



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Minority Health Language Access Plan

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Overview of the OMH Language Access Plan

Consistent with its statutory authority,¹ the HHS Office of Minority Health (OMH) is committed to supporting meaningful access to its programs and building capacity to enhance the availability of language access in its policies, programs, and practices. Language access services are an important tool in efforts to advance and promote minority health and address health disparities.

The overarching goal of the OMH Language Access Plan (OMH LAP) is to promote meaningful access and engagement for all individuals and organizations that utilize OMH resources. The OMH LAP will guide OMH strategies for staff to advance language access in OMH policies, programs, and operations, to include activities for which the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health provides administrative support to OMH (e.g., grants management). For the purposes of this OMH LAP, language access is inclusive of access for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) and/or disabilities, including

¹ Section 1707 of the Public Health Service Act, 42 U.S.C. §300u-6.



persons who rely on sign language to communicate, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or low vision, or have speech-related or other disabilities. The OMH LAP directly aligns with and supports the [2023 HHS Language Access Plan](#) (HHS LAP), the HHS Equity Action Plan, and Executive Orders that support the importance of ensuring language assistance and meaningful access (See Appendix C).

The action steps outlined in the OMH LAP will be conducted throughout Fiscal Years (FY) 2024—2026, with the goal to establish an infrastructure for continued integration of language access in OMH activities. Throughout FY 2024-2026, OMH aims to focus efforts on five priority activities for advancing language access, including:

1. Enhancing awareness and promotion of the National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) in Health and Health Care
2. Increasing utilization of translation and interpretation services
3. Improving accessibility of OMH resources and convenings
4. Researching, developing, and testing methods of informing LEP individuals about the availability of language access services
5. Continuing OMH engagement in HHS language access efforts, including serving on the HHS Language Access Steering Committee

In 2023, OMH established the OMH Language Access Affinity Group, which is charged with championing and coordinating OMH’s language access efforts and is comprised of representatives from each OMH Division. In consultation with OMH senior leadership, the OMH Language Access Affinity Group will oversee the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of the OMH LAP, and ensure that the OMH LAP is aligned with the HHS LAP.

A summary of key OMH language access efforts and accomplishments can be found in *Appendix A*. For questions or more information about how OMH is implementing the OMH LAP, please reach out to OMH’s Language Access Coordinator, Leandra Olson at Leandra.Olson@hhs.gov and MinorityHealth@hhs.gov.

Elements and Action Steps

Element 1: Assessment and Needs Capacity

OMH will align ongoing assessments of language assistance needs with reporting expectations of the HHS LAP. Development of this LAP serves as the first step in this assessment process. The LAP will be used as a keystone for the development of measures and milestones relevant to each LAP element. Data collected for reporting OMH LAP implementation will be used to improve awareness and implementation of language assistance services for persons with LEP and individuals with disabilities.

The assessment process to be developed may identify: 1) communities that interact with OMH programs and the top languages spoken among those communities; 2) non-English languages, including American Sign Language (ASL) or other sign languages, used by the population likely to be accessing or otherwise in need of and eligible for the OMH’s services; and 3) barriers to effective oral and written communication.

Methods for identifying needs, gaps, and areas of opportunity may include but are not limited to listening sessions, program data reviews, environmental scans, and policy reviews. These methods may



engage grant awardees, contractors, and partners as appropriate. Assessment results will also be used to inform budget requests for anticipated language assistance needs for upcoming years.

Action Steps:

- a. Each fiscal year, OMH will host or participate in at least one listening session hosted by another agency to learn about challenges and opportunities for improvement in the agency’s language access efforts.
- b. OMH will initiate an assessment process based on available resources to inform policies and practices that ensure OMH’s language assistance services support OMH needs and priorities, in alignment with the actions outlined in Element 8.
- c. Update the OMH LAP as needed based on the conducted assessment by the end of FY 2026.

