: Spanish, Arabic, and Vietnamese.
- For face-to-face encounters, as well as telephone conversations, the Phoenix Municipal Court uses telephonic interpreter services, (from contract interpreters or an agency); and,
- A public court phone line with key instructions provided in Spanish to request court services.
- Video remote interpreting services (when/where available)
- The terms of the court’s contracts with providers of court-ordered services.

To provide linguistically accessible services for LEP individuals, the Phoenix Municipal Court provides the following:

- Staff court interpreters or independent interpreter contractors;
- Bilingual counter staff.
- Telephonic language assistance.
- Written informational and educational materials and instructions in Spanish.
- Website link from court’s website to the Supreme Court’s Spanish translated webpage for court forms and instructions and other language access related resources such as the courts’ **LAP** and complaint form and process should be made available online at:
<http://www.azcourts.gov/selfservicecenter/Self-Service-Forms#ComplaintForm>

4. Bilingual Staff

The Phoenix Municipal Court uses bilingual staff, if applicable, in the provision of linguistically accessible services for LEP individuals. These staff assist LEP individuals at public counters, resource centers, over the phone, etc., in the same manner as that for English-speaking court users.

Bilingual staff who have not completed the credentialing program are not used in lieu of interpreters, either in court or for court-ordered programs and services.

C. Court Appointed or Supervised Personnel

The Phoenix Municipal Court shall also ensure that court appointed or supervised personnel, including but not limited to child advocates, guardians ad litem, court psychologists and doctors provide language services, including interpreters as part of their service delivery system to LEP individuals.

D. Translated Forms and Documents

The Arizona courts understand the importance of translating forms and documents so that LEP individuals have greater access to the courts' services. The Phoenix Municipal Court uses forms and instructional materials translated into Spanish.

- The court has translated various vital documents into Spanish:

Order of Protection informational brochure 'Helping You Feel Safer'; Protective Order Service Information; Vehicle Impound Information; Children are Priceless Passengers Information; Fine Payment Directive; Financial Screening Application for Payment Plan; Courtroom Assignment Information; Confinement Order Rules and Regulations; Healthcare Instructions; Work Release and Self-surrender information; Diversion Program Brochures; Compliance Assistance Program Information; Notice of Interpreting Services in Spanish, Vietnamese and Arabic, and court correspondence.

These documents will be located at appropriate sites within the Court. When appropriate, Court administrators and staff also inform LEP persons that additional forms can be found in the Arizona Supreme Court's Spanish-translated webpage:

<http://www.azcourts.gov/elcentrodeautoservicio/Home.aspx>.

1. Sight Translation

The court will provide assistance so LEP persons may understand court-issued documents provided in English through sight translation or other reasonable means. Interpreters are expected to provide sight translations of court documents associated with the case.

In the event one is not available, or if the document does not lend itself to sight translation due to its length, complexity, or legibility, other reasonable means may be employed to ensure meaningful access for the LEP person. These include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. Explanation of the contents of the document by a competent bilingual court employee.
- b. Engaging a remote interpreting service to relay a court staff member's explanation of the document's contents.
- c. Submission of the document for a timely written translation, as appropriate.

E. Website/Online Access

The Phoenix Municipal Court operates an Internet website at : <https://www.phoenix.gov/court> and ensures the website is accessible to LEP persons and includes, at a minimum:

- A notice about the availability of language services written in Spanish and posted on the home page.
- Current Phoenix Municipal Court Language Access Plan
- Language Access Complaint Form
- A hyperlink to: Arizona Supreme Court's Spanish-translated webpage at <https://www.azcourts.gov/elcentrodeautoservicio>

IV. Court Staff Recruitment

Recruitment of Bilingual Staff for Language Access

The Phoenix Municipal Court is an equal opportunity employer and recruits and hires bilingual staff to serve its LEP constituents. Primary examples include but are not limited to:

- Court interpreters to serve as regular full-time or part-time employees or regular interpreter contractors of the court.
- Bilingual staff to serve at public counters and or self-help centers; and
- Bilingual staff available on call to assist with contacts from LEP individuals, as needed.