Element 2: Interpretation Language Assistance Services

Interpretation language assistance services are essential to ensure meaningful access to and an equal opportunity to participate fully in the services, activities, programs, or other benefits administered or funded by OMH. OMH offers interpretation services via its language assistance contract and aims to ensure that all interpreters used are qualified to provide the service, understand and apply interpreter ethics and client confidentiality needs, and provide culturally appropriate and accurate interpreting. The contract requires oral interpretation and written translation services to be provided in line with the National CLAS Standards.

For OMH-hosted convenings, OMH will aim to make sure participants are aware that OMH will provide them with interpretation services at no cost and provide information on how to obtain interpreting services. OMH also aims to provide people with disabilities with appropriate auxiliary aids and services where necessary to provide them an equal opportunity to benefit from OMH’s programs and activities. Auxiliary aids and services include, but are not limited to, qualified sign language interpreters on-site or through video remote interpreting services.

OMH, through its language assistance contract, currently tracks and reports the number of requests for interpretation services, the type of interpretation requested, the languages requested, and the response time in which interpretation was provided. Additionally, OMH will offer a dedicated toll-free telephone number and fax line that offers multilingual support and a teletypewriter (TTY) line for the hearing impaired.

Action Steps:

- a. In FY 2025, OMH will establish and implement standard operating procedures for providing interpreting services in a manner that ensures timely communication between persons with LEP and/or people with disabilities and OMH. The standard operating procedures will also include information on how OMH staff can request language assistance services.
- b. In FY 2025, OMH will compile a list of resources available to OMH staff to provide information on best practices for interpretation services for LEP individuals, individuals whose preferred language is a language other than English, and/or people with disabilities who require sign language interpretation. Interpretation services may include onsite interpreting, over the phone interpreting, and/or video remote interpreting.



- c. Throughout FY 2024-2026, OMH will continue to monitor and evaluate interpretation services including the number of requests for interpretation services, the type of interpretation requested, the languages requested, and the response time in which interpretation was provided.
- d. OMH will offer interpretation services to individuals with disabilities on an ongoing basis, which may include requesting participants' accessibility needs for virtual and in-person events and providing sign language interpreting and captioning.

Element 3: Written Translations

OMH will take reasonable steps to provide accurate written translations to ensure meaningful access to and an equal opportunity to receive timely public health and social services information and participate fully in the services, activities, programs, or other benefits administered by OMH. OMH offers translation services via its language assistance contract, which lists six areas of content OMH has prioritized for translation under its current contract. These include written communication focused on consumer health, public health, and social services; infographics and other graphics; social media; business and technical documents; education campaign material; and general OMH messages. If any of the content will be posted on OMH's website, it will be compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 508).

OMH aims to proactively determine what constitutes vital documents for its programs and activities and implement a translation strategy. For purposes of this OMH LAP, *Appendix B* lists examples of vital documents, which include important program information, documents that are essential for obtaining consent, complaint forms, applications for participation in a program or activity or to receive services or benefits, written notices of language assistance services, eligibility criteria, and notices of rights or notices of denial, loss, or decrease of services or benefits. OMH intends to comply with the 2023 HHS LAP that states notices of nondiscrimination may potentially be required to be translated in the top 15 languages spoken by persons with LEP.

OMH supports translation of vital documents and other critical public information (especially during public health emergencies) based on OMH's assessments of need and capacity. OMH will develop translation strategies suitable to the medium for distribution. Translated OMH documents should use plain language, so they are easy to understand by intended LEP populations. Cultural communication and health literacy should be considered for all OMH documents, including documents composed in English that will be translated to languages other than English. OMH intends for translated materials to be easily accessible on OMH's website.

For individuals with LEP and/or who have certain communication disabilities who want to access OMH written translated materials, OMH will consider sight translation, interpretation, or audio/video communication. All online translated content shall comply with Section 508.

Action Steps:

- a. In FY 2025, OMH will establish and implement standard operating procedures for providing translation services in a manner that ensures timely communication between persons with LEP and/or people with disabilities and OMH. The standard operating procedures will also include information on how OMH staff should respond to language assistance services requests.