V. Judicial and Staff Training:

The Phoenix Municipal Court is committed to providing language access training opportunities for all judicial officers and staff members. Training and learning opportunities currently offered will be expanded or continued as needed. Those opportunities include:

- Interpreter coordinator training
- Diversity Training
- Cultural competency training
- LAP training
- New employee orientation training
- Judicial officer orientation on the use of court interpreters and language competency
- AOC's Language Access in the Courtroom Training DVD
- AOC's Language Access Online Training Videos located at <http://www.azcourts.gov/educationservices/cojet-classroom/video-center>

VI. Public Outreach and Education

A. General

To communicate with the court's LEP constituents on various legal issues of importance to the community and to make them aware of services available to all language speakers, the Phoenix Municipal Court provides community outreach and education and seeks input from its LEP constituency to further improve services. Outreach and education efforts include:

- Request for Qualifications (RFQ) on the City of Phoenix Court Internet Website
- Customer Service Survey Cards
- A notice about the availability of language services written in Spanish and posted on <https://www.phoenix.gov/court>
- Current Phoenix Municipal Language Access Plan
- Language Access Complaint Form
- A hyperlink to: Arizona Supreme Court's Spanish-translated webpage at <http://www.azcourts.gov/selfservicecenter/Self-Service-Forms#CompJaintForm>
- Public service videos in English and Spanish explaining the Phoenix Municipal Court Compliance Assistance Program ("CAP") have been produced and will be posted to public access websites for the City of Phoenix and the Court.; and,

The court will solicit input from the LEP community and its representatives through court survey cards and will seek to inform community service organizations on how LEP individuals can access court services.

B. Videos, Webinars, On-Line Classes, In-Person Classes and Other Similar Instructional Methods

New public-facing videos designed to assist litigants or the public more broadly shall be in English and Spanish.

Those videos, webinars, and instructional materials currently in existence which are deemed to be “vital” shall be made available in Spanish.

The court will determine whether any existing videos, webinars, and instructional materials should be made available in languages other than English and Spanish by considering the department of justice’s four-factor analysis.

VII. Formal Complaint Process

If an LEP court customer believes meaningful access to the courts was not provided to them, they may choose to file a complaint with the trial court’s Management Services Court Administrator or Language Access Plan Coordinator. The court has a complaint process that includes at a minimum, the following:

- The court will respond to any complaint within 30 days and the records will be maintained as public records.
- A complaint may be filed in person or by mail and directed to the Phoenix Municipal Court at 300 West Washington St. Phoenix AZ 85003 to the attention of Management Services Court Administrator.
- A complaint form can be found at <http://www.azcourts.gov/selfservicecenter/Self-Service-Forms#ComplaintForm> and at <https://www.phoenix.gov/court>
- The court will ensure that translated versions of the complaint form are available in multiple locations, including, but not limited to:
 - Forms posted on the court’s website and
 - Hard copy forms available at the counters.

VIII. Public Notification and Evaluation of LAP

A. LAP Approval and Notification

The Phoenix Municipal Court’s LAP is approved by the presiding judge and court executive officer. Upon approval, a copy will be provided to the AOC Court Services Division. Any revisions to the plan will be submitted to the presiding judge and court executive officer for approval, and then forwarded to the AOC. Copies of the Phoenix Municipal Court’s LAP will be provided to the public on request. In addition, the court will post this plan on its public Web site at <https://www.phoenix.gov/court>

B. Evaluation of the LAP

The Phoenix Municipal Court will routinely assess whether changes to the LAP are needed. The plan may be

changed or updated at any time but reviewed not less frequently than once a year or biennially.

Every year the court's Language Access Plan Coordinator will review the effectiveness of the court's LAP and update it as necessary. The evaluation will include identification of any problem areas and development of corrective action strategies. From time to time, the court may consider using a survey sampling of data collection for a limited time period which involves assessing language access requests to assist in the evaluation of the LAP.

Elements of the evaluation will include:

- Number of LEP persons requesting Spanish court interpreters and language assistance.
- Assessment of current language needs to determine if additional services or translated materials should be provided.
- Solicitation and review of feedback from LEP communities within the county.
- Assessment of whether court staff adequately understand LEP policies and procedures and how to carry them out.
- Review of feedback from court employee training sessions; and,
- Customer satisfaction feedback as indicated on the access and fairness survey, if administered by the court during this time period.
- Review any language access complaints received during this time period.