- b. Throughout FY 2024-2026, OMH will continue to monitor and evaluate translation, including the number of requests for translation services, the type of translation requested, and the languages requested.
- c. In FY 2025, OMH will develop, and regularly update, a list of OMH resources already available in non-English languages, including American Sign Language, and share the list with OMH staff.
- d. OMH will take reasonable steps for ensuring the availability of vital documents in the preferred languages for LEP communities reached through OMH programs and activities. OMH will also provide alternative methods for providing meaningful language access to vital documents, whenever possible.
- e. OMH, where possible, will provide translated written materials in other formats such as audio, video with closed captions, video with sign language, infographics, etc., for persons with limited literacy or disabilities, and for those whose language does not have a written form.

Element 4: Policies, Procedures, Practices

OMH will establish and maintain an infrastructure designed to implement and improve language assistance services within the office. OMH aims to enhance its ability to assess policies, programs, and practices, including through improved data collection and utilization, to help inform OMH's activities to advance language access. The results of the assessment from Element 1 will be used to inform the development of policies, procedures, and practices appropriate for OMH to promote accessibility for individuals with LEP served.

OMH will ensure policies, procedures, and all language assistance activities are developed and implemented in alignment with the National Standards for CLAS in Health and Health Care.

Action Steps:

- a. In FY 2025, OMH will develop standard operating procedures outlining policies and procedures for language assistance services, including how staff can request written translations of OMH resources, how staff can request oral interpretation services for OMH convenings, and how to address feedback received from partnering entities regarding language assistance services and products.
- b. OMH will regularly collect metrics to monitor implementation and efficacy of the OMH LAP. OMH will report these metrics to the Language Access Steering Committee (LASC) in accordance with the LASC's reporting schedule and will share insights on best practices and lessons learned with the LASC and its subcommittees when relevant. Metrics may include: conducting an inventory of languages most frequently encountered; identifying the primary channels of contact with LEP community members; reviewing OMH programs and activities for language accessibility; reviewing the quality and annual cost of translation and interpretation services; and consulting with outside partners or health and human services partners.
- c. OMH will routinely review federal policy related to language access to ensure OMH remains aligned with current standards, regulations, and law, and, as appropriate, provide input/recommendations to improve the policies or their implementation.



Element 5: Notification of the Availability of Language Assistance at No Cost

OMH will take reasonable steps to ensure individuals accessing OMH resources are notified of the availability of language assistance at no cost to the individual. Notification methods may include multilingual posters, signs, and brochures, as well as statements or taglines on documents or information sources such as application forms, informational material, and websites.

The results from the Element 1 assessment will be used to inform OMH on the languages in which the notifications should be translated. At minimum, OMH will provide information about rights to nondiscrimination and the availability of language assistance and auxiliary aids in the 15 most commonly spoken languages according to the most recent relevant data from the U.S. Census Bureau. OMH will notify people with disabilities that they are entitled to communication with the agency that is as effective as communication with others, including through the free and timely provision of vital information through appropriate auxiliary aids and services.

Action Steps:

- a. In FY 2024, OMH will publish this OMH LAP and other relevant resources on the OMH website in accessible formats, as well as contact information to receive questions and comments.
- b. On an ongoing basis, OMH will distribute and make available resources, such as HHS's [Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons \(HHS LEP Guidance\)](#) and Federal Plain Language Guidelines to all current OMH recipients, contractors, and vendors.
- c. OMH will promote HHS efforts and resources to ensure entities funded by OMH are aware that language assistance services, in order to comply with Title VI and Section 1557, must be provided at no cost to those in need of language assistance services.

Element 6: Staff Training

OMH will provide training and resources to ensure staff understand and can implement the policies and procedures of this plan and the HHS LAP. OMH will promote learning and technical assistance opportunities to support quality language assistance services and encourage accountability across OMH, HHS, and partners to employ best/promising practices in communication and language assistance.

Action Steps:

- a. On an ongoing basis, OMH will provide necessary training and share resources with OMH-designated staff to support implementation of the elements in this plan.
- b. Throughout FY 2024-2025, OMH will offer an online training webinar, or series of trainings, available to all OMH staff to inform them about the HHS LAP, the OMH LAP, OMH language access priorities, and any other information deemed relevant to carrying out OMH language access efforts. OMH will collect and assess feedback from the training to establish a quality improvement loop and help determine future training and resources needs. The training(s) may include the following components:
 - The Department's and agency's legal obligations to provide language assistance services;



- Department and agency language access resources and designated points of contact;
 - Identifying LEP individuals and their language needs;
 - Accessing and providing language assistance services through contracted personnel;
 - Tips on providing meaningful assistance to LEP individuals;
 - How to request translation and interpretation services; and/or
 - How the public can request services or file a complaint.
- c. In FY 2025, OMH will develop an online resource channel accessible to all OMH staff that will house resources related to language access and language assistance services, including relevant policies and procedures. The OMH Language Access Affinity Group will keep the resource channel up to date and will work across OMH to promote awareness of the resource channel and its materials. The OMH Language Access Affinity Group will work with the Office of the Director's Operations Team to ensure the resource channel is included in onboarding resources and internal staff outreach to create consistent awareness and availability of OMH's language assistance services.
- d. OMH will continue to support language access capacity building across HHS and other federal agencies and sectors, and will promote resources for internal and external partners on a regular basis, including:
- HHS Learning Management System National CLAS Standards training module;
 - Think Cultural Health E-learning programs and resources; and
 - National CLAS Standards resources.

Element 7: Assessment & Accountability: Access, Quality, Resources, Reporting

OMH will annually assess progress in the availability and quality of OMH's language assistance activities and identify areas for improvements, in alignment with the quality control mechanisms outlined in the HHS LAP. The assessment may include metrics outlined in Element 4 as well as feedback received from grant awardees, contractors, and regional offices regarding the quality of written translations; interpretation and translation utilization; and identified or potential barriers to providing services.

Information collected may include:

- Performance measures for OMH programs, including disaggregated demographics categories and language metrics.
- Methods employed to promote and implement the National CLAS Standards.

Action Steps:

- a. On an annual basis, OMH will monitor and regularly assess language assistance services provided to individuals with LEP and people with disabilities through the OMH language assistance contract.



- b. In accordance with the HHS LASC reporting timelines, OMH will implement a process to report to the HHS LASC on OMH's progress implementing each element of this plan, effective practices, and barriers to improving language access.
- c. OMH will address, in accordance with policies and procedures developed under Element 4, feedback received regarding language assistance services and products in a timely manner.
- d. OMH will implement methods for collecting information about language access improvements, best practices, and lessons learned from individual programs and take steps to ensure that such information is reported to the Language Access Steering Committee when appropriate.

Element 8: Consultations with Partners

OMH aims to increase consultation and collaboration with partners to inform and improve OMH language access efforts, better highlight research and innovation, and make resources more readily available. OMH will regularly engage with partners, in accordance with the HHS LAP and other federal policies, to identify language assistance needs of individuals with LEP, implement appropriate language access strategies to ensure individuals with LEP have meaningful access in accordance with assessments of customer need and agency capacity, and evaluate progress on an ongoing basis.