C. Trial Court Language Access Plan Coordinator:

Cristina Parra
Office of the Court Interpreter Supervisor
Phoenix Municipal Court
300 W. Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85003
(602) 261-8157, cristina.parra@phoenix.gov

D. AOC Language Access Contact:

David Svoboda
Court Services Division
Administrative Office of the Courts
1501 W. Washington Street, Suite 410
Phoenix, AZ 85007
(602) 452-3965, dsvoboda@courts.az.gov

E. LAP effective date: February 26, 2025

F. Date of last revision: March 1, 2017

G. Approved by:

Presiding Judge:

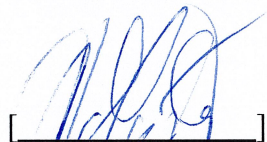


B. Don Taylor III

Date:

[2/27/25]

Court Executive Officer:



Wilfred Gonzalez

Date:

[2/27/25]

Addendum A

Model Interpreter Services Policy

Phoenix Municipal Court
300 E. Washington Street
Phoenix, AZ 85003

INTERPRETER SERVICES GUIDELINES

Arizona Supreme Court Administrative Order 2016-02 requires courts to have their staff interpreters credentialed at the Tier 3 level or higher within two years of their date of hire. Also, the Order requires the court to demonstrate appointment preference for credentialed freelance interpreters.

Additionally, Arizona Code of Judicial Administration (ACJA) Section 7-301 requires interpreters to comply with mandatory continuing education requirements. Beginning in 2025, courts will be able to check an interpreter's compliance with these requirements in the Arizona Court Interpreter Registry.

To comply with the court's duty to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to the court's programs and services for individuals with limited-English proficiency, the court will employ the following guidelines for interpreter services.

Interpreter Credentialing Tiers and Descriptions

Administrative Order No. 2016-02 established the Arizona Court Interpreter Credentialing Program (ACICP) and created the following credentialing tiers for interpreters in the Arizona courts:

Tier 4 The highest credentialing tier an interpreter can earn, denoting a superior command of both working languages and the requisite skills and abilities in all modes of interpreting. Interpreters at this level have successfully completed training on interpreter ethics and the Arizona court system, language assessments in English and the relevant working language (e.g., Spanish, Korean, etc.), and earned scores of at least 80% on all sections of the Oral Court Interpreting Exam.

Tier 3 This tier denotes an interpreter that is fully competent in all modes of interpreting. It is the minimum level of credential required of interpreters in staff positions in the court. Tier 3 interpreters must successfully complete all testing and training elements described above for Tier 4 with scores of at least 70% on all sections of the Oral Court Interpreter Exam.

Tier 2 Denotes an interpreter skilled in the three modes of interpreting and having completed all testing and training elements described above with scores of at least 60% on all sections of the Oral Court Interpreter Exam.

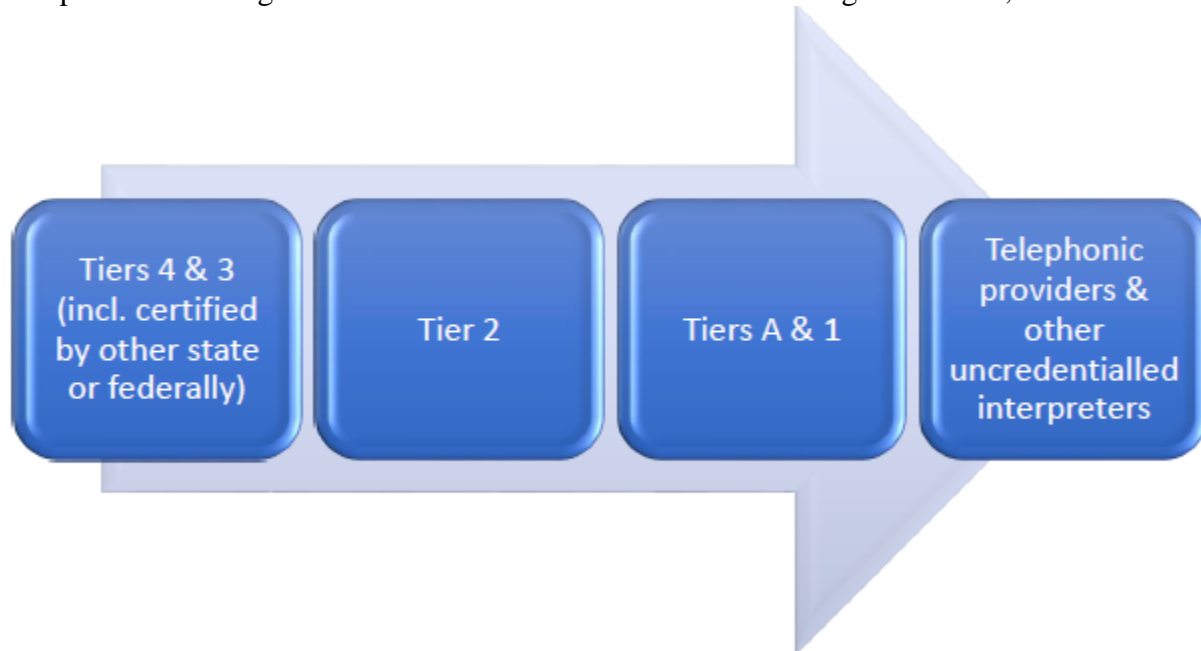
Tier A This tier is reserved for interpreters of languages without an available Oral Court Interpreter Exam and whose interpreting skills, therefore, cannot be evaluated by ACICP. Interpreters at this tier have successfully completed training on interpreter ethics and