Action Steps:

- a. Throughout FY 2024—2026, OMH will plan and coordinate conversations with OMH partners to assess the accessibility, accuracy, cultural appropriateness, and overall quality of OMH's language access efforts, as well as to support the development of policies and practices that enhance access to OMH programs and activities for persons with LEP and people with disabilities. These engagements may be conducted through formal listening sessions, requests for information, and/or informal dialogue.
- b. OMH will continue to promote the HHS LAP and resources with OMH partners in an accessible manner.
- c. In alignment with Element 1 of this plan, each fiscal year, OMH will host or participate in at least one listening session hosted by another agency to learn about challenges and opportunities for improvement in the agency's language access efforts.
- d. Throughout FY 2024—2026, OMH will continue to seek opportunities for collaboration and coordination with partners focused on advancing language access services through Department-level workgroups and strategic internal and external engagements. Partnership opportunities may be facilitated through the Interdepartmental Health Equity Collaborative, HHS Language Access Steering Committee, Advisory Committee on Minority Health, HHS Health Disparities Council, HHS Social Determinants of Health Working Group, State Offices of Minority Health, regional and Tribal partners, and/or with OMH grant participants and recipients.

Element 9: Digital Information

OMH aims to ensure individuals with LEP and those living with disabilities have meaningful access to program information on the OMH website and that OMH resources are developed in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner, in alignment with the National CLAS Standards. OMH will review the quality and accessibility of translated materials provided online to promote ease of use and access.



OMH will comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which requires federal agencies to ensure that their information and communication technology, including websites, electronic documents, and software applications, are accessible to individuals with disabilities. OMH will also aim to ensure that translated digital content meets Section 508 requirements to improve access for people with disabilities. In addition to the requirements of Section 508, OMH will take reasonable steps to comply with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to ensure effective communication with people with disabilities.

Action Steps:

- a. On an ongoing basis, OMH will share multilingual resources via digital channels to increase awareness and utilization of products available in non-English languages, such as on OMH's Spanish language social media platform https://twitter.com/OMH_Espanol. This may also include promoting the resources on www.lep.gov by providing links to the LEP.gov website on the OMH website.
- b. OMH will continue to serve on LASC subcommittees, and/or other inter- and/or intra-agency working groups as applicable, that focus in part on making government websites more accessible to persons with LEP in multiple languages and people with disabilities through various multimedia formats.
- c. In FY 2025, OMH will develop and maintain a list of all in-language content provided on OMH's webpages to use to fulfill reporting requirements for the HHS LAP.
- d. On an ongoing basis, OMH will take steps to ensure virtual meetings are conducted in a manner that provides meaningful access for those with LEP and/or disabilities.

Element 10: Grant Assurance and Compliance by Recipients of OMH Funding

Recipients of federal funds must comply with federal civil rights laws and provide written notice of their legal obligation and compliance with regulations as they relate to language access. OMH is committed to a process of ongoing program reviews to determine if OMH recipients are complying with program and civil rights regulations.

To help recipients of OMH funding meet their program and civil rights obligations, civil rights guidance and increased compliance monitoring are included in grant announcements, requirements, and policies. For example, Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) issued by OMH include Non-Discrimination Requirements and reference guidance from the HHS Office for Civil Rights. NOFOs also specify that recipients of federal financial assistance must ensure that their programs are accessible to persons with LEP. NOFOs also provide guidance relevant to the application of the National Standards for CLAS in Health and Health Care.

OMH aims to ensure that language access services established through OMH NOFOs, and awards reflect language access needs by identifying opportunities to develop and collect standardized language access measures across OMH initiatives and consistent with Element 1. OMH will take the following steps to improve procedures and policies to advance language access in OMH funding mechanisms, in line with the National CLAS Standards:



Action Steps:

- a. OMH, in coordination with the OASH Grants and Acquisitions Management Division (GAM), will provide technical assistance that ensures OMH recipients are aware of and understand:
 - their language access obligations under Title VI and Section 1557;
 - expectations for serving persons with LEP and persons with disabilities in alignment with the assurances they give in exchange for HHS funds;
 - the process for including language access services in their proposal budgets, where appropriate;
 - expectations for reporting the amount and type of language assistance services provided to their beneficiaries and the languages in which the services were provided; and
 - guidance for incorporating methods to document and respond to feedback in their quality improvement processes.
- b. In consultation with the grants office, OMH will identify opportunities and, as appropriate, incorporate LEP requirements or best practices in funding opportunity announcements, e.g., requiring applicants to submit language access procedures or policies with their applications, providing notices of the availability of language assistance services at no cost, providing vital program documents in the top languages spoken by the communities they serve, including budgets in their applications to provide language assistance services, demonstrating the ability to serve communities with LEP and people with disabilities, etc.
- c. On an annual basis, OMH staff will communicate with HHS-funded entities about the requirements of Title VI and Section 1557 and offer resources to promote awareness of the HHS LEP Guidance. OMH will support program staff to make current and prospective recipients of OMH funds aware of their obligations under federal civil rights statutes and regulations, especially obligations under Title VI and Section 1557 with respect to LEP accessibility, including ensuring persons with LEP can utilize language assistance services.
- d. By the end of FY 2026, OMH, in consultation with GAM, will incorporate questions about language accessibility and meaningful communication in the agency's onsite program reviews, questionnaires, or surveys designed to determine compliance with grant obligations.
- e. On an ongoing basis, OMH will include civil rights compliance language and guidance in program outreach materials when appropriate, and, to the extent feasible, ensure its accessibility for people with LEP and/or disabilities.
- f. On an ongoing basis, OMH will consult with GAM, as appropriate, on the development and execution of grants and cooperative agreements supporting language assistance services.
- g. On an ongoing basis, OMH will promote OASH and HHS efforts and resources to entities funded by OMH, as specified in Element 5, to ensure they are aware that language assistance services must be provided at no cost to those in need of language assistance services.



Appendices:

- A. OMH Language Access Efforts and Accomplishments (2022–2024)**
- B. Definitions**
- C. Guiding Legal Authorities**

Appendix A: OMH Language Access Efforts and Accomplishments (2022–2024)

OMH currently has several initiatives aimed at supporting meaningful access to its programs and building capacity among health organizations to enhance the availability and quality of language access services. In 2023, OMH established the OMH Language Access Affinity Group, which is charged with championing and coordinating OMH’s language access efforts and is comprised of representatives from each OMH Division. The OMH Language Access Affinity Group will oversee the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of the OMH LAP, aligned with the HHS LAP. Other key OMH language access efforts include:

- **Promoting national standards:** CLAS are foundational to OMH’s efforts for eliminating health disparities and promoting health equity. To that end, OMH developed the [National CLAS Standards](#), a set of 15 action steps that provide guidance for individuals and health organizations to implement CLAS. OMH promotes adoption of the National CLAS Standards in our grant initiatives and by providing free, accredited e-learning programs and other resources through [Think Cultural Health](#). Specifically, Think Cultural Health includes an e-learning program titled [The Guide to Providing Effective Communication and Language Assistance Services](#) and also houses other relevant language access resources, including: [Effective cross-cultural communication skills checklist](#); [Working effectively with an interpreter checklist](#); [Providing CLAS fact sheet](#); and the [Communication styles factsheet](#).
- **Supporting language access programs and policy development:** In October 2022, OMH announced more than \$4 million in grants for the [Promoting Equitable Access to Language Services \(PEALS\) in Health and Human Services initiative](#). The PEALS initiative supports the development and testing of methods to inform individuals with LEP about the availability of language access services in health care-related settings. Through this initiative, recipients implement and evaluate strategies to enhance language access services through policy development and implementation, technology utilization, education for individuals with LEP, and education for providers, including medical support staff. Additionally, in accordance with OMH’s [Fiscal Year 2023 Appropriations](#), OMH is in the process of researching, developing, and testing methods of informing LEP individuals about the availability of language access services.
- **Engaging with Community Partners:** OMH is committed to engaging with community partners and key stakeholders to help inform and improve its language access efforts. In August 2022, OMH held a listening session with stakeholders to help inform the development of OMH’s strategy to improve support for language access. Participants included representatives from nine organizations specializing in interpretation, translation, disability rights, and immigration and health law. Additionally, in July 2023, OMH hosted another listening session focused on methods used to inform LEP individuals about the availability of language access services. Participants represented the following types of organizations: interpreter and translator



associations, language companies, providers and insurers, advocacy groups, and state and local groups. OMH will continue to consult external experts, organizations with knowledge about or connections to LEP communities, and LEP populations to inform its language access priorities and activities.