the Arizona court system, passed the English language assessment, and demonstrated superior command of the relevant working language (e.g., Italian, Japanese, etc.).

Tier 1 This is the lowest, introductory tier of interpreter credentialing offered by ACICP. Interpreters at this level have completed the same elements described above for Tier A with an advanced command of the relevant working language. Tier 1 interpreters' skills have either not yet been evaluated or failed to earn scores on the Oral Court Interpreter Exam sufficient to achieve and/or maintain the more advanced tiers above.

In-Court & Court-Ordered Hearings, Events, Programs, And Services

For all in-court and court-ordered hearings, events, programs, and services, the court will employ interpreters in accordance with AO 2016-02 and the related *Guidance to Courts Regarding the "Preference" Requirement in A.O. 2016-02* issued by the Court Interpreter Program Advisory Committee. These authorities make it incumbent upon the court to ensure interpreters assigned to matters for the court are appropriately skilled and competent, considering the totality of the court's responsibilities, the rights of limited English proficient parties and court customers, and the nature and complexity of the hearing or event. In general, the court will demonstrate preference for credentialed interpreters at the highest available level as shown in the following illustration, read from left to right:



The timing of notification of interpreter needs and the availability of resources may result in deviations from the guidelines above, however, the overall goal is to provide the best services possible to ensure meaningful access to the court's hearings, events, programs, offices, etc. To this end, the court will ensure its personnel responsible for staffing interpreted events use and have access to the Arizona Court Interpreter Listserv and the Arizona Court Interpreter Registry.

As with uncredentialed interpreters, providers of remote interpreting services such as Language Line and similar vendors are not credentialed by ACICP or any other entity. As such, the court must consider these options as "last lines of defense" only. These will not be used as the court's first or only available option, with the exception of emergent hearings and events for which no other viable options, including a continuance, are reasonably available to the court.

For the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, the court will make reasonable accommodations, including the provision of qualified interpreters, pursuant to federal and state statute and the Rules of the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Public Counter, Phone Calls, and Interactions with Clerk of Court and Other Court Offices

In no event will a member of the public be turned away from the court due to the inability to speak, read, or write English fluently. Court staff must provide language assistance as needed to provide proper customer service in accordance with the Arizona Code of Judicial Administration §1-303 (Code of 697 Conduct for Judicial Employees). This responsibility shall not be shifted to the court user/customer, their friends or family, other interested parties or members of the public.

For routine public assistance, interactions, and services; general legal information; payment transactions; forms assistance (scribing); etc., the court will ensure meaningful language access using the following resources:

1. Staff interpreters
2. Bilingual staff
3. Freelance interpreters (individuals or agencies)
4. Remote/telephonic providers (Language Line or similar)
5. Language ID cards to identify an individual's language

Interactions By the Public with Attorneys at the Courthouse: It is the responsibility of the attorney, both prosecutors and defense counsel, whether appointed or retained, to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their services for individuals with limited-English proficiency (e.g. meetings between LEP defendants and their defense attorney and/or opposing counsel, victim/witness meetings with the prosecution and/or opposing counsel, etc.). While it is not the court's responsibility to do so, the Phoenix Municipal Court may provide language assistance resources for these encounters as a courtesy. The Phoenix Municipal Court provides

this courtesy assistance as follows: Spanish court interpreters are made available to attorneys with matters before the court. This courtesy assistance may not be available at all times and shall not be construed as creating a right to such assistance or responsibility it be provided.