- Providing language assistance services:** OMH aims to serve as an example of language access in its programs and operations by providing translations, interpretation, and alternate formats, ensuring accessibility for individuals with LEP and/or disabilities. OMH has a language assistance contract to provide written translation and oral interpretation services. The contract prioritizes languages spoken by a majority of LEP persons living in the United States according to U.S. Census Bureau data, though it allows translation into additional languages as requested. OMH has utilized this contract to support OMH requests to translate OMH products into languages other than English and offer interpretation for OMH- or HHS-hosted convenings. OMH has also used this contract to support other HHS agencies with their translation needs, such as translating the 2023 HHS LAP into 13 languages and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) COVID-19 factsheets into 13 languages.
- Improving language access across HHS:** OMH serves as a key contributor and leader in various HHS efforts to improve communication and language access. In 2023, HHS relaunched its [Language Access Steering Committee](#), which is a Department-wide effort led by the HHS Office for Civil Rights. OMH serves on the HHS Language Access Steering Committee and supported the development of the 2023 HHS LAP. OMH is also co-leading two of the Language Access Steering Committee subcommittees focused on oral interpretation and accountability, and it also serves on the subcommittee focused on resources.

Appendix B: Definitions

Note: Any related definitions that may be issued under Section 1557 will complement or supersede the broad working definitions set forth below.

Term	Definition
Agency	Agency refers to HHS Operating Divisions (such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, FDA, or the National Institutes of Health) and Staff Divisions (such as the Office for Civil Rights or the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs). Operating Divisions focus on specific programs and activities as authorized by Congress. Staff Divisions are part of the Office of the Secretary and serve in a coordinating role for the Department.
Applicant	Any person who inquires about or submits an application for public assistance benefits under any program or service.
Certificate	An academic recognition demonstrating the successful completion of a program of study, usually based on amount of instructional time and a minimum grade.

Term	Definition
Certification	Institutional recognition demonstrating successful passing of an examination that tests knowledge, skills, and abilities related to an occupation.
Contractor	Any entity that performs work or provides services on behalf of an agency or division under a contractual agreement with reimbursement.
Customer	Individuals, businesses, and organizations that interact with an HHS agency or program. The term customer is inclusive of beneficiaries and interested parties.
Digital Information	Information, as defined in OMB Circular A-130, which the government produces and provides digitally to help individuals access HHS-conducted programs and activities for which they are individually eligible to participate. OMB Circular A-130 defines digital information as any communication or representation of knowledge such as facts, data, or opinions in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual forms.
Direct “in-language” communication	Monolingual communication in a language other than English between a multilingual staff and a person with LEP (e.g., Korean to Korean).
Disaggregated Data	Data that separates out subgroups to provide the most descriptive and detailed information possible; for example, rather than using data about “Asian languages” or “Native American languages,” disaggregated data would indicate which specific languages are spoken by an individual or at the community level. Disaggregated data may also include information about varied dialects, as well as more specific national origin information.
Effective Communication	For communication disabilities, it refers to aids and services to ensure that communication with people with disabilities, such as people who are deaf or hard of hearing, is as effective as communication for people without disabilities.
Interpretation	The act of listening, understanding, analyzing, and processing a spoken communication in one language (source language) and then faithfully orally rendering it into another spoken language (target language) while retaining the same meaning. For individuals with

Term	Definition
	<p>certain disabilities that affect communication, this can include understanding, analyzing, and processing a spoken or signed communication in the source language and faithfully conveying that information into a spoken or signed target language while retaining the same meaning.</p>
Language Access	<p>Is achieved when individuals with LEP have meaningful access to and can communicate effectively with HHS employees and contractors and participate in HHS programs and activities.</p>
Language Assistance	<p>All oral, written, and signed language services needed to assist individuals with LEP and people with disabilities to communicate effectively with HHS staff and contractors and gain meaningful access and an equal opportunity to participate in the services, activities, programs, or other benefits administered by HHS.</p>
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	<p>An individual who does not speak English as their preferred language and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English in a manner that permits them to communicate effectively with HHS and have meaningful access to and participate in the services, activities, programs, or other benefits administered by HHS. Individuals with LEP may be competent in English for certain types of communication (e.g., speaking or understanding), but have limited proficiency in English in other areas (e.g., reading or writing). LEP designations are also context-specific; an individual may possess sufficient English language skills to function in one setting (e.g., conversing in English with coworkers), but these skills may be insufficient in other settings (e.g., addressing court proceedings). An individual who is deaf or hard of hearing may also have limited proficiency in spoken or written English and may not be proficient in American Sign Language (ASL) or any other recognized sign language.</p>
Meaningful Access	<p>Language assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the individual with LEP needing assistance. Meaningful access denotes access that is not significantly restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to programs or activities provided to English-proficient individuals.</p>
Participant	<p>Any person who has applied for and is receiving public assistance benefits or services under any HHS program or service.</p>

Term	Definition
Plain Language	Plain language as defined in the Plain Writing Act of 2010 is writing that is “clear, concise and well organized.”
Preferred/Primary Language	The language that LEP individuals identify as the preferred language that they use to communicate effectively. The language that LEP individuals identify as the preferred language that they use to communicate effectively.
Qualified Interpreter or Translator	A bilingual/multilingual person who has the appropriate training and experience or demonstrated ability to fully understand, analyze, and process and then faithfully render a spoken, written, or signed message in one language into a second language and who abides by a code of professional practice and ethics. A child shall not be considered a qualified translator or interpreter, nor shall a family member or employee who does not meet the minimum qualifications specified above.
Sight Translation	The oral or signed rendering of written text into spoken or signed language by an interpreter without change in meaning based on a visual review of the original text or document.
Sign Language	Method of communication for people who are deaf or hard of hearing in which hand movements, gestures, and facial expressions convey grammatical structure and meaning. There is no universal sign language. Different sign languages are used in different countries or regions. For example, British Sign Language (BSL) is a different language from ASL, and Americans who know ASL may not understand BSL.
Taglines	Brief messages that may be included in or attached to a document. Taglines in languages other than English are used on documents (including websites) written in English that describe how individuals with LEP can obtain translation of the document or an interpreter to read or explain the document. Section 1557 and Title VI will prescribe the languages that must be included in such tagline notices but covered entities may also add more languages.
Translation	The process of converting written text from a source language into an equivalent written text in a target language as fully and accurately as possible while maintaining the style, tone, and intent of the text and considering differences of culture and dialect.



Term	Definition
Vital Document	Paper or electronic written material that contains information that is critical for accessing a component’s programs or activities or is required by law. Vital documents include, but are not limited to: critical records and notices as part of emergency preparedness and risk communications; online and paper applications; consent forms; complaint forms; letters or notices pertaining to eligibility for benefits; letters or notices pertaining to the reduction, denial, or termination of services or benefits that require a response from an individual with LEP; written tests that evaluate competency for a particular license, job, or skill for which knowing English is not required; documents that must be provided by law; and notices regarding the availability of language assistance services for individuals with LEP at no cost to them.

Appendix C: Guiding Executive Orders and Legal Authorities

The OMH LAP directly aligns with and supports the 2023 HHS LAP, the HHS Equity Action Plan, and Executive Orders that support the importance of ensuring language assistance and meaningful access: EO 13116, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency; EO 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government; EO 13995, Ensuring an Equitable Pandemic Response and Recovery; EO 14031, Advancing Equity, Justice, and Opportunity for Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders; and EO 14091, Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.

The OMH LAP is aligned with the following legal authorities: Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, The Plain Writing Act of 2010, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, § 504 and 508.